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 TO IMMEDIATE FCO
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*What do you think?**CIP*

NY TELNO 3710 (NOT TO ALL): PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH
 THE PRESIDENT, 22 DECEMBER : NORTHERN IRELAND

1. CONGRESSMAN BIAGGI IS SEEKING SIGNATURES FROM COLLEAGUES TO
 A DRAFT LETTER PRESSING THE PRESIDENT TO INCLUDE NORTHERN IRELAND
 IN THE AGENDA FOR HIS MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF 22 DECEMBER.

2. THE LETTER REFERS TO THE QUOTE LARGELY UNSUCCESSFUL MEETING
 UNQUOTE BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND DR FITZGERALD AND REFERS
 TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S QUOTE REFUSAL UNQUOTE TO CONSIDER ANY
 OF THE FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS. IT ASKS THE PRESIDENT TO ENCOURAGE
 THE PRIME MINISTER TO RECONSIDER THE BRITISH POSITION. WHILE
 RECOGNISING THE NEED FOR THE UNITED STATES NOT TO APPEAR TO
 ADVOCATE OR IMPOSE PARTICULAR SOLUTIONS, THE LETTER SAYS THAT
 QUOTE WE CAN PLAY A POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE UNQUOTE.
 IT CONCLUDES BY URGING QUOTE SOME QUIET DIPLOMACY UNQUOTE
 WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND REFERS TO THE NEED QUOTE TO HAVE ALL
 FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND CEASE UNQUOTE.

3. ON PAST FORM, BIAGGI WOULD GET 10-20 CO-SIGNATURES. BUT ON
 THIS OCCASION HE COULD CONCEIVABLY GET MORE, GIVEN THAT HE HAS
 USED, BY HIS STANDARDS, TEMPERATE LANGUAGE.

4. WE HAVE ALERTED THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHO IMMEDIATELY TOOK
 THE POINT THAT, IF THE PRESIDENT WERE TO RAISE NORTHERN IRELAND
 AT CAMP DAVID, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT NOT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION
 THAT HE HAD DONE SO BECAUSE OF PRESSURE FROM BIAGGI OR OTHER
 EXTREMISTS. THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S SUGGESTION IS THAT, THOUGH
 BOTH SIDES WOULD SUBSEQUENTLY REFER IN PUBLIC TO THE PRINCIPAL
 SUBJECTS DISCUSSED (EAST/WEST, INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY, MIDDLE EAST
 ETC), THEY MIGHT DECLINE TO SAY WHETHER NORTHERN IRELAND HAD BEEN
 RAISED. IF IT WERE NEVERTHELESS TO LEAK OUT THAT THE PRESIDENT
 HAD RAISED NORTHERN IRELAND, THE US SIDE WOULD FIND A WAY OF
 MAKING CLEAR THAT THIS WAS IN NO WAY BECAUSE OF BIAGGI'S LETTER.

COMMENT

5. BIAGGI HAS GIVEN A DEADLINE OF 14 DECEMBER FOR CO-SIGNATURES,
 SO HIS LETTER WILL NOT BE RELEASED UNTIL THEN. WHEN IT IS, HE
 IS LIKELY TO SEEK THE MAXIMUM PUBLICITY. IN THE PAST HIS
 ACTIVITIES HAVE MADE LITTLE IMPACT HERE, EXCEPT IN THE IRISH
 ETHNIC PRESS. BUT THERE HAS USUALLY BEEN COVERAGE IN THE IRISH
 AND NORTHERN IRELAND PRESS.

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6. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT BIAGGI HAS URGED THE PRESIDENT TO RAISE NORTHERN IRELAND AT MEETINGS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. HE DID SO BEFORE WILLIAMSBURG IN 1983. THE DIFFERENCE THIS TIME IS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ALREADY, INDEPENDENTLY, DECIDED TO BRIEF THE PRESIDENT TO RAISE THE SUBJECT. WE THEREFORE DOUBT WHETHER IT WOULD BE SAFE TO RELY ON THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSED WAY OF HANDLING PRESS ENQUIRIES LASTING THE COURSE. THE US SIDE MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO AVOID GIVING A DIRECT ANSWER TO THE DIRECT QUESTIONS THEY CAN EXPECT TO RECEIVE FROM BIAGGI OR OTHERS.

7. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, AND ASSUMING -AS WE DO - THAT OUR SEEKING ACTIVELY TO AVOID THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND BEING RAISED AT CAMP DAVID, WOULD HAVE MORE CHANCES OF MAKING THE SITUATION WORSE THAN OF SUCCEEDING, AN ALTERNATIVE WAY OF HANDLING PRESS QUESTIONS WOULD BE FOR BOTH SIDES TO CONFIRM THAT THE SUBJECT WAS DISCUSSED AND TO SAY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER, HAD WISHED TO BRIEF THE PRESIDENT ON HER RECENT MEETING WITH DR FITZGERLAND. WE COULD RECALL THAT NORTHERN IRELAND AND TERRORISM HAD ALSO BEEN TOUCHED ON DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S BILATERAL MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT BEFORE THE LONDON ECONOMIC SUMMIT.

8. IF QUESTIONED BETWEEN NOW AND 22 DECEMBER, WE ASSUME BOTH SIDES WILL DECLINE TO SAY WHICH INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS WILL BE DISCUSSED AT CAMP DAVID: THAT CERTAINLY IS THE US INTENTION. THEY AND WE COULD ADD THAT THERE WILL BE NO FIXED AGENDA FOR AN INFORMAL MEETING OF THIS KIND. BUT THERE WOULD OF COURSE BE NO OBJECTION IN US TERMS IF OUR SIDE WERE TO INDICATE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER INTENDS TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT TERRORISM, AND ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND.

9. WE COULD, IF YOU WISH, LEAVE MATTERS AS THEY NOW STAND (PARA 4 ABOVE). BUT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF YOU COULD LET US KNOW (A) WHETHER YOU WOULD LIKE US TO EXPLORE WITH STATE DEPARTMENT AND NSC THE ALTERNATIVE APPROACH, DISCUSSED IN PARA 7 ABOVE, AND (B) WHETHER YOU WOULD WISH US ALSO TO SUGGEST THAT IT BE BROUGHT FORWARD, TO PRE-EMPT BIAGGI, AS IN PARA 8 ABOVE.

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