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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 30, 1994

Statement by the Press Secretary

This afternoon, Attorney General Janet Reno issued a waiver to Gerry Adams' ineligibility for a visa to visit the United States for a conference on Northern Ireland hosted by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy in New York City on February 1. Mr. Adams will be issued a limited visa for the sole purpose of attending the conference only. The Attorney General acted pursuant to a recommendation by the Secretary of State.

The President supports this difficult decision and believes it will help advance the cause of peace in Northern Ireland. Over the last decade, the United States has refused Mr. Adams a visa because of his involvement in terrorist activity. His last request was denied in April 1993 for that reason and he remains ineligible for a visa. However, the Joint Declaration issued on December 15, 1993 by British Prime Minister Major and Irish Prime Minister Reynolds offers an historic opportunity for peace. Today's decision represents the Administration's effort to do our part to support this important peace process.

In making the decision to waive Mr. Adams' ineligibility, the Administration sought assurances from Mr. Adams that he would renounce violence and support the Joint Declaration. Following a meeting with our Consul General in Belfast, Mr. Adams made constructive comments on both these points. He reiterated his desire "to see an end to all violence and an end to this conflict." He stated that it was his "personal and political priority to see an end to the IRA and an end to all other organizations involved in armed actions." He also moved forward in stating his willingness to "seek to persuade the IRA to make definitive decisions on the conduct of its campaign." And he stated that he is "anxious to embrace [the Joint Declaration] if it helps the peace process" and that he is "prepared to go the extra mile."

We are also encouraged that Mr. Adams "unreservedly condemn[ed]" three bomb threats on January 27 in San Diego reportedly claimed by the Southern California IRA and, in addition, condemned "all attacks on innocent civilians anywhere."

These statements represent positive steps toward peace by Mr. Adams and can move the process forward. It is therefore in the interest of peace that the United States reach out to Mr. Adams to press him to go forward. We are hopeful that enabling him to attend the conference in New York will encourage Mr. Adams to make peace and help bring an end to the tragic cycle of violence that has plagued the people of Northern Ireland for too long.

The Consul General in Belfast or Dublin will issue Mr. Adams a visa of strictly limited duration to allow his attendance at the conference only and will prohibit any direct or indirect fundraising. His travel will be limited to a 25 mile radius of the conference.