

Mowlam; William T. McCarter, chairman, International Fund for Ireland; Lord Trevor Smith, vice chancellor, University of Ulster; Professor Patrick Murphy, chairman, Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education; Deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Assembly Seamus Mallon; Northern Ireland Assembly members David Ervine and Joseph Hendron; Sinn Fein leader and Northern Ireland Assembly member Gerry Adams; former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; musician Van Morrison; and poet Seamus Heaney.

Remarks to Victims of the Bombing in Omagh, Northern Ireland

September 3, 1998

Thank you very much. Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Blair, Secretary Mowlam, Ambassador Lader, Senator Mitchell; to the people of Omagh. Hillary and I are honored to be in your presence. We come to tell you that a long way away the American people have mourned the loss of 28 innocents and all those who were injured. For those victims and family members who have come here today to say a word to us, we thank you for your presence.

To all of you, we thank you for standing up in the face of such a soul-searing loss and restating your determination to walk the road of peace.

We came here, knowing, as the Prime Minister said, that words are not very good at a time like this, simply to express our sympathy with the good people of this community, especially with the victims and their families, and again to support your determined refusal to let a cowardly crime rob you of the future you have chosen.

What has happened here on August the 15th was so incredibly unreasonable, so shocking to the conscience of every decent person in this land, that it has perversely had exactly the reverse impact that the people who perpetrated this act intended. By killing Catholics and Protestants, young and old, men, women, and children, even those about to be born, people from Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, and abroad—by doing all that in an aftermath of what the people have voted for in Northern Ireland, it galvanized,

strengthened, and humanized the impulse to peace.

Even more than when we were here 3 years ago, people are saying to me: “It’s high time that the few stop ruining the lives of the many; high time that those who hate stop bullying those who hope; high time to stop the lilt of laughter and language being drowned out by bombs and guns and sirens; high time to stop yesterday’s nightmares from killing tomorrow’s dreams.”

All I wanted to say today is that nothing any of us can say will erase the pain that those of you who have experienced loss know now. Just a few days ago, we had to—Hillary and I did—go to the airport to meet the plane bringing home the bodies of the Americans who were killed in the Embassy bombing in Africa, and to go from table to table to meet their families. There is no word to explain a mindless act of terror that grabs the life of an innocent. But I think the only way to truly redeem such a terrible loss is to make the memories of the innocents monuments to peace. We cannot brook a descent into terror. Northern Ireland is walking away from it. Life will never be the same here, but it will go on.

Since the bombing, one of the victims, Nicola Emory, has given birth to a healthy baby. I pray that baby will never know an act of terror and will live a long, full life in the 21st century, proud of a hometown that learned through tragedy the meaning of community.

I’d like to close my remarks by reading to you from a letter that our Ambassador in Dublin received from a young man named Michael Gallagher from County Mayo after this happened. He wrote to the American Ambassador: “You don’t know me. You may not even get this letter. But after yesterday’s tragedy I just wanted to do something. I am 29 years old, an Irishman to the very core of my being. But throughout my life there has never been peace on this island. I never realized how precious peace could be until my wife, Martina, gave birth to our daughter, Ashleen, 20 months ago. We don’t want her to grow up in a society that is constantly waiting for the next atrocity, the next bunch of young lives snuffed out in a sea of hatred and fear. Ashleen’s name means ‘vision’ or

'dream,' and we have a dream of what Ireland might be like when she grows up. It could be a place where dreams come true, where people would achieve things never imagined before, where people would not be afraid of their neighbors. Hopefully, this can happen. But after yesterday, one has to wonder. We know America has done much for Ireland, all we ask is that you keep trying, even when times are hard. Please keep Ireland in mind because Ashleen and all Irish children need to be able to dream."

So we came here today to say we grieve for your loss, but to pledge to that little Ashleen in Mayo, and Nicola's newborn here in Omagh that we will work to build this peace, to make it a place where children can dream, to redeem the lost innocence from the madness of people who must fail so that your life can go on.

Thank you for letting us come here, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:05 p.m. at the Leisure Center. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and his wife, Cherie; United Kingdom Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Marjorie Mowlam; Philip Lader, U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process

September 3, 1998

Yesterday's announcement that Martin McGuinness will oversee decommissioning issues for Sinn Fein is an important step. I welcome it as the kind of action essential not only to fulfill the Good Friday commitments, but to deepen public confidence in the overall process of making peace a reality in Northern Ireland.

Statement on the Crash of Swissair Flight 111

September 3, 1998

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the fatal crash of Swissair Flight 111

off Halifax, Nova Scotia, last night. We join the American people in extending our deepest sympathies to the families of the passengers and crewmembers aboard the aircraft.

I want to thank the Canadian Government and people for the extraordinary way in which they responded to this tragedy. Hundreds of people, including many volunteers, searched through the night. The United States will continue to do everything we can to assist the Canadian and Swiss authorities in the search for survivors and to determine the cause of the accident. Members of the National Transportation Safety Board are on the scene of the crash, and we have offered support from our Navy, the Coast Guard, and other Federal agencies.

I ask that the American people remember in their prayers the families who lost loved ones on that flight.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Iraq's Compliance With United Nations Security Council Resolutions

September 3, 1998

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1) and as part of my effort to keep the Congress fully informed, I am reporting on the status of efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This report covers the period from June 24 to the present.

Introduction

From June 24 until August 5, Iraq had provided site access to U.N. weapons inspectors, as required under UNSC resolutions and reaffirmed under the terms of the February 23 Secretary General/Tariq Aziz MOU and UNSC Resolution 1154. In June, UNSCOM inspectors presented a work plan to Iraq to delineate areas of concern and elements that Iraq needed to disclose. However, in June, UNSCOM revealed that it had found evidence of Iraqi weaponization of VX nerve agent and in July, Iraq refused to turn over