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SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: IRA ROCKET ATTACK

SUMMARY

1. Strong condemnation from State Department. Loyalists warn their cease-fire all but over.

DETAIL

2. At his daily press conference, the State Department spokesman volunteered the following statement about this morning's rocket attack:

"The United States condemns in the strongest terms the attack on the Belfast Courthouse today. This attack, which we understand has injured a police officer, follows several discoveries in recent days of apparent Irish Republican Army bombs which were being prepared for terrorist attacks.

These incidents have shaken the fragile peace in Northern Ireland and the continued violence could complicate the multi-party talks which, as you know, are scheduled to resume later this month.

The United States shares the hope expressed by the British and Irish governments that these incidents will not provoke loyalist groups to end their cease-fire."

3. The White House tell us that they prepared similar guidance for President Clinton's spokesman, and thought they had planted a suitable question. In the event, there was no question, and no reply. But we have been warned to expect a more general White House statement on Northern Ireland in the next few days.

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4. Martha Pope, Mitchell's Chief of Staff (visiting), told us separately that she had taken several anxious calls from Loyalist leaders today warning that their cease-fire was all but over. She had urged them to try to hold the line, on the grounds that neither the IRA nor the DUP/UKUP deserved the comfort they would derive from seeing the clock put back two and a half years.

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