

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 259

Urging the decommissioning of arms and explosives in Northern Ireland.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 24, 2000

Mr. HELMS (for himself and Mr. SMITH of Oregon) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Urging the decommissioning of arms and explosives in
Northern Ireland.

Whereas the Good Friday Agreement was signed on April 10, 1998, to bring about a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Northern Ireland;

Whereas in a referendum on May 22, 1998, the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Good Friday Agreement;

Whereas the Good Friday Agreement provides for the devolution of government from the United Kingdom to local institutions in Northern Ireland and the establishment of a North/South Ministerial Council and a British-Irish Council, and consists of provisions on decommissioning, human rights, policing, and prisoners;

Whereas much progress has been made in the establishment of both the indigenous Northern Ireland institutions and the North/South and British-Irish bodies, hundreds of prisoners from both communities have been released, and a plan for the restructuring of the police force has been put forth;

Whereas the Independent international Commission on Decommissioning (the Commission), led by General John de Chastelain, was established to facilitate the process of decommissioning of paramilitary arms as called for in the Good Friday Agreement;

Whereas the two principal loyalist paramilitary organizations, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), informed the Commission that they are prepared to move on decommissioning if the Irish Republican Army (IRA) makes clear that the war is over and it will also decommission;

Whereas the Commission's January 31, 2000, report on decommissioning states that though the IRA emphasized that it poses no threat to the peace process, it has not provided any information as to when decommissioning will begin;

Whereas the leader of the Social Democratic and Labor Party, John Hume, has called upon the IRA to "demonstrate for all to see its patriotism and desire to move the situation forward by strengthening the peace process through beginning voluntarily the process of decommissioning";

Whereas on February 11, 2000, due to the decommissioning impasse, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ire-

land, Peter Mandelson, suspended the Northern Ireland Executive and resumed direct control over the province;

Whereas on February 11, 2000, the Commission issued a report noting the “IRA’s recognition that the issue of arms needs to be dealt with in an acceptable way and that this is a necessary objective of a genuine peace process”;

Whereas recent polls indicate that the overwhelming majority of the people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland support decommissioning by all paramilitary organizations: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) stresses the importance of decommissioning
3 of weapons held by paramilitaries on all sides with-
4 out conditions to the success of the peace process in
5 Northern Ireland;

6 (2) calls upon the Irish Republican Army to
7 make a firm commitment and offer a specific time-
8 table as to when decommissioning of all of their
9 arms and explosives will begin; and

10 (3) urges the loyalist paramilitary organizations
11 to respond to such an IRA proposal by immediately
12 beginning the process of decommissioning all of their
13 weapons.

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