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File 1/16

Subject

10 DOWNING STREET

cc FERB

From the Private Secretary

26 October 1983

GRENADA : CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRIME  
MINISTER OF BARBADOS

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The Prime Minister, having heard that the Prime Minister of Barbados was trying to get in touch with her, telephoned him at five minutes past three this afternoon. Some of the conversation was not very audible owing to a bad telephone line but the main substance was as follows.

The Prime Minister said that she had made clear in the House yesterday that although we had counselled caution upon the United States we recognised that there might be different perspectives in the Caribbean and that the attitudes of the Caribbean countries would have weighed significantly with President Reagan. We had been taken by surprise by the decision to embark upon military action because there had been previous indications that there were divided opinions and that there was a substantial view in the Caribbean in favour of non-intervention, but there had been a sharp change on Monday evening and we had naturally wondered whether we had been kept in the dark.

Mr. Adams said that he had no quarrel with anything said on the Conservative side in the House on Monday. He much appreciated the views of the Prime Minister. A majority of CARICOM had always been in favour of military intervention and had begun to plan it last week. When Bishop had still been alive, there had been talks with the United States about the possibility of recovering the situation in Grenada. Last Friday morning the OECS had met in Barbados and decided to invoke their treaty. It was ironic that the clause under which they had acted had been inserted at the insistence of Bishop who was believed to have taken it from the Warsaw Pact. The OECS had then decided to invite the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Venezuela and the other CARICOM States to join in military action. But the Bahamas had been against intervention. Belize had said it would be governed by the attitude of the British Government. No serious approach had been made to Guyana because the OECS did not

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particularly want it to intervene. Trinidad had later expressed reservations. But it had never been true that a majority in CARICOM were against intervention. Contact with the United Kingdom had been made through diplomatic channels.

He regretted the difference between the United States and the United Kingdom. Barbados was caught in the middle. It had done everything to try to get agreement with HMG. It had emphasised that the role of the Governor General was crucial. Ideally, Barbados would have wanted the Governor General to invite in the OECS forces. But the Governor General had said that he could not do this because of the constraints upon him. It was against this background that he (Adams) had conveyed to us the OECS wish that we should take part in the operation. He had had no way of knowing that the United States had been less than forthcoming in its discussions with us.

The Prime Minister said that we had no criticism of Mr. Adams or other Caribbean leaders. Whatever our feelings about the American attitude, the operation was now taking place. We hoped that it would succeed and be over quickly and that democracy would restore. We wanted to avoid harm to the Alliance. That was the approach which she would take.

Mr. Adams said that he had heard that in the House on Monday the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had been asked for an assurance that the United States would not intervene. The Prime Minister explained the circumstances and said that Sir Geoffrey Howe's wording had been correct. But the situation had then changed. The United States had contacted us at 1915 hours on Monday but told us at 2300 hours that they were going ahead any way.

Mr. Adams said that Barbados had not been formally notified that the operation was going ahead until the time when Britain received this information. But because military planning had been proceeding it had been able to deduce that it was unlikely that there would be no military action. His impression was that the Americans had not wanted to say anything earlier because already too many people were privy to the plans. They took the position that they would say nothing until the last possible moment. But he had believed it likely that the Americans would have told us more than the OECS States. It had come as an enormous shock to him to discover that so little was known in London. He had full sympathy with HMG. But the effect of the Anglo/US differences on the Caribbean was awkward. Public opinion in the area fully supported the operation but public opinion tended still to be guided by Britain.

The Prime Minister said that she thought that Mr. Adams had put his finger on a missing factor. The sudden decision had come as a surprise to us. But he should understand that there were no hard feelings as far as Caribbean countries were concerned.

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The conversation ended shortly before 1530 hours.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), Janet Lewis-Jones (Lord President's Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

No copies should be made except where this is operationally essential.

A. J. COLES

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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