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British Embassy  
Washington

BY FAX

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*Dear Sir,*

GERRY ADAMS: U.S. INFORMATION STRATEGY

1. Our telno 315 promised our more detailed thoughts on the impact of Gerry Adams's visit to the U.S. and the further steps we could take to counter it. I now attach a short paper we have prepared here. We would like to be consulted about any submission before you put it to Ministers.

*Yours truly  
Jonathan R.*

J N Powell

cc: G R Archer Esq, RID, FCO )  
Sir John Ramsden, Information Dept, FCO )  
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GERRY ADAMS: U.S. INFORMATION STRATEGY

Damage

1. We warned the U.S. Administration that if Gerry Adams were granted a visa he would receive wide and largely uncritical media exposure. When the prediction was borne out they expressed surprise and tried to limit his appearances on television. Anyone with extreme views, even a Zhirinovsky, can guarantee coverage on American television.
2. Adams played the game skillfully. He chose programmes with relatively large audiences but renowned for easy questions, notably Larry King Live and Good Morning America. Later in the visit he faced more challenging interviews on MacNeill-Lehrer (when John Alderdice appeared with him) and on Charlie Rose (briefed by BIS, New York). Adams did not appear on the network evening news shows.
3. Adams's visit was a set-back for our information effort. We have worked hard for the last twenty years to marginalise the IRA in the U.S. His mild manner and apparent reasonableness will have given him a new legitimacy with some innocents in the audience. But we should not exaggerate this impact. The American attention span is short. Television was already bored with Adams after 24 hours and moved on to other stories. His failure to say anything new meant there were no follow-up stories. Adams's double-speak turned off interviewers and audiences and his accent proved impenetrable for many Americans. His impact may well turn out to be ephemeral. Certainly it has not been followed up in the media or by increased letters or calls to our missions. There has been some coverage of the broadcasting ban.
4. Adams's visit will re-confirm hard-liners in their beliefs. But they were disappointed by his failure to offer more red meat: he was on his best behaviour at the rally of supporters and steered clear of calls for violence. His visit may help NORaid increase its fundraising capacity. We will not know for some time because the organisation is slow to file its accounts with the Justice Department. However, NORaid is not as significant as it was. Its take has been declining over the years and it has become a less significant part of overall IRA funding. Even if it betters its position slightly it is unlikely that Adams's visit will do much to sustain the IRA campaign financially. The real damage done by Adams's visit is likely to have been in Northern Ireland: it will have let the IRA out of its isolation and left Protestant extremists feeling increasingly isolated and alienated.
5. There may be a political silver lining to the visit. Both Clinton and Gore came out with forthright statements of support

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for the Joint Declaration urging Adams to end violence. The President has declared the peace envoy dead. The Administration, having burnt their fingers once, is now more aware of the complexities of Northern Ireland. Their leverage over us on the issue, which the Irish Government have tried to exploit in recent months, has fallen away. We no longer need worry so much about Irish-American attempts to interfere. Irish-Americans, like Senator Kennedy, now need Adams to end violence if they are to avoid embarrassment.

#### Response

6. We should not over-react to Adams's visit. Too hysterical a response would give the story new life. Nor should we expect to get the same sort of television coverage as Adams: moderate good sense will never have the same appeal as a banned terrorist. We need instead to return to the patient work of getting out our case on Northern Ireland and working to undermine any new legitimacy for Sinn Fein/IRA.

7. Events in Northern Ireland are likely to help us. If the IRA declare an end to violence at the end of the month we can all rejoice. If they do not, we can stress their refusal to stop killing and their isolation in rejecting the Joint Declaration. Adams's words here will look increasingly hollow. We should be in a position to call on those here who supported the visa - the Administration, Senator Kennedy, the Irish - to condemn the IRA in strong terms.

#### Practical Steps:

8. There are a number of practical steps we can take:

- The Prime Minister's visit will enjoy wide coverage. Although we do not want to give undue emphasis to Adams or Northern Ireland during the visit, the timing, immediately after the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, will put a particular focus on Sinn Fein/IRA's decision on whether or not to sign up for the Joint Declaration. The Prime Minister will appear on the Breakfast Shows and CNN. Our message will be: Deeds are more important than words; Adams talks of peace, but the IRA continue to kill and maim; Americans should press the IRA to end violence and support the Joint Declaration; we are pressing ahead with the talks process. After the visit we will be in a better position to judge if any further corrective action is necessary with the media.

- The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will visit at Easter. He too will appear on CNN and NPR, and talk to editorial boards. There may also be a speech in New York. This will provide a good opportunity to get our message across to a wide audience, both in the media and to opinion formers on the Hill.

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- Unionists: For several years now we have urged Unionist politicians to come here and get their case across, with mixed results. We are willing to make appointments for them on the Hill or to try to interest the media in interviewing them. They are unlikely to have the same appeal as Adams to the big television shows, but they will be listened to by the more important opinion formers. Dr Paisley will of course be a harder sell than the UUP politicians. If Jean Kennedy Smith wants to get involved in helping make appointments so much the better.

- Joint Visits: If Irish Ministers are prepared to agree to a joint visit with one of our Ministers we would welcome this. We should not expect enormous coverage. We can, however, arrange a number of fora with interested and informed Irish-Americans and would try for television coverage. A joint visit by Unionist and SDLP politicians, as we have advised before, would go down well if it could be arranged. The Hendron/Walker visit, however, was restricted to economic issues and the parties have shown reluctance to undertake political visits. If the two parties can be persuaded to send out a delegation to talk about the political situation we could certainly find audiences for them.

- Speaking Tours: We have asked separately for authority to bring John Alderdice back for a West Coast tour. We would also like to consider tours by John McGuckian, Ken Bloomfield and John Dunlop. You may well have other moderate, independent figures who would be prepared to talk to American audiences. There will of course need to be reasonable spacing. We cannot guarantee huge audiences for them.

- Op-Ed Articles: We have been pressing for some time for an op-ed article for the Boston Globe by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. We must get on with this straight away. We should also consider trying to place an op-ed article in the New York Times just before the Secretary of State's visit. We can look for markets for articles elsewhere as well.

- Victims: We have considered in the past whether it would be productive to help victims of terrorism visit the U.S. In the past we have agreed that it was best to keep them at arms' length for fear of appearing too goulish and undermining their impact by too close contact with us. We could however consider offering discreet assistance in media coverage etc if eg. Colin Parry wanted to come back to the U.S. or if FAIT wish to organise a tour.

- Written Briefing: We already have all we can use. Further material will have to be prepared on an ad hoc basis.

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9. We also need to consider how to deal with the more powerful new Irish-American lobby that appears to have grown up in the last few months. NORAIID continues to be isolated. But Bill Flynn, who organised the New York Conference, is a major player in American business, heading Mutual of America valued at \$6 billion. There are other rich Irish-American businessmen who think they can play a role in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. These are quite different characters than small-time lawyers like Martin Galvin of NORAIID. We need to consider how to co-opt them rather than confronting them head-on or trying to isolate them.

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