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SUBJECT: GERRY ADAMS VISA

SUMMARY

1. No decision yet but Adams likely to get a visa. He will not see either Clinton or Gore. But he will be allowed to raise money.

DETAIL

2. On 13 February, Gerry Adams applied for a visa (in Dublin) to visit New York and Washington on 23 - 25 February.

3. On 18 February, Butler (NSC) told us that a final decision on the visa would await the decision (expected on 19 February) to expel Sinn Fein from the talks. They were likely to let Adams visit: a visit merely signalled that they were keeping their lines open to Sinn Fein (precisely what the British and Irish governments would be doing after the expulsion). But the NSC would restrict Adams's access: they wanted to show that any return to violence carried penalties in America. Ten days ago, Adams and his supporters had been lobbying hard, and with some expectation of success, for a meeting with the President. Now Butler saw "no circumstances under which either the President or Vice President would see Adams next week". Butler said in terms that Adams would not see Clinton or Gore, even if Sinn Fein managed to spin out the process of their expulsion until after Adams's visit to Washington. Berger was unlikely to meet Adams. Butler thought Steinberg and himself would meet him, somewhere other than the White House.

4. According to Adams's itinerary, one (small) fund-raiser was planned for Friends of Sinn Fein in New York. The NSC would allow this to go ahead.

5. Butler thought that Adams might get a sympathetic ear from Irish America in public. Sinn Fein had successfully used the last few days to transform themselves into victims. But in private the

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message would be tougher. (We are getting the same signal from the Hill: Kennedy will not see Adams if Clinton and Ahern do not). Butler sketched his own talking points: expulsion was a fair outcome; the talks had shown themselves again to be impartial; Sinn Fein should get over their disappointment and begin preparing the ground for their readmission. Was the Republican movement, united until now, splitting dangerously? Was Adams losing control?

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