



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
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Telephone ~~01-936 7000~~ 218 2111/3

MO 5/21

28th January 1983

Dear John,

*WJ*  
Prime Minister  
W.L. - to me A.F.C. 28/1  
A.F.C. 31/1

You wrote to me on 20th January about the allegation in the Sun newspaper that a letter addressed to the Prime Minister by a serviceman on the Falkland Islands had been intercepted and returned to the sender.

The first point to make is that all concerned are aware that soldiers are perfectly entitled to write to any Member of Parliament or to the Prime Minister herself. There is no censorship imposed on any soldier's mail (unless he is undergoing a custodial sentence) and he may write to anyone he wishes.

The military authorities in Port Stanley have investigated the specific allegation. They have told us that mail leaving Port Stanley is not vetted: even if such vetting was thought to be necessary there is such a voluminous quantity of mail leaving Port Stanley daily that any check on individual letters would be impossible. As you know the writer of the letter to "The Sun" is believed to be a member of the 1 Royal Hampshire Regiment. The unit has no record of any complaint of this kind being lodged by a soldier nor of any reprimand being given to a soldier, as the article suggested. In short we can find nothing to substantiate the allegation.

*Yours ever  
NHR*

(N H R EVANS)

A J Coles Esq



RESTRICTED

Argentine  
Relations.

File



Handwritten initials and a large flourish.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

20 January 1983

"SUN" ARTICLE ON CONDITIONS FOR TROOPS IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

You kindly provided some briefing for Prime Minister's Question Time on today's article in The Sun.

BK | According to that article, a letter addressed to the Prime Minister by the Serviceman concerned was intercepted at Port Stanley and returned to the sender. I should be grateful for your comments as to the truth of this report. If the facts are as reported, it is on the face of it a little surprising that a letter to the Prime Minister was intercepted in this way.

A. J. COLES

Nick Evans, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

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"SUN"ARTICLE ON CONDITIONS FOR TROOPS IN FALKLAND ISLANDS

Line to Také

I have seen the article in this morning's Sun Newspaper. No one would pretend that the conditions in the Falklands for all our servicemen are ideal, but I can assure the House that we regard the comfort and welfare of our troops as being of great importance. Many facilities have already been provided since the ending of hostilities and the Ministry of Defence will continue to do everything possible to provide further improvements as soon as it can. My hon Friend the Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces is now in the Falkland Islands and these are just the sort of matters he will be examining.

Deal

Jim:

a letter to P.N. was interrupted  
at Port Stanley & returned to sender.

BACKGROUND NOTE

At this early stage the allegations appear to be rather exaggerated although there may be substance to a few points.

The soldier apparently belongs to a unit based in an outlying area where sanitation and washing facilities are still limited.

Natural fresh water resources are severely limited even in the Port Stanley area and fresh water is brought to the Falklands in tankers and distributed as necessary. It is therefore expensive and its use must be carefully controlled.

Since May of this year 8 consignments of eggs have been despatched to the Falklands amounting to some 3,000,000 eggs.

The floating hotel is now in position and was never intended as other than sleeping accommodation for some 950 personnel. It is misleading to suggest it has been gutted. It is fulfilling its intended function.

Fresh milk is not available. The powdered milk is the same as supplied to the Services around the world.

A mobile laundry unit has been procured and is understood to be working very efficiently.