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cc: FCO ^{DS} Diplomatic Missions
JMT
CO
Home Office

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6 August 1980

Dear Brian

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's letter of 28 July to the Foreign and Commonwealth about armed protection for Government representatives overseas.

As you know, the Prime Minister noted at OD that the Ministry of Defence ought to be able to provide the bodyguards and she is disappointed to see that your Secretary of State does not now regard this as possible.

She has noted that the problem is over the availability of a regular supply of suitably trained personnel. She has commented that it might be possible to find funds to train a greater supply of such personnel by withdrawing some of the considerable number of military personnel who are still based with our Embassies overseas.

I am sending copies of this letter to Paul Lever (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Martin Hall (HM Treasury) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Mike Pattison

Brian Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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Prime Minister

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You expressed the view at OD, 28th July 1980

that the "bots" ought to be able to provide the "bodyguards". This is therefore rather disappointing.

Perhaps there are more ways of doing this with a smaller personal staff for our Embassy etc.

Dear Peter,

Paul 30/7

ARMED PROTECTION FOR GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES OVERSEAS

You will recall that after our OD discussion in January (3rd Meeting) about the problem of providing armed protection for Government representatives overseas, I was asked to consider whether and how your requirement could be met by the Ministry of Defence. Following a suggestion by Sir Robert Armstrong, our officials have looked at the possibility of using the Ministry of Defence Police for this task, as well as at the military options.

While the MOD Police option has theoretical attractions, it has been shown clearly not to be practicable, since we could not guarantee a regular supply of suitably trained personnel.

I have therefore looked again very carefully at the possibility of providing Royal Military Police for this task. The difficulty is that the men concerned are highly trained in a wide range of military skills and using them as bodyguards in this way would give them a very limited police-type role, cut off from their normal chain of command. Moreover, the RMP is a small corps, already under strength, and thus unable as it is to carry out many of its existing commitments. Since our last discussion in January these commitments have significantly increased because of the growing terrorist threat in Germany to personnel, barracks and married quarters. The RMP is of course also liable for contingency tasks worldwide as instanced by their recent role in Rhodesia. I appreciate your own reservations about using KMS but I do not believe it would be right to use the MOD Police or the RMP for this task.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister and to other members of OD and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Francis Pym
Francis Pym

Francis Pym

The Rt Hon The Lord Carrington KCMG MC

29 JUL 1980

