



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
GREAT GEORGE STREET,  
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Brian Fall Esq  
Private Secretary to the Secretary of  
State for Foreign and Commonwealth  
Affairs  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
LONDON SW1

AL 19/7

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*Dear Brian,*

VISIT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

As you know, plans were at an advanced stage for Mr Prior to visit the United States in April to publicise the Government's political initiative in Northern Ireland. The visit had to be postponed because of the invasion of the Falklands.

Fortunately, the steps we had taken to brief the administration and the State Department early in April on the nature and purpose of the policy set out in the Northern Ireland Bill were successfully completed before the Falklands issue arose. The other main purposes which the Embassy identified in such a visit, namely talking to the Congress and the press, are still outstanding. Mr Prior is anxious to do anything to assist in winning a wider understanding in the US of the Government's efforts in Northern Ireland, and it is also possible that such a visit might cause some members of the Congress to exert helpful influence on John Hume to commit his party to taking part in the Assembly elections.

In recent contacts with American politicians passing through London, Mr Prior has been urged strongly to make a visit in July, and Mr Prior has recently had an opportunity to discuss the matter informally with Sir Nicholas Henderson. Sir Nicholas takes the view that a visit from the afternoon of 19 July to the evening of 21 July, involving a full working day in Washington and another in New York, would be beneficial. We recognise, of course, that a new Secretary of State has only just been nominated and would probably by then not have been confirmed in office, but since as mentioned above the main target of the visit would not be the administration, Mr Prior would not have wanted to press for a meeting with Mr Schultz anyway.

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Since time is very short, arrangements for the proposed visit have had to be set in hand in this unorthodox way. I should be grateful if you would confirm as soon as possible to me and to John Coles that your Secretary of State would support this visit. Subject to that, I hope that on the the basis of this letter John Coles would then be able to ask the Prime Minister for her approval. Subsequently there would obviously need to be further discussion between our two Departments about the content of the Secretary of State's programme, the general direction of which I have outlined above.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Coles.

Yours,  
Stephen Bayliff