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SUBJECT: MICHAEL ANCRAM'S VISIT, 16-18 MARCH

SUMMARY

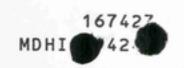
1. Administration and Congressional spokesmen confirm that Sinn Fein cannot be admitted to talks without an IRA cease-fire. (But if there were a cease-fire, US opinion would expect their early admission, eg. on 3 June.)

DETAIL

- 2. Michael Ancram visited Washington on 16 18 March for the St Patrick's Day events; had meeting with Berger, Tarnoff and, on the Hill, Senators Kennedy, Dodd and McCain and the House International Relations Committee; saw Gore at the White House reception and the Speaker's lunch; met Mitchell; conducted a wide range of press and TV interviews, and attended my lunch for Congressmen, Irish Americans and visiting Northern Ireland politicians. (There were more visitors from Northern Ireland than before: Trimble (and Taylor, Maginnis and Donaldson); Hume; Alderdice (and Bell); McCartney (and Cruise O'Brien); McWilliams (and Sagar); Curran; Ervine and (Smyth); McMichael (and White). (The DUP were not represented.) Also here was Mitchell McLaughlin of Sinn Fein, but kept out of sight: not invited to the White House, nor the Speaker's lunch, nor received in any Senate office.)
- 3. The main public events were two speeches by Gore and two by the Taioseach: none caused us any problems. Gore refused to support Kennedy's call for HMG now to declare that if the IRA restored its cease-fire, Sinn Fein would be admitted to the

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talks on 3 June. Berger confirmed that it remained the Administration's view that the cease-fire would have to be unequivocal, proved in deeds as well as words.

4. The focus in all Michael Ancram's meetings was exclusively on the peace process: no-one raised MacBride, Drumcree, McAliskey, O'Callaghan, or Bloody Sunday. Everyone the Minister saw supported the call for an immediate, unequivocal IRA cease-fire. There was no pressure to let Sinn Fein into talks without a cease-fire. But if there were a cease-fire, there would of course be pressure to admit them quickly. Our position with US Congressional and public opinion is better than for many years. But brittle.

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