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Week Ending Friday, March 24, 2000

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

March 17, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you, *Taoiseach*, for your words and your leadership, for the shamrocks, and the beautiful Irish crystal. Upstairs in our Residence, there is so much Irish crystal now that sometimes I have guests from other countries that ask me if I've ever been anywhere but Ireland. [*Laughter*] But I will treasure this always.

I don't suppose the saints in Heaven spend time boasting about their earthly achievements, but if they do, I imagine the other saints can bear no more bragging from Saint Patrick, for no nation has ever lived up more fully to the virtues of its patron saint than has Ireland.

Saint Patrick has been described as one of the great saints of the downtrodden and the excluded. And the legendary, large-hearted Irish people are famous for reaching out to the world's less fortunate.

Whenever the troubled places of the Earth have called out for help, the Irish have answered the call. Always among the first in economic assistance, disaster relief, peacekeeping. Indeed, in the past four decades, there has never been a day, not a single day, that Irish troops have not stood watch for peace on some distant shore.

All of you have paid a price for this, like all of Ireland. I was saddened by the recent deaths of four young Irish soldiers serving with the United Nations in Lebanon. As Ireland has committed itself to the cause of peace around the world, it is right that the world, and especially the United States, should commit ourselves to the cause of peace in Ireland.

I repeat today the promise I made in Dublin 4 years ago: America will be with you as you walk the road to peace. We are conscious that Ireland, along with the other parties to the Good Friday accord, made fundamental and principled compromises in the effort to secure a lasting peace. That agreement remains the very best hope we have ever had for achieving peace, and I still believe it will succeed.

And the model of the Good Friday accord represents not just hope for Northern Ireland but hope for so many stricken areas all across the Earth now suffering from sectarian violence. As extraordinary as Ireland's record is in exporting peace and peacekeepers to troubled areas of the Earth, nothing will compare to the gift Ireland gives the world if you can make your own peace permanent and meet the urgent need of the world for proof that a path to peace can be found.

In the sixth year of Saint Patrick's enslavement he was awakened by a mysterious voice that said: "Your hungers are rewarded. You are going home. Look, your ship is ready."

His fateful response to depart immediately and seek his destiny set in motion his vocation to study, to learn, and then return to Ireland to bring faith and peace. By the persuasive force of the spirit, he began to change the warring traditions of the Irish tribes. But his accomplishments, great as they are, remain, after all these centuries, incomplete.

And so, I say to you, *Taoiseach*, your ship is ready. In the smiling eyes of the Irish child, you have all the cause you will ever need to intensify the search for peace. I hope all the leaders and people of Ireland will follow your lead. I hope all those in Northern Ireland, especially, will heed this call. We must fulfill the pastoral mission of Saint Patrick. Nothing is more fitting on this Saint Patrick's Day.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 4:15 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Signing the Open-market Reorganization for the Betterment of International Telecommunications Act

March 17, 2000

Today I have signed into law S. 376, the "Open-market Reorganization for the Betterment of International Telecommunications Act." S. 376 amends the Communications Satellite Act of 1962 to establish a statutory framework for the privatization of the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (INTELSAT) and the International Mobile Satellite Organization (Inmarsat).

In partnership with the Congress, my Administration has worked aggressively over the last 6 years to promote the pro-competitive privatization of these intergovernmental satellite organizations. As a result of our efforts and changing commercial conditions, in 1995, Inmarsat spun off new business activities into a private United Kingdom (U.K.) corporation, ICO Global Communications Ltd., and, in 1999, Inmarsat privatized its remaining business activities as a U.K. corporation. In 1998, INTELSAT spun off five satellites into a private Netherlands corporation, New Skies Satellites, N.V. And last October, INTELSAT's 143 member governments agreed to fully privatize by early 2001.

My Administration's goal is to ensure that a privatized INTELSAT will compete fairly and fully with other international telecommunications companies, thus benefiting consumers through greater innovation, lower prices, and more service options. Fair competition requires a level playing field; INTELSAT must not retain advantages that result from its former intergovernmental status or that are unavailable to other satellite competitors, including any preferential access to orbital slots or foreign markets. But neither should INTELSAT (or the already privatized Inmarsat and New Skies) have to face barriers to the U.S. market erected by competitors who want to limit competition here. Full competition means that INTELSAT should be privatized in a way that allows it to provide the full range of telecommunications services, including value-added services to end users, as well as wholesale satellite capacity to communications providers (its current role). That means allowing INTELSAT to compete robustly against all other service providers in this rapidly growing industry.

My Administration intends to pursue INTELSAT's privatization in a manner that is compatible with this Nation's international obligations and with our interests in a competitive global international telecommunications environment. Accordingly, the United States will continue to engage the other 142 member countries of INTELSAT in cooperative multilateral negotiations to achieve these goals.

Several provisions of S. 376 could interfere with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs by directing or burdening the President's negotiations with foreign governments and international organizations. Specifically, new sections 621 and 661 of the Communications Satellite Act of 1962 purport to direct the executive branch on how to proceed in foreign negotiations, and new sections 625(c), 644(b), and 647 purport to require the executive branch to take particular positions in international organizations. The President's constitutional authority over foreign affairs necessarily entails discretion over these matters, and I will therefore construe these provisions as advisory. To avoid similar constitutional difficulties, I will construe section 602(b) as not requiring the United States to take particular positions in international organizations.

The President has the authority to conduct U.S. international trade policy and to interpret international treaty obligations, such as those arising under the World Trade Organization (WTO). In this regard and in furtherance of new section 601(c) of the Communications Satellite Act of 1962, the appropriate Federal agencies will advise the Federal Communications Commission on all matters raised by S. 376 concerning interpretation of and compliance with WTO commitments of the United States.

I appreciate the changes that the Congress made to section 3 of this bill, with respect to new section 601(b)(1)(C) of the Communications Satellite Act of 1962. These changes ensure, among other things, continued access