

Remarks at a Reception for Saint Patrick's Day

March 13, 2000

Thank you very much. A hundred thousand welcomes to you all. I probably am not going to try to say that in Gaelic. [Laughter] But I have learned how to pronounce *Taoiseach*. [Laughter] Welcome back to the White House. It's good to be able to welcome a friend into your home. The *Taoiseach* is a friend.

I want to thank John Reid, the Secretary of State of Northern Ireland, for being here. John, how are you? He's on his honeymoon. [Laughter] Sorry to disrupt your honeymoon, but it's for a noble cause. [Laughter] David Trimble, the honorable David Trimble, First Minister of Northern Ireland—David, thank you for coming. Honorable Mark Durkan, appreciate you being here. I want to thank all the other leaders from Northern Ireland. I want to thank the ambassadors who are here. Members of Congress, always a pleasure to welcome you to the White House.

I want to thank you all for joining us in celebrating the memory of Saint Patrick. His generosity and love of liberty shaped Ireland. Through generations of immigrants, those values have helped shape America, and we are a better country for it.

Today we also celebrate our common bonds and common purpose. From America's earliest days, our Nation has profited from the contributions of the men and women of Ireland. In fact, over two centuries ago, it was an Irish boy born in County Wexford, John Barry, who made vital contributions to America's independence and is recognized as one of the founders of the Department of Navy.

Today, Ireland is supporting the coalition against terrorism, and we're proud of your support. You've frozen the assets of terrorists. You're helping respond to terror by leading the Security Council of the United Nations.

For tens of millions of Americans, our ties with Ireland are family ties, and this number includes some very distinguished Americans. We're honored today to have with us Irish-American firefighters who served our Nation so heroically on September the 11th. They represent the best of the United States when

they displayed enormous strength and determination in the face of overwhelming tragedy. And I want to thank you all for coming. And I want to tell you what I told you before: We remember your colleagues. We will not forget your colleagues who gave their lives trying to save the lives of others. Welcome to the White House.

The people of Northern Ireland know the threat of terror. They know the value of peace. America is encouraged with the great strides that have been made in implementing the Good Friday Agreement. We see progress in the daily business of the Northern Ireland Assembly, in the new class of police recruits drawn from all communities in Northern Ireland, in the first act of decommissioning taken last fall, and in the North/South Ministerial Council, which is promoting cooperation across the border in agriculture and transportation and other areas.

The good citizens of Northern Ireland and the leaders here today have demonstrated a fierce determination: The next generation must not grow up amid The Troubles. For all communities in Northern Ireland, there's only one future, and it must be a future of peace. Peacemaking can be hard work, like planting in hard soil, and as the Irish proverb tells us, "You'll never plough a field by turning it over in your mind."

Important work remains, and the United States stands ready to do its part. As we gather here today to celebrate an old friendship and new hopes, let me open this reception with a blessing: May the Irish hills caress you; may her lakes and rivers bless you; may the luck of the Irish enfold you; may the blessings of Saint Patrick behold you.

God bless Ireland, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:14 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; and Deputy First Minister Mark Durkan, Northern Ireland Assembly.

The President's News Conference

March 13, 2002

The President. Good afternoon. Tomorrow the Senate Judiciary Committee will vote