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From: PS/Secretary of State
30 July 1998

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SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES - 21-24 JULY 1998

The Secretary of State visited Washington and New York last week accompanied by Bill Jeffrey, Peter Reid and myself. She was extremely grateful to you for co-ordinating the briefing and for negotiating with officials in the two locations to produce an extremely good programme. Many thanks also to those who provided the briefing before the visit and the press updates and other information during it. All the action points have been dealt with separately.

2. The essential messages of the visit were - to underscore the progress made since the Good Friday Agreement; to point out the possible pitfalls ahead; to thank the Americans for their support; and to flag up the 10 city investment tour in the Autumn. It was a very successful visit. The Secretary of State was received with warmth and enthusiasm wherever she went and there was general agreement that the trend in Northern Ireland was positive, even after Drumcree and the deaths of the three Quinn boys.

Meeting with Irish Ambassador

3. The Secretary of State met Sean O'hUigin for about 40 minutes shortly after arrival. We were in full strength together with the Ambassador, Mr Cary and Dr Smith. Mr O'hUigin was in reasonably upbeat mood, congratulated the Secretary of State on the achievements to date since the Good Friday Agreement and said that the history of Northern Ireland would be seen from 1921-1998 and from 1998 to the future, such was the enormity of the GFA. He mentioned the equality agenda as crucial and intimated some irritation that more could be done on this. He mentioned Martin Galvin, who had been reported as saying that he was going to start fundraising for the dissident

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Republic groups and said we should not elevate him as he was essentially marginalised in New York. He was not against bolstering Trimble's position to an extent, but drew the line at any suggestion at bolstering the Orange Order.

4. Taking their cue from a sudden thunderstorm, the Secretary of State and Mr O'hUiginn took to a more sheltered part of the terrace for a tête-à-tête. Afterwards she reported that this was the most optimistic she had seen Mr O'hUiginn in a long time. He had said that the Good Friday Agreement had changed the picture and, while he acknowledged that there were difficult times ahead, he urged her again not to bend to Unionism and not to move away from the Agreement. He said that Sinn Fein were having a tough time and urged the Secretary of State not to push them too far, particularly on issues which were supportive of the Unionists' position and against Sinn Fein. He explained that he was keen to make sure the equality agenda was not diminished because this was how they had sold the Agreement to Sinn Fein. The Secretary of State said to him that the Government needed an interlocutor or at least strong words from Sinn Fein. Mr O'hUiginn said that the process was a steep learning curve for Sinn Fein but they were getting there. Decommissioning was extremely difficult for them.

5. The Secretary of State reiterated to him the catch 22 situation, where the Government wanted to move on demilitarisation but found its hands tied by the activities of the dissident Republican groups. Yet she knew that if there was no movement on the ground, people would become disillusioned and wonder what the benefits of the Good Friday Agreement were. Mr O'hUiginn was well informed about events in Northern Ireland, eg the approach to Chris McGimpsey to join the Prisoners' Body and internal NIO staff moves.

Dinner with Senator Connie Mack

6. The Secretary of State, Ambassador, Mr Jeffrey and myself had a very pleasant dinner with Senator Connie Mack (Republican - Florida) at the residence on the first night of the visit. It was a friendly and useful occasion. Senator Mack had visited Northern Ireland for three days some time ago and had some knowledge of the situation.

He was particularly complementary about Monica McWilliams and Pearl Sagar of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, whom he had met recently. All the major issues were covered in the course of the conversation - the transition to the new Assembly, the involvement of Dr Paisley and others, the security situation and the dissident Republican groups, inward investment, the forthcoming visit by the President, as well as a range of American domestic issues and party political comparisons with GB. Senator Mack mentioned that he had accepted an invitation to speak at a prayer breakfast in Belfast in November and was very agreeable to the Secretary of State's suggestion that we might work up a programme for him, even for a day.

Washington - 22 July

7. The Secretary of State began the day with a live appearance on ABC's Good Morning America, followed by a televised media breakfast at the residence. The breakfast was, for me, the most successful event of the visit with the Secretary of State giving a comprehensive and convincing account of the many recent developments in Northern Ireland since her last visit and looking forward with optimism, though not down - playing the potential difficulties that lay ahead. After further interviews with CNN and BBC, the Secretary of State called Senator Robert Torricelli and Congressman Sonny Callaghan, neither of whom were available to speak.

8. The Secretary of State spoke by phone with Bruce Morrison, Chairman of the Federal Housing Federation. In that conversation, she said that we were attempting to move all the parts of the GFA forward together, including prison releases by the end of August, the new Human Rights and Equality Commissions and North/South structures. She made the point strongly that if the dissident groups got money from the US then that would potentially destabilise or could completely derail the process. Morrison said that Martin Galvin was a minor player and he (Morrison) would do all he could to make sure that money did not go to the dissidents.

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The Secretary of State also spoke to Senator Tom Hayden in Sacramento.

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9. Lord Mayhew telephoned the Secretary of State to lobby for the early release of Fisher and Wright (bearing in mind that there was a crucial vote in the House of Lords that evening). The Secretary of State resisted because of her ongoing review, and said that one of things she had learned from her predecessor was that she needed to carry out such reviews correctly and that she intended to do. It would take time.

State Department

10. While we were waiting for the meeting with Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State had a conversation with Jim Lyons. During this, they agreed that the President should ideally come to Belfast before Dublin, should turn the first sod at Springvale and that Mr Lyons would come to Belfast in early August (once he had received a feasibility study on the proposed Enterprise Growth Trust), so that he could talk to the four main banks about putting £2.5 million each into the Trust which would be used to encourage the growth of small businesses.

11. The meeting with Mr Pickering, later joined by Mrs Albright, gave another opportunity to chart the way ahead - Adams and McGuinness were trying, Paisley was not interested in sustaining the Assembly or the Process, better words were needed from Sinn Fein, including an interlocutor and David Trimble needed to be supported. Mrs Albright said that the Administration was totally in support of what was happening in Northern Ireland and she saw the need to nurture the process, which was clearly evolutionary and had to be taken in a step by step manner.

Senators Kennedy and Dodd

12. Senator Kennedy congratulated the Secretary of State warmly on what had been done in recent months. However, he urged her to keep pushing the Equality and Rights Issues including the Irish language. People needed to see that things were actually happening on the ground. The Senator agreed to launch the Boston leg of the 10 City Tour, bringing in the New England Council. He was not particularly happy about the leak of his conversation with the Secretary of State. Senator Dodd joined towards the end of the meeting and said the Prime Minister had done a wonderful job in

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Northern Ireland. He too referred back to the information leak around the time of the Police Commission announcement.

Speaker Newt Gingrich

13. We had a friendly meeting with the Speaker and his assistant, Gardner Peckham, who confirmed that the IFI contribution was going through as part of the Appropriation Bill. Most of the discussion centred around the Speaker's forthcoming visit to Ireland. He thought it would be a good idea to have a photo-op with Lord Alderdice, Presiding Officer Designate of the new Assembly, but he was not particularly concerned about the level of Government representation there to meet him. He said it would be very helpful if he could have a brief on Northern Ireland before the visit. This will be provided by the Embassy.

The White House

14. The Secretary of State, the Ambassador and myself had a meeting in the White House with Mrs Clinton, Larry Butler, Melanne Vermeer and Theresa Loar, mainly about the Vital Voices conference. The two principals then left to have a swim and we remained to discuss the conference further. It was agreed that the conference should take place immediately before (but not overlapping with) the President's visit to Northern Ireland: Pearl Sagar of the Women's Coalition should be considered to do some follow-up project, as this was not simply an event but a process; the Secretary of State had a number of suggestions (Bea Campbell, Inez McCormick) of those who should attend the conference. [Note: this has since been comprehensively discussed in a meeting which the Secretary of State had with Mrs Loar in Belfast this week]. It was agreed that there needed to be a comprehensive media strategy for the conference, including possibly articles by Pearl Sagar and Monica McWilliams (**Ms Dodd to note please**).

House International Relations Committee

15. This was, as ever, a somewhat unusual meeting lasting about one hour and punctuated by voice messages coming through on members pagers, calling them to vote

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and giving updates on progress of business in the House. It began somewhat predictably, with Congressman Gilman congratulating the Secretary of State on the outcome of Drumcree, deprecating the fact that the fear of violence had allowed the march to go down the Lower Ormeau and mentioning the "appalling" burning of 10 Roman Catholic churches and the death of the Quinn boys. The session was punctuated by a sharp exchange with Chris Smith on abortion, firstly with the Secretary of State and then between him and some other members of the Committee when he persisted on the subject. On this, the Secretary of State said that while she personally was in favour of the 1967 Act, before she did anything in Northern Ireland she would consult the Assembly and if they did not agree then should would not take any action.

16. The tension after the abortion issue was largely dissipated by a single gesture during an exchange with Congressman Peter King. He said that there was no support at all for Sands-McKevitt, but it was important that the Executive should be in place by September and the North/South Council by October. He also referred to the continued high level of military activity in South Armagh. The Secretary of State said that recent bomb attacks, mostly foiled by the Gardai, made it necessary to have a significant army presence in South Armagh. On the other points raised, she said she hoped that the timetable would be adhered to, but the matters were really for the Assembly to deal with.

17. Senator Joe Kennedy made a strong point about triumphalist marches and said the British Government had a responsibility to protect the Roman Catholic community, suggesting that some marches should actually be suspended, as Abraham Lincoln had done. Other topics were the proposal to provide 50,000 visas over 5 years and whether [REDACTED] could get parole for the birth of his child. A full tape recording of this session is available from Mr Reid, if required.

National Security Adviser

18. The final meeting on the Hill was with Sandy Berger, Jim Steinberg and others in the White House. I was not present but I understand that the subjects discussed were the 10 City Tour (the possibility of the President dropping in or providing a

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contribution by video), the dissident republican groups (who would not be allowed into the US but could not be proscribed without better information), the need for better words or an interlocutor to match prison releases and the Clinton visit (Belfast first, Springvale, possibly Armagh, a meeting of the Assembly, but not a public rally).

New York

19. A good quality programme in New York began with a dinner hosted by HMCG with a small number of people who were potential donors to Springvale. This has been minuted separately and a follow-up meeting was held in Belfast yesterday. Much of the activity was aimed at the media, beginning with a Press breakfast at BIS, followed by an interview with Adrian Flannelly. There was an, at times, quaint meeting with the New York Times Editorial Board, which was both friendly in tone and helpful in getting a number of messages across and a lunch at a much more modern George Magazine (hosted by John F. Kennedy Jnr.). The questions here were wide-ranging and included media coverage of Northern Ireland, the effect of death threats on Secretary of State, how the job affected her health, US investment in Northern Ireland, marches, how Tony Blair has changed the Labour Party, the role of George Mitchell. There was one further meeting with the Mayor, followed by a good interview with Charlie Rose on his television chat show.

Mayor Guiliani

20. The Secretary of State met Mayor Rudi Guiliani in his office at City Hall. This was quite a coup, given that the Mayor had declined to see the President of China and other notable visitors in recent times. The Mayor said that Northern Ireland was a great example to everyone interested in conflict resolution. He recounted how that, in his time of office, he had tried to move people away from group and ethnic blame and instead tried to deal with people as individuals and citizens. The spirit of the City had been turned around, the homicide rate was now much lower and people on welfare did 20 hours of work each week to improve the quality of life for others. The Mayor agreed to make a "big thing" of the 10 City Tour when it began in New York in October. He also agreed to visit Northern Ireland before that and accepted an invitation from the

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Secretary of State to speak about his experiences in administering New York. The Secretary of State and Mayor got on extremely well together and over-ran their time. At the end, they exchanged an Apple paperweight for a House of Commons letter opener.

Conclusion

21. I think this was the best of all the US visits in which I have been privileged to play a part, in the past year. It was well balanced in terms of the actual timings, most of the media engagements were of a substantial character and we were able to see many of the top players in Washington. It helped a great deal that there was a positive story to tell in terms of the Agreement, the Referendum, the election, the setting up of the Assembly, the legislation currently going through Parliament, the Police Commission, the Criminal Justice Review, the ongoing Equality Agenda and so on. There was not a great deal of bite to criticisms about the Parades Commission or the slowness of the Equality Agenda and those we met at times reverted to individual grievances such as

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22. As ever, we were looked after very well by the Ambassador, Mr Cary and others from the Embassy and the Residence in Washington and by Mr Ling, Gerry McCrudden and P J in New York. Generally, the briefing provided by others to you was good though I think it probably needs to be shorter and punchier with key messages in the case of most subjects. Conversely, we could have done with something on the Irish language and more specific briefing in some areas, such as Springvale. The protection officers were, as ever, extremely helpful in smoothing the way. The NYPD performed a similar function but in a slightly different way!

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