

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

NONRECORD

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FROM:

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SUBJECT:

[UNCLASSIFIED] northern ireland

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I understand that at this morning's Senior Staff meeting there was some concern raised about the lack of credit in the press for the President and the Administration's role in Northern Ireland.

Since our office spent all day yesterday calling reporters and editors around the country, I want to update you on the coverage.

1. Let me begin by saying that there is a tendency to judge coverage simply by what is in the Washington Post and the New York Times. Using that standard, we cannot claim success in persuading journalists to include in their coverage, the role of the President (and his National Security Adviser, in particular, in encouraging the Northern Ireland peace process along.

a--The New York Times did a fairly good editorial, but failed to give us public credit (despite the fact that we arranged for Sandy Verschbow and others to background the Times Editorial Page Editor yesterday on the President's role. I do, think, however, that we MAY get some credit in the Sunday Times which is doing more behind-the-scenes analysis. (We did background John Darnton for that piece.)

b- The Washington Post was very disappointing. Having walked Tom Lippman through a detailed chronology of Clinton's role (and having others background him to support the material we provided) Lippman chose to offer this gratuitous comment in his piece:

"White House aides took the unusual step of telephoning reporters to tell them how much effort Clinton and his national security adviser had invested in the Irish issue, chronicling a dozen meetings with visiting Irish and British figures over the past year."

In terms of columnists and editorial writers at the Post, we spent a good deal of time with

MARY McGRORY yesterday and STEVE ROSENFELD. I am absolutely convinced that we will see a very positive McGrory column next week praising the President. McGrory will be talking to Nancy Soderberg for follow-up this weekend.

REGIONAL COVERAGE

If you use the nation as a better barometer of how we do than simply the Post and Times,

the result of our calling around yesterday is far more impressive. Let me give you just a sample of the coverage:

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Article: US SAYS IT HELPED IN IRA DECISION

"Since February, Clinton and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake have pressed privately for a cease-fire. Clinton has personally talked to Major 15 times in the last month about it, officials said, and Lake held talks with officials on both sides. But the groundwork for the ceasefire may have been laid in February when Clinton, in a controversial step, granted a visa for Gerry Adams...Clinton overruled the State Department in granting the visa and was criticized by the British.

After Adams sent Clinton a letter March 31, Lake answered on behalf of the President, calling for a permanent ceasefire and negotiations with the British.

(article goes on and on about role of White House in meetings, phone calls, etc.)

LOS ANGELES TIMES

(piece on WHY the ceasefire..."The attitude of a new Democratic administration in Washington is also believed to have been a factor. The Clinton Administration was both interested in playing a low-key role to nudge the talks forward and gained credibility as a mediator within the IRA by allowing senior republican figures to travel to the US. Trips by Adams earlier this year and by well-known IRA activists Joe Cahill and Pat Treanor this week are believed to have boosted the IRA resolve to go forward with the cease-fire. In each of these circumstances, Clinton reportedly personally approved the decision to grant the visa."

BOSTON GLOBE

Clinton role--quotes Jean Kennedy Smith in a call to Clinton. "I told him he made an enormous difference here. It wouldn't have happened without him." Smith said Clinton...had helped move the peace process by backing the issuance of US visas to IRA officials."

One day's work is not enough to re-inforce the message that this Administration and this President went to great lengths to nurture this peace process along. The visit by Spring tomorrow will certainly re-inforce the message. Jonathan Spalter is talking to Nancy Soderberg about other outreach events we can do.

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