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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND MR. DAM
OF THE US STATE DEPARTMENT AT 0800 ON MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER 1983 AT
CHEQUERS

Present:

Prime Minister	Mr. Dam
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary	Mr. Burt
Sir Julian Bullard	Mr. Streator
Mr. Coles	

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Opening a discussion of Grenada, the Prime Minister referred to this morning's reports that mass graves have been found on Grenada. Mr. Dam said that it was known that many of the political prisoners were missing but he did not yet know whether this explained the mass graves.

The Prime Minister said that the basic question she needed to ask about Grenada was whether it was a one-off operation. Or were we witnessing a new policy which might embrace other crisis areas such as Nicaragua? Mr. Dam replied that he could not predict far into the future. But Grenada was seen as a very special situation. The United States certainly wished to limit the implications of Grenada as a precedent, not least because the Soviet Union might exploit the precedent. But there would inevitably be some static in the area. There would be statements emanating from Washington designed to make the regime in Nicaragua more uncertain. However, Grenada had been a very unusual situation. There was chaos on the island and much concern about the US students there. As the latter had returned to America it had become clear that they had considered themselves to be in danger. A bipartisan group from Congress which visited Grenada this weekend had also taken the view that there had been danger to US students.

The Prime Minister commented that it was puzzling that the American citizens had not left Grenada if they had felt themselves

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in danger. Our Deputy High Commissioner from Barbados had visited Grenada on 23 October and had obtained the impression that our own citizens were not under threat. Mr. Dam said that US consular officers who had gone in at the same time had contacted some 400 American students many of whom said that they did feel insecure. Some had been trying to leave in small boats. There was a curfew in operation and no functioning Government. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary pointed out that the curfew was being relaxed in Grenada on 24 October.

Mr. Dam said that it was the request of the OECS countries together with the Governor-General's request which had largely prompted US action. The Prime Minister observed that the Jamaican Prime Minister had recently said that he had seen no written request before 26 October. Mr. Dam replied that this was true but one had to remember that the Governor-General was in a hazardous position. The Prime Minister said that

when contacted by our Deputy High Commissioner on 23 October had not only not requested intervention but had said that if he did so his life would be in danger. Mr. Dam said that the US Government had learnt from Barbados that the Governor-General had made a request. When American forces had entered Grenada their top priority had been to rescue the Governor-General. His house had been surrounded by Cuban troops and the task of extrication had been very complicated. The US Government believed that it had a good case at international law, based on the requests made by the OECS and the Governor-General. The Prime Minister asked when the Governor-General had made his request. Mr. Dam replied that the Americans had received a general, oral request from the OECS on 21 October. They had decided that if they were going to intervene they would need a more formal request. The Premier of Dominica had arrived in Washington on the evening of 24 October and made clear that she was speaking for the OECS. The formal letters issued on 26 October were not a good idea because the Americans had already received a request. They had not been concerned about their power to act.

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The Prime Minister said that all the signals we had received had pointed to the fact that the United States was not likely to intervene. The CARICOM meeting on 23 October had ended in a decision to adopt political and economic measures. The National Security Council meeting had, we were told, ended on a very cautious note. Granted, US naval ships had been moved but we had interpreted these as purely precautionary. We could not predict American military action every time ships were moved. She had for example defended US military movements off Honduras as exercises. We ourselves had moved HMS Antrim although our own citizens had not appeared to be in danger. For all these reasons, we had told Parliament on 24 October that we did not consider that the United States was going to invade. There had then been the exchange of messages between herself and President Reagan on the evening of 24 October.

To say that all this had put us in difficulty was to put it very mildly.

Mr. Dam said that the US Government very much regretted this. He was not going to defend the lack of consultation but the Americans had been in touch with our Embassy in Washington throughout the weekend and the newspapers had been full of invasion stories. The British Government was the only government that the Americans had consulted. The affair was very closely held in the US Administration. They had a terrible problem of leaks and had been very concerned, for example, about the leaking a few months ago of American measures to protect President Nimeri. He had not been aware until today that the Governor-General had said on 24 October that if he requested intervention his own life would be threatened. Mr. Dam said that when the US consular officers had flown to Grenada their first attempt to land had been met by a group of teenagers with weapons. The plane had had to take off and then come in a second time. As the National Security Council was meeting in Washington they had received reports of the inability of US citizens to leave the island. The Prime Minister commented that in that case it was remarkable that the Governor-General had said that there was no threat.

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The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the worrying feature was that, despite our close relationship and good secure communications, we had received no indication on 24 October of the shift in American thinking. The closer co-operation was the more one relied on it. The Prime Minister said that she was the first to understand that where the lives of soldiers were at stake, one had to be very careful. But all the information had tended to support the view that America would not intervene. With regard to the airstrip on Grenada, she referred to the press release by Plessey that had pointed out that there were four other airstrips in the Caribbean which were substantially the same. She asked that a copy of this press release be forwarded to Mr. Streater.

The Prime Minister said that in the wake of the Grenada events we had decided to have an early vote in the House of Commons on Cruise missile deployments. We now faced a demand for dual key. People argued that if the Americans did not consult us over Grenada, why should they do so over the firing of missiles. Mr. Burt commented that the debate had gone very well.

The Prime Minister said that it was now more difficult for her if asked, for example, whether the United States would go into Nicaragua, to defend the Administration's actions. She would simply have to say that she did not answer for the United States. Mr. Dam said that Grenada and Nicaragua were two totally different situations.

The Prime Minister said that America's forces would probably be in Grenada for a fairly lengthy period. We had had to remain in Belize much longer than we wanted though we hoped to be out in a few months.

In answer to a question from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary about the next steps, Mr. Dam said that there was a good tradition of democracy in the area. The Governor-General was very sensible. Mr. MacIntyre was now in the island. The Americans were anxious to extricate their troops. The Marines and Rangers had already left. Five hundred military engineers had gone in to rebuild the infrastructure. The sum of three quarters of a million dollars had been allocated to the infrastructure and more aid was under consideration. It was hoped that elections would take

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place as soon as possible. The Americans would look to the Governor-General and the OECS to take the lead on future steps. The United States would not attempt to determine the date of elections or select a Government. Nor would they decide what to do with Grenadian prisoners who were a matter for the Government of Grenada. As regards the involvement of other forces in a security role, the Americans would be guided by what the Governor-General and the OECS wanted. A recent poll had shown that 91% of the people of Grenada were grateful for American intervention. He would be leaving with us documents showing the threat under which Bishop had been from people to his left. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that it was important that the American presence should not become counter-productive. It was also important that US troops should leave as soon as possible. No-one could tell what would emerge from the elections. The Governor-General was a Grenadan, not a British creation and we had taken pains not to give him advice. Ramphal was not our creation either and his efforts were important. We were not trying to elbow our way in though we were under pressure to help. The Commonwealth might be able to give help, for example in the form of aid. The Prime Minister commented that she doubted whether this was now necessary, given US aid intentions. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that another area in which we could help was in advising on the elections. Mr. Dam said that that would be very welcome. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that we could also help to train a reconstituted police force. The Prime Minister commented that we would respond sympathetically to any request but we would not push ourselves forward. Could Mr. Dam say what had actually happened at the prison which had contained political prisoners? There had been conflicting reports. Mr. Dam said that he did not have information on this point but he would get it together and let us know. Reverting to the elections, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary pointed out that if US military withdrawal was not rapid a political party which was anti-American could re-emerge. Mr. Dam said that it was certainly the American wish to withdraw soon.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary pointed out that at the United Nations OECS countries were regarded as part of the invasion

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force who ought now to withdraw. The more the OECS could be supplemented by countries who had not taken part in the invasion, the easier it would be to avoid trouble at the UN. We wished to avoid a vote on the Trinidad resolution because if a resolution referring to a Commonwealth presence were rejected, one option would be closed off. Another reason for quick progress was the forthcoming CHOGM meeting. If there were not more agreement before CHOGM on practical steps the conference could be dominated by the Grenada issue. The Prime Minister said that we must do everything to avoid that. We must now address the future. CHOGM should simply make it plain that help was available if it was requested. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that both Mr. Ramphal and the Indian Foreign Minister were anxious to avoid a row in Delhi. As to the Indian view that no Commonwealth forces could enter the island before the Americans left, one could not have a vacuum for this would be a recipe for disorder. He also wished to refer to the problem of micro-countries. The Prime Minister said that we were reviewing this problem. The Seychelles was an important example. Mr. Dam commented that the Americans would be very interested in discussion with us of this general problem.

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The Prime Minister asked whether there was firm information about the loss of life during the intervention. Mr. Dam said that 18 Americans had been killed and 85 wounded. There had been no US civilian losses. Information on other casualties was less complete though 20 patients at the mental hospital had been killed. Figures of Cuban deaths were unknown but were perhaps in the 50-60 bracket. He would be leaving with us the text of five agreements between Grenada and communist countries as well as minutes of the Central Committee.

Turning to INF deployment, Mr. Dam said that the Americans very much appreciated British resolve. The position of the Alliance in the INF negotiations was very sound. The recent decisions of the Nuclear Planning Group in Canada had not yet received sufficient intention. As for Andropov's latest offer, the only new point had been his willingness to take Asian systems into account. There was now a question of whether, prior to the Bundestag debate, the United States should make one last move. This was being debated internally. If there was to be a further offer, it should be simple and not embrace aircraft. Mr. Burt explained that any new step would be totally compatible with the criteria already laid down. They would insist on a global equality in warheads. One possibility was that the Russians should have 90 SS20s. We could have 270 warheads, 180 to be deployed in Europe, 36 of those to be Pershings. This would be called an "illustrative proposal". The Prime Minister pointed out that if the figure was pitched too low, people would question why it was necessary to deploy at all. Recognising this danger, Mr. Burt pointed out that the figure he had suggested would be well in excess of the proposed first tranche of deployments. The initial deployment to Germany envisaged only 9 Pershings.

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Mr. Dam said that he would be grateful for British views. One consideration was whether it would be best to put our figure forward now or wait until, if the Soviet Union broke off the Geneva talks, it was ready to resume them again. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that that depended on one's objective - was this to influence public opinion now or to persuade the Russians to rejoin the talks after a rupture?

Mr. Dam replied that one aim might be to make it clear that Soviet withdrawal from the talks had no justification. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that if the proposal was tabled after a break-down, it might be argued that it should have been put forward before. We would consider the American ideas and let them have our views.

Mr. Dam said that the Administration was very opposed to the Danish request for a special meeting of Foreign Ministers. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he had been in close touch with the Danes. It was clear that the Danish Government did not welcome the outcome of the recent vote in the Danish Parliament but they had to go through the motions. The Prime Minister commented that there would be many efforts to prevent deployment. It must go ahead. Mr. Burt said that if the Danish Government received a quick negative response to their request they would be able to tell the opposition that there was no point in pressing it. Mr. Burt suggested that in considering the American ideas, we should bear in mind that the Russians might come forward with another proposal.

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Turning to the Lebanon, the Prime Minister referred to her recent exchange of messages with President Reagan. She had to say that we did not like words such as 'retaliation' and 'revenge'. It was wrong for democratic countries to adopt the tactics of those we opposed. Innocent people were liable to get hurt. She had, however, noted that in his message of 6 November the President had spoken of self-defence. We could understand the need for that. We had noted that the President would be in touch with us again. It was most important not to provoke attacks on the Multi-National Force or to escalate events in the Gulf. Mr. Dam said that he was very conscious of these concerns. The President was leaving for Japan on 8 November and Mr. Shultz would be with him. The Americans had carried out a good deal of planning with relation to possible targets. But he did not know whether there would be retaliation. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary again pointed out that that word was inadvisable. It was extremely difficult to identify individuals at the root of the recent attacks. If the response went wider than removing terrorists and appeared to be "group violence", this could be very dangerous. It was also important to avoid creating an impression that the West was set on a long term presence in the Lebanon. The Prime Minister commented that the situation had become much more complex in recent days. The Lebanon was now a cauldron. Mr. Dam said that the intelligence now pointed towards Hussain Moussawi. If he were precisely identified as the perpetrator of the attack on US marines, this would increase the pressure to do something but it would also enable the action to be pin-pointed. He repeated that the Americans were very conscious of the

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points we had made and would wish to discuss the matter with us further. Meanwhile, the collective solidarity and resolve of the MNF contributors were very important. The Prime Minister recalled the original mandate of the MNF and said that at present it did not have clear objectives.

Mr. Dam said that he would be meeting tomorrow with Mr. Fairbanks and with the US Ambassadors to the Lebanon and Israel to discuss the situation, including the state of the reconciliation talks. During the recess in these talks, President Gemayel had been authorised to try to negotiate Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanon with the US. This was precisely the wrong approach. Israel had already agreed to withdraw. The negotiating objective now was to persuade others to withdraw. Gemayel's mission was, as far as the United States were concerned, a non-starter. The Israelis might be able to put in abeyance some aspects of the Israel/Lebanon agreement. But it was just not on to say that the Americans had to get the Israelis out of the Lebanon before talking about withdrawal by others. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary commented that it might be possible to put together a package covering all aspects. Perhaps the Israel/Lebanon agreement could be left on one side (though without abrogating it) and some matching move on the Syrian side [redacted] agreed. Everything was predicated on the requirement for progress on reconciliation.

Mr. Dam said that the idea that President Gemayel could talk to the United States during the ten day recess in the Geneva talks was odd since President Reagan would be in Asia until 14 November. We had to get on with the

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business of reconciliation. Syria could not be allowed to dominate things. The Prime Minister agreed with the need to make progress with reconciliation. It was tempting for Gemayel just to keep the Multi-National Force in the Lebanon. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said we had made it clear that if the parties were not genuine about reconciliation the purpose of the MNF was called into question. On another point, there was a risk of undue identification between American, Israeli and MNF interests. An Israeli spokesman had apparently said yesterday that he was encouraged by the growing closeness of the United States and Israel. It was very important to distinguish the American and MNF position from that of Israel - or the whole Arab world would regard them as being on the side of Israel. Mr. Dam commented that the purpose of Mr. Eagleburger's recent trip to Israel was to discuss bilateral issues, some of which related to quite other parts of the world. The idea of strategic co-operation had been further discussed.

The Prime Minister said that it was necessary to reflect on the position of Syria which had now come to assume great importance in the Middle East. It was possible that our treatment of Syria over the last few years had been responsible for this development. It was worth analysing how this had developed. Assad was a formidable personality. Mr. Dam commented that Syria's willingness to use terrorism was a factor in the equation and explained the reservations of moderate Arabs. The Prime Minister observed that Israel had come into existence as a result of terrorism. We had been on the receiving end of some of it. Israel now occupied the whole of Palestine as well as the Golan Heights. She had drawn attention to the importance of Jordan during her recent visit to Washington. The factor that a Syrian-controlled PLO was now likely posed fresh dangers for Jordan.

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It was disappointing that the US Congress had rejected funding for a Jordanian rapid deployment force. Mr. Dam confirmed that this issue was dead, at least for this year. Yesterday King Hussein had publicly stated his intention to reconvene the Jordanian Parliament. This matter had been broached in confidential messages but was now public. The fat was in the fire and there would be much comment.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that closer consultation between MNF contributors was necessary to work out a clearer game plan and to arrange for the more effective co-ordination of our diplomatic influence. Mr. Dam agreed that it was necessary to think ahead. It was also necessary that the peace process should remain part of our thinking.

Turning to the Falklands, the Prime Minister said that we were disappointed that the Americans proposed to vote with Argentina in the UNGA. On Grenada, we had at least abstained. If the United States were now to supply arms to Argentina, this would put us in acute difficulty. It would be seen as having one purpose - to build up the Argentine potential to fight the United Kingdom. She would have to be vigorously critical - and the decision could have other repercussions on public opinion. There had been recent reports of a new wave of anti-Semitism in Argentina. It would be wrong if the United States agreed to certification in these circumstances. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that all these matters tended to have implications for co-operation on defence and INF. Mr. Dam said that the United States would resist any unhelpful amendments to the current UNGA resolution. But if the resolution was simply like last year's resolution, the United States would have to support it. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary pointed

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out that the text was already different from that of last year. Mr. Burt said that the Americans were in touch with us daily in Washington about this issue. As of now, the resolution was consistent with last year's. If it were radically changed, the US would reconsider the position. Nor did they intend to lobby on behalf of the existing text.

The Prime Minister said that the US supply of arms to Argentina would be infinitely more serious. Mr. Dam said that our law did not provide for certification. It had been incorporated in United States law as a human rights measure. Since there was now a democratic government in Argentina, it was a foregone conclusion that the Administration would have to certify. But they would look at the question of anti-Semitism. Certification was different from the supply of arms. The Prime Minister commented that it would be seen as a prelude. Mr. Dam said that some relationship between the United States and the Argentine military was in the long term desirable for democracy in Argentina. But the US would not rush into major arms sales - though he could not rule out Argentine attempts to buy commercially. The Prime Minister said that Argentina was short of cash. She trusted that no-one would assist her to use her limited resources to buy arms for use against us. We had been involved in putting together international loans for Argentina. But she might have to warn our commercial banks that HMG would severely disapprove if the result of fresh loans was that Argentina was enable to purchase arms. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the further certification could be distanced from the Grenada events the better. First, it

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would be necessary to be sure that Alfonsin was actually in place. It was to be noted that he had given pledges of reductions in military spending. We continued to hope that the Americans would not supply arms. But if they decided to do so, there should be very close consultation with us. We would have views on the type of weapons which could be damaging for our own interests. Mr. Dam said that there would be many stories emanating from Washington about what the Administration planned to sell. That would mean no more than that there had been talks between the military on both sides. But the reality was that there could be no sale without a decision of the Administration. The Prime Minister said that following recent events we would have to be very sure that no Administration decision had been taken. She reiterated that if arms were sold to Argentina, it would be extremely damaging. Alfonsin was even saying that he would not end hostilities formally until there were negotiations about sovereignty. Mr. Dam undertook to report the discussion of this matter to Mr. Shultz and to President Reagan.

The Prime Minister said that the Iran/Iraq situation was very worrying. The Etendards had been delivered. We must keep closely in touch. Mr. Dam said that the Americans had worked with us at the planning level on various options for keeping the Gulf open to navigation. He was not aware that there was any real differences with us on this subject. The Prime Minister observed that the US had doubtless given certain guarantees to the Gulf countries. We also had understandings with them, for example about the role of loan service personnel. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that any response to an escalation of the situation in the Gulf should be

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limited to what was necessary to keep open the Straits. Surprise action by the United States would be disastrous. The Prime Minister firmly agreed with this. She also hoped that the Americans would take into account the fact that retaliation against an Iranian group in the Lebanon would have implications for the Gulf. Mr. Dam said that retaliation was more likely to be directed against Lebanese Shia.

It was agreed that in briefing the press about the meeting both sides would emphasise that, with regard to Grenada, it was the future that was important and that it was for the legitimate authority in Grenada and for the OECS to consider the next steps. With regard to the MNF, we would emphasise that its purpose was to contribute towards reconciliation.

The meeting ended at 0935.

A. J. C.

7 November 1983

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