

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Sinn Fein Leader Gerry Adams
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Gerry Adams
Margaret McCorry, Sister of Gerry Adams

Notetakers: Jenny McGee, Joel Ehrendreich,
Robert Ford and Richard Norland

DATE, TIME November 7, 1999, 9:02-9:11 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Residence

The President: Hello. (U)

Mr. Adams: Hello, Mr. President. (U)

The President: I wanted to call to say just how very sorry I am about your family tragedy. (U)

Mr. Adams: You are very kind. I appreciate that very much. I am actually at my sister's house now, and I would be honored when we are finished, if you would have a word with her. Her name is Margaret and her husband's name is Michael. It's so sad. We are just sitting in the two boys' bedroom; one was 10 and the other was just 15. It has just devastated the entire family. (U)

The President: It's so sad, you know. It is always a frightening thing when these children learn to drive. In my own case, I narrowly escaped terrible accidents twice. (U)

Mr. Adams: To tell you the truth, I have been through it twice myself and here are two kids now. (U)

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The President: At some point you get older and really wish that you could trade places with them so they could have their lives, too. (U)

Mr. Adams: Well, in the middle of all of this we have managed to work on the peace process. I just finished speaking with the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister. It's obviously highly confidential. We have just managed to get the IRA to appoint someone to meet the de Chastelain Commission. I said to Senator Mitchell that I would call him and let him know. The Sit Room gave me a number. They tried to confirm it, but no one answered it. If you are in touch with him at all, could you call him and let him know? It's his wife's apartment. Anyway, it was almost midnight when the boys were killed, so I had to leave Stormont to go back to the family. (C)

The President: Well, I know that he will be thrilled with that. Trimble was here Thursday. I was out of town, and Jim met with him. (C)

Mr. Adams: Martin McGuinness will see Reg Empey now to tell him of the IRA's decision. Whatever the situation is, if we got a no, we would have told them, too, but we hope this decision will empower the unionists to take it through. (C)

The President: That's wonderful. Martin also asked us about three or four things you asked the British to do. I will see Tony Blair next week. If you don't have a commitment from him by then, I can talk to him. We will be seeing each other for a day and a night. (C)

Mr. Adams: That's first class. I also did get a commitment from him actually. It will be a matter of making sure the commitments are kept. This is what the IRA leadership will need in order to sell it to the rank and file, especially in South Armagh. (C)

The President: Yeah, I think getting the fugitives back and changing the law that would prohibit you from taking part in the government -- these are really important. (C)

Mr. Adams: Yeah, and we have a whole lot of support for this. (C)

The President: I also think the continued demilitarization is very important to you. (C)

Mr. Adams: Absolutely. (C)

The President: I think we need to, and I am going to talk to George about this, too -- we spent a long time together last week, and he gave me a very detailed accounting of what he had done. It sounds very good to me, and I think if everyone's going to move on this track, at some point we have to calibrate the British moves and at some point the early stage prisoner release in good faith. Reducing the military presence is going to be quite important to you. (C)

Mr. Adams: Well, the process is going. I hear there was a bomb in the Middle East. Did you hear about that? (C)

The President: No, I did not hear about that. I just got up. (C)

Mr. Adams: There were 18 people injured. Every time we make a little progress something bad happens. I fear something like this could happen here. We are going to need your continued support. I just appreciate your abiding interest. (C)

The President: Oh, God, I want you to make it so much. I think time is on your side. (C)

Mr. Adams: I am glad to give you a bit of good news when you have woken up this morning. I will just go and get her now. Okay, Mr. President, here you are. (U)

Mrs. McCorry: Hello? (U)

The President: Hello, Margaret? I just wanted to call and tell you how terribly sorry I am, and I know there is nothing I can say or do to make things any better. Gerry and I were talking about kids and cars, and it's always, it's always...it's just almost like a lottery. I am so sorry. It's so heartbreaking. (U)

Mrs. McCorry: It's so sad. God, I don't know. (U)

The President: Well, there's nothing anybody can say right now. We can just say a prayer for you and for them. (U)

Mrs. McCorry: Thank you anyway. (U)

The President: You are welcome, God bless you. (U)

Mrs. McCorry: I will give you back to Gerry. Goodbye. (U)

The President: Well, you've got a lot of hard work to do there, man. She just went through that awful incident with her son-in-law a year ago, right? (U)

Mr. Adams: Two boys and two girls. One of the girls is 25 and is a widow. And now the boys are gone. (U)

The President: It is just too awful to contemplate. (U)

Mr. Adams: Thank you very much for your call. We will stay in touch. (U)

The President: Good by. (U)

-- End of Conversation --