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Ms. Bennett

To: Secretary Gallagher

From: Michael Moloney **No. of Pages:** 7

c.c.: Political Director
Press Section

Nil

Subject: Press briefing by Jim Steinberg on Clinton's visit to Ireland Nil/8/5/2/28

1. The Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Jim Steinberg, gave a briefing today to the White House Press Corps on the meeting between the Taoiseach and President Clinton in Dublin. During the briefing Mr. Steinberg made the following points:

- Yesterday the President spoke with all the key parties in Belfast and he had the opportunity to speak directly to the people of Northern Ireland.

- Today, with the Taoiseach the President focused on the peace process and the "very important developments" of the last week - Steinberg particularly mentioned the Sinn Fein statement, the appointment of Martin McGuinness, and the forthcoming meeting of party leaders.

- Steinberg paid tribute to the role of the Irish in the peace process and made particular mention of the overwhelming support for the peace Agreement from the Irish people, saying that "we would not be where we are now were it not for the efforts of the Irish".

- He said that the two leaders in looking forward focussed on how to give momentum to progress on constitutional issues as well as issues to do with security, policing, equality, regional economic development and educational partnerships.

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- The two leaders also touched on Russia, Afghanistan and China. Steinberg also mentioned that the Taoiseach expressed his thanks for US support on Ireland's application for membership of the Conference on Disarmament, which Steinberg described as an "important development". Developing this point Steinberg said that the CD represented the "kind of leadership role that this new and dynamic Ireland can play in the world."

2. During the question and answer session that followed Steinberg's initial comments, the press concentrated on China, Iraq, the Starr inquiry, Afghanistan and India/Pakistan. The only mention of Ireland was during three short exchanges. The first was on Steinberg being asked did the Taoiseach raise any concerns about the bombings in the Sudan and Afghanistan. In reply Steinberg said that the President had told him that the two leaders did touch on the issue in their head-to-head meeting with the Taoiseach expressing his "sympathy and his understanding of what the United States faced in terms of the challenge (of terrorism)". The White House spokesman added that he was unaware of any criticism of the US action.

3. Secondly during questioning on the Starr inquiry, a reporter implied that the President may have spoken with Senator Mitchell about hiring a senior advisor to assist the President in his dealings with Starr. In reply McCurry said that the President and Senator Mitchell did have several opportunities for private discussions during the visit, but what they talked about was private although McCurry qualified this by saying he knew they had talked a lot about Ireland.

4. Finally on bring asked for the President's reaction to the news coverage of criticism of the President in the Lewinsky matter in the US when he was experiencing "adulation" in Ireland, McCurry replied "It's just a reminder of the parallel universes we live in".

5. The relevant portions of the briefing transcript are attached.

Michael Moloney
Embassy, Washington
September 4, 1998

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September 4, 1998

PRESS BRIEFING BY MIKE MCCURRY AND DEPUTY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JIM STEINBERG

3:10 P.M. (L)

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dublin, Ireland)

For Immediate Release September 4, 1998

PRESS BRIEFING BY
MIKE MCCURRY AND
DEPUTY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JIM STEINBERG

Dublin College Filing Center
Dublin, Ireland

3:10 P.M. (L)

MR. MCCURRY: Mr. Steinberg is going to give you a sense of some of the meetings the President had with the Taoiseach and some of his other conversations in and around the events today, maybe do a little preview of the afternoon speech and some of you wanted a comment to kind of bring us to the end of this journey, which he will be happy to do. And I can take other questions if you have any.

Mr. Steinberg.

MR. STEINBERG: Good afternoon and welcome to the only filing center that I've ever been in that serves Guinness, which is a positive credit to be given to those who organized this facility.

The President met this morning with the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in a meeting which was largely just the two of them meeting alone, but they came out at the end of the meeting to brief the rest of us on their discussions. And it also gave some of the members of the Cabinet and the President's staff an opportunity to talk to their counterparts.

Today was a very important continuation of the work that we did yesterday. The events of yesterday were not only an opportunity for the

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President to speak on a number of occasions to the issues that are facing Ireland and Northern Ireland in the peace process, but also a chance to engage in a lot of very direct discussions with the participants.

During the course of the day the President spent considerable time yesterday with Prime Minister Blair. We had a chance to talk to all of the key parties. There were senior officials, obviously, engaged in discussions with their counterparts about next steps forward as we look forward to the meetings next week and the efforts to get the new Assembly underway. And not surprisingly, the discussions between Prime Minister Ahern and President Clinton today were focused to an important extent on the peace process issues, and particularly, sort of how do we build on the very important developments of last week, including the statements by Sinn Fein, the appointment of Martin McGuiness to work with the decommissioning commission, and the forthcoming discussions among the party leaders to try to sustain the momentum that's been developed over the last few weeks.

I think it's important to recognize that we would not be where we are now were it not for the efforts of the Irish. Because one of the important elements of the peace agreement was the vote in the referendum here in the Irish Republic to, in effect, repeal Articles II and III of the Irish Constitution which made constitutional claims with respect to Northern Ireland. And so there is an important element of a broader Irish history and an Irish political settlement, which was brought to bear here. And the overwhelming support of the people of the Irish Republic was a critical part of moving past the conflicts of the past 30 years and into the future.

The focus between the two leaders today was precisely on how to generate momentum not only on the constitutional issues which have got a lot of focus -- the setting up of the new executive and the like -- but also moving on the full range of issues that are involved in the peace agreement, including the security situation in Northern Ireland, issues like equality, policing and the development of economic potential of the region. And the issue of the economic opportunity is very much going to be in the centerpiece of the President's speech this afternoon.

I think that in addition to a discussion of the peace process, the Taoiseach asked to hear more from the President about the situation in Russia and its impact on the broader international economic situation. They also discussed briefly the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Africa. They noted in passing that the Taoiseach is on his way to China later this month, and that they intended over lunch that they hope to have a further conversation about the situation in China.

The Taoiseach thanked the President for U.S. efforts that have supported Irish membership in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which is an important development. It really represents a different kind of approach and a spirit in the Irish Republic of greater involvement in international institutions, a greater role on the world stage, which we've seen as the President has noted in his remarks in things like greater involvement in international peacekeeping and the like, and the kind of leadership role that this new dynamic Ireland can play in the world.

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They talked briefly about the educational partnerships that we are developing with Secretary Riley and his counterparts and the new Mitchell Scholarships.

I think that we all feel after two days here that while there are very important obstacles that remain to making sure that the peace-process stays on track, that there is a growing commitment not only by the people, but also by the leaders, to try to find pragmatic ways to deal with these issues. And the President and the Taoiseach, along with Prime Minister Blair, are committed to work very intensively in the coming weeks to try to help the parties find creative ways to move the process forward.

I think the other thing that's been apparent over the last several days is that what we have seen is really the indispensability of American leadership. The President's message in Russia, the importance of his coming there at a time of great difficulty, really shows that in a time of crisis -- although there are obviously risks associated with leadership -- that it's important for the United States to be deeply involved, to try to work as best it can to try to influence the course of events that have such a profound impact not only on the people of the United States and Russia, but on the world. And here, as you've seen over the past several days, that the United States, obviously in partnership with the parties and with the leaders of the two governments, is playing our continued indispensable role in support of the peace process.

That gives us an opportunity to sustain the American leadership. And the President has been talking about that as he goes back to Congress -- the importance of having support for things like the IMF funding, which will be an important priority when he returns to the United States.

So with that, let me take your questions.

Q On another subject, do you see the delay in the Chernomyrdin vote as a positive sign that maybe there's a compromise in the works and that when they do vote he may be confirmed?

MR. STEINBERG: Well, as you know, we are not taking positions on specific individuals or who should play what role in the government. But we do think it's important for Russia to move forward and to take some steps that it needs to do to deal with this very severe economic and political crisis that it's facing right now.

I think that to the extent that the leaders, the political leaders there can come together around a sound program that will deal with Russia's economic challenges, that that's a very positive sign. But in terms of how this comes out in terms of individuals, that's something that's for the Russian people.

Q Just the fact that they've delayed the vote, does that signal a compromise that might move them towards putting a government in place?

MR. STEINBERG: I don't want to try to handicap the situation there. I mean, obviously, there have been intensive discussions. We think it's important for there to come together a consensus in Russia behind an effective program. To the extent

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