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## THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 17, 1995

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AT SHAMROCK CEREMONY WITH PRIME MINISTER JOHN BRUTON

The Roosevelt Room

10:40 A.M. EST

**THE PRESIDENT:** Good morning. Please be seated. Happy St. Patrick's Day. It's a great pleasure for me to welcome the Prime Minister here. This is the Taoiseach's first visit to the United States since he assumed office. So on this St. Patrick's Day, I think we should begin with an appropriate greeting -- Ceada mile failte -- a hundred thousand welcomes.

Mr. Prime Minister, I think, in this symbolic ceremony, you should go first. So I want to turn the microphone over to you.

**PRIME MINISTER BRUTON:** Thank you very much. Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Secretary of State, ladies and gentlemen: It's a wonderful honor for me to be received here as the leader of an Irish government of a country, Ireland, that's now at peace; at peace after 25 years of violence.

I want to say that you, Mr. President, probably as much as any individual, have helped to bring that about. When you look back on your administration, I think the bringing of peace to Ireland will rank as one of your major personal achievements. The willingness that you've shown, Mr. President, to take risks, to do things that many of us might have thought were foolhardy at the time -- like granting a visa to Gerry Adams -- it has been proven to be -- you have been proven to be right. You made the right decision.

The results are there for all of us to see, because you gave that organization the sense of confidence in itself, and a glimpse of the political dividend that was there for them by pursuing a peaceful rather than a violent path. That vista that you opened up to them by that decision enabled them, gave them the confidence to end their campaign and take a new road.

Others need to show similar courage and generosity. And I know that the United States will be willing to play the same

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crucial role in being a friend to all in Ireland, and encouraging all in Ireland to be generous risk-takers, as you have been, Mr. President, in your dealings with Ireland since the commencement of your administration.

My purpose in coming here today, on Saint Patrick's Day, is to thank you very, very much, from the bottom of my heart, for what you have done, and to look forward to working with you and your administration and, indeed, Congress on a bipartisan basis on building on this, your great achievement.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. (Applause.)

PRIME MINISTER BRUTON: Now, Mr. President, it is my high honor to present you some shamrocks to celebrate this great day. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. (Applause.)

Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister for the beautiful gift, the beautiful Irish crystal. I hope the shamrocks will bring us the luck of the Irish over the next few months. (Laughter.)

Today, we don't have to look much further than the green ties and the dresses in this room to be reminded of the bonds between the United States and Ireland: the common heritage we share and have shared since the beginning of our country's existence. Much of America's love of freedom has Irish roots, whether our ancestors were Catholics or Protestants. Four signers of the Declaration of Independence were born in Ireland. At least nine more were of Irish descent. And many of our bravest soldiers in the Revolutionary War were Irish Americans.

Today the Irish are still fighting the good fight -- the fight for peace in Lebanon and Somalia and the Balkans. Irish troops under U.N. command have braved great dangers in the quest for peace. Ireland has also opened a school to train U.N. peacekeepers from other nations so that we may all benefit from Ireland's experience.

Ireland has demonstrated its commitment to peace most powerfully, of course, in the efforts to end the violence in Northern Ireland. On this St. Patrick's Day, as the Taoiseach said, Northern Ireland is closer than at any time in a generation to a just and lasting settlement of the differences of the people who share that small country's land.

At this historic moment, I salute Prime Minister Bruton for his tireless efforts for peace and for continuing the work of his predecessor, Prime Minister Reynolds, in completing the joint framework document for Northern Ireland with the British Prime



Minister, John Major, who also deserves our salutes for the brave risks that he has taken to make peace. This is a landmark step for all the parties to bring them together and forge a new partnership for reconciliation.

Today I want to take this opportunity, this St. Patrick's Day, once again to urge all the parties to look carefully at the framework, to accept it as the basis for moving forward. I call on all those who still resort to violence to end the beatings, the intimidations, the shootings. To those who have laid down their arms, I ask you now to take the next step and begin to seriously discuss getting rid of these weapons so they can never be used again, and violence will never again return to the land.

I welcome the statement by Sinn Fein, reiterating its readiness to include the issue of weapons in the talks with the British government. It must be included, and progress must be made.

As we have in the past, the United States stands ready to help those who are taking risks for peace. Our economic initiatives in Ireland are proceeding under the supervision of former Senator George Mitchell. In May we are hosting a White House conference on trade and investment in Ireland. And there's tremendous interest in this conference from our private sector.

Mr. Prime Minister, the United States will continue to support your efforts and those of Prime Minister Major. You have done very much to bring the prospect of a new day to Northern Ireland.

I'm also pleased to announce that beginning April 1st, Irish citizens visiting the United States on vacations or business will no longer require visas. This step is another demonstration of our confidence in the future of Ireland and the strong ties between our nations.

I finally want to say that I am very much looking forward to our reception tonight at the White House. I'm glad that you, Mr. Prime Minister, and Mrs. Bruton will join us. And we're going to have a high old Irish time. (Laughter.)

In closing, let me thank the Secretary of State, and our fine Ambassador to Ireland, Jean Kennedy Smith, for the work they have done in supporting the White House and the President in our efforts to help you bring peace.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, may I ask you, first of all, how you have reacted to what appears to be the British government criticism of your decision to allow Mr. Adams to come into this

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country? And do you agree with those other Irish Americans who seem to believe that the British government and that John Major is being slow, too slow, in allowing his ministers to talk to Mr. Adams --

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me answer it in this way. First of all, I have had a good relationship during my presidency with Prime Minister Major. And the United States has had a very unique and powerful relationship with Great Britain for a very long time. We may differ from time to time about the specific actions that each would take, but our goal is the same. And I think we all have to recognize the risks that Prime Minister Major has taken for peace in the context in which he must operate.

So I look forward to having a chance to visit with him in the next couple of days about this, and I'm basically very positive about it. And if you're the President of the United States, there are days when you're grateful for implied criticism. Most of it's expressed. (Laughter.)

Q Mr. President, you were asking for people who have guns and have used them in Ireland to take the next step. How soon do you think that next step might be taken by the IRA and Sinn Fein?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I know that it couldn't come soon enough for me. And this whole business about weapons decommissioning is, obviously, critical to the completion of the process. And we here in the United States have reached out not only to Sinn Fein, but also to the unionists. The Prime Minister has pointed that out. The Vice President and my National Security Advisor have, on more than one occasion, tried to establish contacts to make sure we were reaching out to everyone in Northern Ireland.

And the important thing to me is that we keep pushing this process and keep it going in the right direction. And I have every confidence that that will occur.

Q Mr. President, President Yeltsin announced that he's willing to eliminate military hardware from his V-I parade on May 9th in order to encourage you to join others in Moscow to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. Is that enough to encourage you to go to Moscow, and will you include a trip to Ireland after that? (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I appreciate what President Yeltsin said today. And I expect to be making a decision about that whole set of issues very shortly. And when I do, I'll announce it.



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Q Is Chechnya the stumbling block?

Q What pressures can the U.S. administration bring on Sinn Fein, particularly in regards to the decommissioning of arms? And was there a quid pro quo in that area for your granting a visa to Gerry Adams to fund-raise in the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, certainly, his prompt statement about the willingness of Sinn Fein to discuss arms decommissioning had an influence on my decision. I think it's important that the United States take some steps along the way, as the Prime Minister has said, to keep this process going. When others take appropriate steps, I think it makes it a lot easier for us to do the same thing.

Thank you.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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