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MARKPRESS DUBLIN, MARCH 30, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO DELIVER A STIFF PROTEST TO LIBYA IF IT IS PROVED THAT THE ARMS SHIPMENT SEIZED BY THE IRISH NAVY ON WEDNESDAY WAS SUPPLIED BY COLONEL GADAFY, THE LIBIAN LEADER.

SINCE THE SEIZURE OF THE CYPRIOT-REGISTERED COASTER 'CLAUDIA' AND THE ARREST OF SIX MEN SAID TO BE INVOLVED IN THE GUN-RUNNING OPERATION, THE REPUBLIC'S ATTORNEY GENERAL, MR DECLAN COSTELLO, HAS FORBIDDEN ANY FURTHER OFFICIAL COMMENT ON THE MATTER. DEFENCE MINISTER MR PADDY DONEGAN DID NOT DISCLOSE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE POSSIBLE SOURCE OF THE SHIPMENT, BUT REPORTS IN DUBLIN SAY THE 'CLAUDIA'S' FIVE TONS OF ARMS AND EXPLOSIVES WERE ALMOST CERTAINLY LOADED IN TRIPOLI WHERE THE SHIP IS KNOWN TO HAVE CALLED TWO WEEKS AGO BEFORE SAILING FOR IRISH WATERS. LAST JUNE, OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CALLED FOR A TRANSLATION OF A CONTROVERSIAL SPEECH IN WHICH COL. GADAFY WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT LIBYA WAS SUPPLYING ARMS TO 'REVOLUTIONARIES' IN IRELAND.

THE ARREST OF THE 'CLAUDIA' IS SEEN IN DUBLIN AS A CLEAR INDICATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S 'NO-NONSENSE' APPROACH TO EXTREMISTS WHO SEEK THE REUNIFICATION OF IRELAND THROUGH MILITARY, RATHER THAN POLITICAL, MEANS.

THE 'IRISH INDEPENDENT', THE DUBLIN DAILY WITH THE LARGEST CIRCULATION, SAYS IN AN EDITORIAL TODAY (FRI) THAT THE DEFENCE MINISTER WAS JUSTIFIED IN CLAIMING THAT 99 PER CENT OF THE IRISH PEOPLE WOULD BE GRATIFIED AT THE ARMS CAPTURE.

THE SUCCESS OF THE OPERATION WOULD 'MAKE IT CLEAR BEFORE THE EYES OF THE WORLD THAT THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED WITH THE SECURITY SITUATION HERE AND ARE PREPARED AND DETERMINED TO DO EVERYTHING THEY CAN TO PUT AN END TO VIOLENCE.'

THE INFLUENTIAL 'IRISH TIMES' SAYS MR DONEGAN HAS JUSTIFIED THE CONFIDENCE PLACED IN HIM BY MR LIAM COSGRAVE, LEADER OF THE NATIONAL COALITION GOVERNMENT WHICH TOOK OFFICE THREE WEEKS AGO.

IT IS NOT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE, SAYS THE EDITORIAL, THAT IN PARLIAMENT MR DONEGAN SITS AS NUMBER THREE TO MR COSGRAVE AND THE DEPUTY PREMIER, MR CORISH.

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FOR FURTHER INFO PLEASE CONTACT DUBLIN 49122 OR LONDON 499-4982.

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