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Visit to Ireland of President Clinton

12 December 2000

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CONFIDENTIAL

8 December 2000
ad referendum

Visit to Ireland by President Clinton and Mrs Clinton
12 December 2000
DRAFT Programme

Tuesday, 12 December

07.55	Arrive Dublin Airport
	Greeted by: An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern, T.D. and Ms Celia Larkin Ms Mary Harney, T.D., Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Mr Brian Cowen, T,D., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mrs Mary Cowen Ms Liz O'Donnell, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs ~~and Mr. Michael Carson~~ H.E. Michael Sullivan, Ambassador of the United States to Ireland and Mrs Jane Sullivan H.E. Sean O hUiginn, Ambassador of Ireland to the United States and Mrs Bernadette O hUiginn Mr Earle Scarlett, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy Mrs Barbara Scarlett, US Embassy
08.10	Transfer by helicopter to Residence of the US Ambassador
08.25	Arrive Phoenix Park (Papal Cross)
08.40	Arrive US Residence
	Freshen-up Opportunity
09.45	Breakfast at US Residence with US Congressional Delegation
10.20	Depart Residence of the US Ambassador
10.25	Arrive Áras an Uachtaráin
	Courtesy Call on President McAleese
11.05	Depart Áras an Uachtaráin
	Separate Programme for Mrs Clinton (meeting with female Oireachtas members at US Ambassador residence)

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11.20	Arrive Government Buildings
	Photo Opportunity
	Meeting with An Taoiseach
12.15	Depart Government Buildings
12.25	Arrive Guinness Storehouse
	Buffet Reception hosted by An Taoiseach and Ms Larkin
12.30	Meeting with members of Oireachtas (Ground floor) (250 guests approx)
13.10	Remarks (Taoiseach) (Second Floor) (700 guests approx)
	Response (President Clinton)
	Opportunity to greet guests
13.40	Opportunity to greet guests (Fifth Floor) (900 Guests)
14.30	Depart Guinness Storehouse
	"Downtime"
16.00	Arrive Residence of US Ambassador
	Freshen-up Opportunity
17.20	Meeting with Embassy staff and families
17.50	Depart Residence of US Ambassador
18.05	Helicopters depart
18.40	Arrive Army Barracks, Dundalk
18.55	Arrive Court House Square
19.00	Public Event
	Address by Taoiseach
	Address by President Clinton

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	Possible presentation by Town of Dundalk
20.15	Opportunity to greet guests /walk through Dundalk town centre (weather permitting)
	Transfer to helicopters
20.40	Depart by helicopter to Belfast
21.10	Arrive Belfast
	Overnight

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VISIT BY PRESIDENT CLINTON, 12 DECEMBER 2000

US BACKGROUND NOTE

President Clinton

1. The visit is taking place at the end of the President's eight years in office and will almost certainly be his last trip abroad. His involvement with the peace process is something of which he is particularly proud and it has displayed clearly his strong ability to deal with conflict situations, his capacity to absorb detailed and complex information and his winning ways with even the most hesitant of interlocutors. He has made himself available at crucial moments in the process and has been willing to risk his own credibility to advance it.

2. Irish American Democrats (and indeed many Republicans) feel strongly that Clinton has finally given the Irish issue its rightful place in US politics and that he has been an effective vehicle for the political force that they represent. In doing so, he has also helped (in line with what was happening in Ireland itself) to redefine the Irish issue for Irish Americans, and Americans in general, so that it is no longer presented either simplistically or in terms of paramilitary struggle. For Irish people and the Irish issue, he has been unfailingly generous with his time and hospitality and many Irish Americans feel a deep sense of loss at his departure

3. His record on the US domestic front is generally positive. He leaves behind a strong economy with almost full employment, the longest period of sustained growth in US history, some notable reforms in education and a number of achievements in international trade (the North America Free Trade Association and, most recently, facilitating the entry of China into the WTO). On the foreign policy front the results have been mixed. The US involvement with the Balkans has worked well but there was a reluctance to get involved with East Timor. An opening to North Korea has been made. Although the Administration negotiated the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, they were unable to have it passed by the Senate. The Middle East negotiations have stumbled. The relationship with Russia has seemed to lack direction. The US has held back ultimately on international environmental issues. The US/EU relationship is generally positive with continuing differences on some trade issues and on the development of European Defense Policy. The President's involvement with Northern Ireland stands out as one of his more successful foreign undertakings.

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Congress

4. President Clinton's relations with Congress, which has had a Republican majority for the last six years, have often been fraught. His political astuteness has continually outmanoeuvred and wrongfooted them, particularly when Newt Gingrich was Speaker of the House. The zeal with which Republican Members pursued the President at the time of the Monica Lewinsky affair, in part reflected this sense of grievance. Denis Hastert, whose manner is more diffident, has proven more adept at dealing with the President. Despite earlier predictions of the Democrats probably winning the House of Representatives in the recent elections, Hastert contrived to manage affairs in such a way that, even though normally essential business was not dealt with in the weeks preceding the elections, little or no blame accrued to the Republicans. The Republicans have retained the majority in the new House (to be installed on 5 January) with the Democrats gaining one member. The numbers in the 435-member House will be 221 Republicans, 212 Democrats and 2 Independents. Practically all of Ireland's friends in the House have been returned.

5. On the Senate side the composition of the new 100-member body, will be split evenly 50-50 between Republicans and Democrats. This may change to 51 Republican, 49 Democrat if Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) becomes Vice-President. Two other Republican Senators are in poor health and if they were to leave the scene would be replaced by Democrats thus bringing the majority back to the Democrats. Ireland will have lost some friends from the present Senate, notably Connie Mack (R-FL) and Daniel Moynihan (D-NY), but will have gained others, including Mrs Clinton. The bipartisan approach to the Irish issue in both Houses of Congress remains quite secure.

New President

6. Barring some unexpected legal developments, events surrounding the Presidential election appear to be going clearly in favour of Gov George W Bush. By the time of President Clinton's visit the issue may well be resolved but, if not, the day of the visit, 12th Dec (when Florida state elctors are scheduled to be named) may prove to be a crucial date. Bush has given fairly clear indications that he will be a President who depends heavily on his advisers (in something of the Reagan fashion) and his main likely foreign policy aides, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, have shown little interest in Ireland. However, with bipartisan support in Congress , Republican members can be relied on to make their views clear to the White House. There was also a strong statement on Ireland in the Republican Platform this summer and Gov Bush wrote to the Taoiseach in early September affirming his commitment to helping with the Irish issue. An increasingly active Irish American Republican lobbying group is already organising a letter to Bush (if he is the eventual President-Elect) reminding him of his commitment.

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Patten

7. On the particular issue of the Patten recommendations, Congress has been practically unanimous in calling for their full implementation. To some extent this makes more difficult the need for adjustment if the result of the present negotiations is a package (inevitably falling short of "full" implementation) which the Government and the vast body of moderate nationalism are able to go along with. Nonetheless, the signs are that positive Congressional support will be forthcoming if the Government and the SDLP have a supportive position on the outcome. The Administration (and the President) have avoided commenting on Patten but they will have to certify that the Irish and British Governments "are committed to assisting in the full implementation of the recommendations" in the context of renewed RUC/FBI training. The Administration have indicated that they will take their cue from the reaction of Congress.

Good Friday Agreement

8. There is a fairly wide appreciation in Washington that the vast energies that the President and Congress have devoted to the Irish issue have been a forceful element in bringing about the Good Friday Agreement. This interest remains strong and, while there is a continuing willingness to engage on particular issues such as Patten and the upcoming Criminal Justice Review, Congress and the Administration can sometimes be impatient with the hiccups in the implementation of the Agreement, often expressing the view that it may be a long time again before the conjuncture of forces in Washington will prove so favourable for the Northern Ireland issue. The President's role in particular is recognised as having been crucial and his visit in many ways as a rightful inspection of the results on the ground.

Aims of the Visit

9. Apart from any possible advance in the process, the White House see the visit as providing the opportunity to establish a very public benchmark of what the Agreement has achieved to date and to give encouragement for the future. The President's presence and his engagement, both with the parties and with the public, will also allow for visible expressions of support for progress so far, thus making slippage or regression more difficult. His decision to make the trip at a period of strong pressure on his time is clear indication of his commitment and engagement. Should the visit succeed in bringing the process onto a more secure plane, that would be an added bonus.

T Russell
Embassy Washington
December 6, 2000

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