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TELEGRAM NUMBER 2664 DATED 7 SEPTEMBER

INFO NIO BELFAST, DUBLIN, CG NEW YORK, BIS NEW YORK.
INFO SAVING LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO, BOSTON, CHICAGO,
HOUSTON, ATLANTA.

NORTHERN IRELAND: POSSIBLE SENATE HEARING.

SUMMARY.

1. SENATOR HATCH HAS TOLD THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS (INC) THAT HE WILL HOLD A HEARING ON NORTHERN IRELAND. WE AND THE IRISH EMBASSY HAVE SOUGHT TO DISSUADE HIM. WE HAVE ALSO PROMPTED SENIOR SENATORIAL COLLEAGUES TO DO THE SAME. HATCH SEEMS TO WANT TO FIND A WAY OUT. THE IRISH HAVE INVITED HIM TO VISIT DUBLIN. I SHALL SEE HIM NEXT WEEK. IF HE BITES ON THE IRISH INVITATION, I SHOULD LIKE TO INVITE HIM TO BELFAST.

DETAIL.

2. TWO MEMBERS OF MY STAFF CALLED ON SENATOR ORRIN HATCH (REPUBLICAN-UTAH) YESTERDAY. HATCH EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD GIVEN A COMMITMENT TO THE IRISH NATIONAL CAUCUS TO HOLD A HEARING ON NORTHERN IRELAND. THIS WOULD BE IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSTITUTION SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE AND WOULD PROBABLY TAKE THE FORM OF A HEARING ON COMPARATIVE POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN THE US AND NORTHERN IRELAND. HATCH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE KNEW VERY LITTLE ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND WHEN HE GAVE THE COMMITMENT. HE BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THERE IS A CASE FOR SOME ASPECTS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION TO BE AIRED. AT THE SAME TIME HE WOULD ENSURE THAT HEARINGS WERE BALANCED. HE ASSURED US OF THE STRENGTH OF HIS VIEWS ON TERRORISM.

3. WE (AND THE IRISH EMBASSY, WHO ALSO MET THE SENATOR YESTERDAY) ARGUED THAT A HEARING WOULD SERVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE, WOULD BE REGARDED AS PROVOCATIVE IN THE UK AND THE REPUBLIC AND MIGHT COMPLICATE THE TASK OF THOSE DIRECTLY CONCERNED. HATCH TOOK THESE POINTS BUT STRESSED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO GO BACK ON HIS COMMITMENT TO THE INC. HE SEEMED TO BE LOOKING FOR AN HONOURABLE ALTERNATIVE. THE IRISH EMBASSY PROPOSED THAT HE SHOULD VISIT IRELAND INSTEAD. HATCH SEEMED INTERESTED.

4. WE HAVE ALERTED THE STAFFS OF SENATORS BAKER (SENATE MAJORITY LEADER), LUGAR (CHAIRMAN, EUROPE SUB-COMMITTEE, FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE), KENNEDY AND BIDEN (THE LAST 2 MUCH INVOLVED IN IRISH-AMERICAN ISSUES AND MINORITY MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE). THEY HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO BRIEF THEIR PRINCIPALS TO ADVISE HATCH TO DROP HIS PROPOSAL. SENATOR BAKER'S STAFF WERE

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REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT THEY COULD KILL THE IDEA. WE HAVE ALSO BRIEFED THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL STAFF. THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARE AWARE OF HATCH'S PROPOSAL.

5. THE ACTION TAKEN SO FAR HAS SERVED TO SOW DOUBTS IN HATCH'S MIND. ADVICE FROM HIS COLLEAGUES MAY FURTHER THAT PROCESS. HATCH IS BASICALLY WELL-INTENTIONED TOWARDS US BUT IS, HOWEVER, SOMETHING OF AN ACTIVIST AND A MAVERICK. AN ADDITIONAL ASPECT TO THE PROBLEM IS THAT ONE OF THE INC OFFICIALS WHO APPROACHED HIM CLAIMED TO BE A MORMON LIKE THE SENATOR HIMSELF. THAT LAYER OF PERSONAL COMMITMENT NEEDS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. IN ORDER TO REINFORCE OUR CONCERN I AM ARRANGING TO CALL ON HATCH MYSELF NEXT WEEK. IF HE SEEMS INTERESTED IN TAKING UP THE INVITATION TO VISIT THE REPUBLIC, I THINK IT WOULD BE RIGHT TO SUGGEST A VISIT TO BELFAST. I HAVE ALSO ASKED OUR CONSUL-GENERAL IN LOS ANGELES, WHO COVERS UTAH, TO BRIEF LOCAL CONTACTS IN SUITABLE TERMS.

6. OUR AIM IN ALL THIS IS, IF POSSIBLE, TO AVOID A HEARING ALTOGETHER. BUT AT THE VERY LEAST WE AND THE IRISH EMBASSY HOPE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO STAY THE SENATOR'S HAND UNTIL AFTER NOVEMBER (THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HERE AND THE ANGLO-IRISH SUMMIT). BETWEEN NOW AND THEN CONGRESSIONAL ACTION OF THIS KIND ON NORTHERN IRELAND COULD HAVE DAMAGING REPERCUSSIONS. EVEN IF HATCH HIMSELF WOULD PREFER TO TAKE A LOW PROFILE, THAT WILL NOT BE THE OBJECTIVE OF THE INC AND THE OTHER EXTREMISTS.

7. WHEN I SEE HATCH NEXT WEEK, I SHOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY SOMETHING, AT IN GENERAL TERMS, ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS FOLLOWING THE PRIME MINISTERS MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH ON 3 SEPTEMBER AND ABOUT THE PREPARATIONS FOR THEIR MEETING IN NOVEMBER. THE IRISH EMBASSY ARE MAKING MUCH USE ON THE HILL OF SUCH PHRASES AS 'THE CURRENT MOMENTUM IN ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS' AND 'PROCESSES ALREADY UNDERWAY'. WE NEED A LINE OF OUR OWN WHICH ELABORATES ON THE APPROACH IN MR PRIOR'S SPEECH IN THE HOUSE ON 2 JULY.

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