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SUBJECT: SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S VISIT TO
WASHINGTON, 15-18 MARCH

SUMMARY

1. An intense and very productive two days' work by Dr Mowlam around the St Patrick's Day celebrations, at which almost all Northern Ireland party leaders were present, as well as the Taoiseach. Public praise from the President for the Prime Minister and Dr Mowlam, who had time with both Clintons.
2. The Administration are reasonably content with their meetings with the party leaders. Trimble was disappointing, but Adams seems to have played his hand astutely.
3. The Administration and corporate Irish-America are beginning to think about underpinning a settlement. The White House are focussing on a likely visit by Clinton to Ulster in May and how this fits into the end-game. We need a clear strategy soon for the post-settlement period.

DETAIL

4. Dr Mowlam had a dense two-day programme in Washington, including a very public 10-minute 'pull aside' with the President at the Speaker's St Patrick's Day lunch; half an hour with the First Lady; meetings with Berger and Steinberg, Mrs Albright, five Senators (separately), and with the House Ad Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs; a speech at my St Patrick's Day lunch (attended without incident by most NI party leaders, including Adams and 140 guests); breakfast with potential US investors/donors; and a lot of media work.
5. To all those that she spoke, Dr Mowlam stressed the Government's determination to achieve a settlement on schedule; the likelihood of further random terrorist acts intended to derail the peace

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process; and the importance of continuing US support for the process, political and economic. She also explained the issues outstanding in the talks and our approach to the so-called equality agenda.

6. The American response was almost universally encouraging, with few sour notes. At the Speaker's St Patrick's Day lunch the President paid tribute to the Prime Minister and Dr Mowlam, who was given a standing ovation. The President, Albright and Berger asked in the meetings what the US could best do to help. Clinton said privately that he stood ready to go to Ulster in May, during his UK visit for the G7 and EU/US Summits, if that would be useful. He acknowledged that there could be circumstances in which it would be more helpful to stay away. Berger said that this was a decision which could be taken nearer the time. But Hillary Clinton thought it almost inevitable that the President should go and the possibility of a visit is evidently concentrating White House minds.

7. Clinton was eloquent in his public appeals to the parties to seize the moment and make peace. In private, he warned Adams that if the IRA broke the ceasefire again, he would have burnt his bridges in Washington. Adams apparently responded reasonably and engaged in a discussion of detail, which the NSC found quite encouraging. Trimble, by contrast, disappointed. Urged by Clinton to engage with Sinn Fein, he claimed that Hume was refusing to talk to him (his theme of the visit, which Hume indignantly denied) and that Adams would not be able to control the IRA. Clinton felt personally rebuffed.

8. Dr Mowlam encountered a widespread wish to discuss ways of underpinning a settlement once it was achieved. Tentative ideas that emerged included: a cross-border economic package or "mini-Marshall" plan; a "blue-ribbon" committee of leading US businessmen to stimulate investment in Ulster; funding for education and retraining in which the America-Ireland Fund showed particular interest, subject to receiving specific proposals; US help with police reform and training in government and administration; various permutations of Congressional visit, including with the President himself in May.

9. The White House have now set up a task force to come up with ideas. This will have in-put from the Hill and corporate America. It could unlock funds, in addition to IFI money. We will stand a much better chance of this happening if we turn it into a trilateral

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post-settlement package, to which both we ourselves and Dublin contribute.

10. We also need to clear our minds urgently on general strategy for underpinning and exploiting a settlement, if the Americans are not to run away with it. Steinberg (Deputy National Security Adviser) tentatively mentioned the possibility of a White House ceremony a la Arafat/Rabin, to which Dr Mowlam did not warm. Clinton remains embattled domestically and, if there is a settlement, will seize as much of the credit as we allow him to.

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