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EMBASSY OF IRELAND
2234 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

8 October 1999

FOR SEC GALLAGHER FROM AMBASSADOR
RE: President Clinton's Ottawa remarks (copy attached)

In the absence of Steinberg and Norland I spoke to Mr David Leavy, Spokesperson for the National Security Council. I said the President's remarks would undoubtedly cause waves in the Irish-American community, combining as it did the three stereotypes of religious war, fighting Irish and drunken Irish. It was very unfortunate that the salutary admonition of the President on the lack of political progress should have been expressed in those terms, since stereotyping was always unfortunate even when intended for good purposes.

I said we would be recommending to our spokespersons to say that the essence of the message was the President's impatience at the lack of progress, impatience that was especially understandable on his part given his enormous input, and the focus should be on that essential message about progress rather than on the metaphors used.

Mr Leavy accepted fully that the President's remarks would meet an adverse reaction. He promised to pass on my comments. He said their press line would be that the President intended no offence to any group but was trying to drive home his impatience to see progress.

ENDS

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10/08 12:01P (RT) Clinton says Northern Irish addicted to fighting
Story 9782 (I/CA, I/IE, I/GB, I/US, I/POL, I/DIP, I/VIO, I/NEWS)

OTTAWA, Oct 8 (Reuters) U.S. President Bill Clinton said on Friday the people of Northern Ireland are as addicted to fighting as drunks are to their drink.

"I spent an enormous amount of time trying to help the people in the land of my forebears in Northern Ireland get over 600 years of religious fights," Clinton said in a speech lauding close U.S.-Canadian ties.

"And every time they make an agreement to do it, they're like a couple of drunks walking out of the bar for the last time. When they get to the swinging door, they turn right around and go back in and say I just can't quite get there."

Clinton worked the phones from Washington in April 1998 as the now-troubled Good Friday peace accord was being negotiated, and has also visited Northern Ireland to try to advance the peace process.

The Good Friday accord aimed to set up new political institutions in the British-ruled province to end three decades of violence between the majority Protestants and pro-Irish Catholic minority.

REUTERS
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EMBASSY OF IRELAND, WASHINGTON

FAX COVER SHEET

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Date: 9 October, 1999

To: Press Section

For: Declan Kelly

From: Adrian O'Neill

c/c: Anglo-Irish; CGNY; GIS; London

Pages: 3

Declan:

I refer to our telephone conversation last night concerning the remarks made by President Clinton in Ottawa yesterday. As you are probably aware by now, the White House subsequently issued a statement - apparently read by the Press Secretary Joe Lockhart - in which the President acknowledged that the metaphor used was inappropriate and expressed his regret for any offense his earlier remarks caused.

Attached for your information is the report on the matter which appeared in today's ***Washington Post***. As you will see, it quotes the reaction of Ian Paisley, as well as the more measured response of the SDLP.
END

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