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US GROUP CRITICISES DISSIDENTS

By William Graham Political Correspondent

18/03/09

Senator Edward Kennedy and the US Congress 'Friends of Ireland' committee have said that "a small group of irreconcilable terrorists" must never be permitted to reverse the course of reconciliation in Northern Ireland through violence.

In a St Patrick's Day statement they condemned "the recent murders of two British soldiers and a Catholic police officer by criminals who have no public support".

The statement continued: "The people of Northern Ireland have clearly chosen a course of reconciliation and stability for their future.

"The courageous example of the people of Northern Ireland, who continue to choose peace over conflict, offers a bright lesson of hope to other troubled areas of the world.

"On this St Patrick's Day we reaffirm our strong support for the government of Northern Ireland.

"We continue to support the transfer of authority and responsibility for justice to the NI executive and we look forward to maintaining the hard won peace and prosperity in the years ahead."

Senator Kennedy, above, and his colleagues also praised Taoiseach Brian Cowen and Prime Minister Gordon Brown for their strong commitment to the peace process which they said had done so much to transform Northern Ireland from conflict to cooperation.

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