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Proposed Statement by the U.S. Government
on Northern Ireland

1. In the course of a visit to Washington on 23/24 May, Mr. John Hume suggested to Senator Kennedy and Speaker O'Neill that they avail of a meeting which, together with Governor Carey and Senator Moynihan, they had arranged with Secretary of State Vance to suggest that the United States Government issue a statement on Northern Ireland. Mr. Hume proposed that the statement should reiterate the U.S. policy of non-involvement, call for an end to terrorist activity and request Americans to desist from assisting those committed to violence. He also suggested that the statement indicate the willingness of the U.S. Government to assist the economic development of Northern Ireland in any appropriate way in the event of the political leaders of the two communities agreeing on a political solution. Senator Kennedy and the other Irish-American leaders reacted favourably to this suggestion and agreed to raise the matter with Secretary Vance.

2. The Embassy in Washington was in close contact with those involved in this initiative and on instructions from the Department indicated to the Irish-American leaders that the Government would support a statement along the lines proposed. The desirability of a positive reaction by the British Government, without which the U.S. would be unwilling to proceed, was urged by the Department on the British Ambassador and by Mr. Hume on the NIO. The matter was also raised by Mr. Lillis with the Northern Ireland desk officer at the British Embassy in Washington. The British reaction, as reported from Washington, was one of support in principle, but reservations in regard to certain forms of assistance which were being proposed. The British were in particular opposed to the suggestion that a special fund might be appropriated by Congress for use in Northern Ireland. It was indicated that there would probably be no objection to a statement which encouraged industrial investment.

3. The meeting with Secretary Vance took place on 9 June. Subsequent press reports stressed that the U.S. policy of non-involvement remained unchanged and referred to the statement issued by the four politicians on 17 March. The Ambassador in Washington was officially informed of the suggested initiative by the State Department on 13 June. As requested he conveyed the Government's views on the proposal to the

State Department on the following day.

4. The Ambassador said the Government believed that a great deal of good could come from a public reiteration by the U.S. Government of its call for an end to violence, support for a negotiated settlement and the renunciation of a direct role for the United States. In regard to the reference to economic assistance in the proposed statement, the Ambassador said that such an undertaking could, if appropriately drafted, make a positive contribution to the lowering of community tension and thereby enhance the prospects for a political settlement. The Ambassador suggested a number of forms this assistance might take - investment guarantees, loan guarantees, job subsidies, statement of encouragement to U.S. companies, tax incentives - but advised that any public statement from the U.S. Administration should not be specific as to the form of assistance envisaged. He also said that while we would not object to a special Congressional fund if it was acceptable to the British Government, we thought it unlikely that they would agree to such a proposal. It was also probable that such a fund would be misinterpreted and rejected by loyalist opinion. The Ambassador stressed the importance of the timing of the statement and suggested that it should not be issued during the "marching season". (The text of the Ambassador's speaking note is attached.)

20 June 1977