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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
 MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
 Telephone 01-~~836 7622~~ 218 6169

14th July 1986

Tim

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*Prime Minister
 to note
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The Prime Minister may recall that in late 1982, following the Falklands conflict, the Ministry of Defence commissioned two academic studies into aspects of relations between Government and the media in wartime. The studies were undertaken by King's College, London and the Centre for Journalism Studies at University College, Cardiff. Now that final versions of both studies are available the Defence Secretary proposes to place copies in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament before the recess. The Prime Minister may, however, wish to be aware of the background before this is done.

The study by King's College, London concerned 'Unofficial commentary in the media on military aspects of the Falklands campaign 1982'. Though short, it is an important piece of work and is uncontentious. The study commissioned from University College, Cardiff on 'Relations between Governments, Armed Services and the media in times of armed conflict' runs to 250,000 words in two volumes, one on the British experience (Suez and the Falklands), the other on Vietnam, the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, and Grenada. The second volume is based entirely on published sources, but the Falklands section draws heavily on officially-sponsored interviews with those involved in the campaign, including serving and past Ministers, members of the Armed Forces and civil servants. Some of the comments and conclusions of the study are contentious. The study also contains detailed recommendations on how relations with the media could be improved in a future conflict. These are being considered and, where appropriate, acted upon by officials in parallel with follow-up work to the Beach Report on Censorship.

It was envisaged from the outset that both studies would be published by the authors. Difficulties have, however, arisen with the authors of the Cardiff study, who have been reluctant to delete from their report certain items of information which, though classified, they do not consider to be of real security sensitivity. They are particularly unhappy with our insistence

Tim Flesher Esq
 No 10 Downing Street



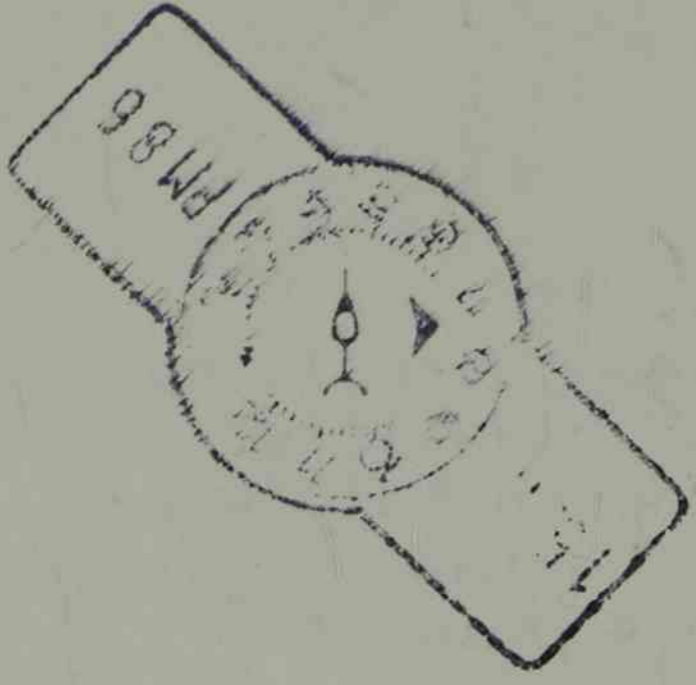
on the removal of references to Cabinet committees. In addition, one of the authors, Mr Mercer, a freelance journalist, leaked to "The Observer" in May in the existence of classified but now obsolete understandings with the BBC. Although this was a prima facie breach of the Official Secrets Act, the Law Officers decided in the event that no legal action should be taken.

Discussions are still continuing with the authors of the Cardiff study on the amendments to their proposed book, which they hope to publish late this year or early next. As to the copies of the study that we shall present to Parliament, the authors have accepted that these are entirely a matter for us, and have taken our amendments in full. Given that the study was completed a year ago and has already attracted Parliamentary interest, Mr Younger believes it important that it, together with the King's study, should be placed in the libraries as soon as possible. He will be announcing this by means of a written Parliamentary Answer and will at the same time pass a copy to the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee.

I am copying this letter to Colin Budd (FCO), Claire Pelham (Home Office) and Alison Smith (Lord Privy Seal's Office).

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "D J Woodhead". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive hand.

(D J WOODHEAD)



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16 July 1986

Thank you for your letter of 14 July about the academic studies commissioned by the Ministry of Defence into aspects of relations between Government and the media in wartime.

The Prime Minister has noted the course which your Secretary of State intends to follow on the publication of these studies.

(TIM FLESHER)

David Woodhead, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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