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From the Private Secretary

12 November 1990

THE GULF

The Prime Minister has had a letter out of the blue from a young British officer in the Gulf. It is a nice letter, one she is very pleased to have. It is generally very complimentary about the manner in which British forces have been deployed and the arrangements made for them, as well as about the morale of the forces themselves. I will be writing back to him with a simple acknowledgement.

The Prime Minister thinks the Defence Secretary may want to know that the letter mentions one or two problems which have occurred, all perfectly predictable. The author writes that: "Water has been a problem - never enough - but as the logistics have improved so has the supply of water and fuel." He goes on to say that vehicles have performed better than expected but: "one thing has become very clear. We must have all the spares we need as and when we need them. The distances we cover out here are so much longer than in Germany and if a vehicle cannot motor, it has a far more limiting effect than it would have had before." He has expressed some concern about the effect of the intense heat on the gun kit of Challenger tanks but says that no specific problems have been identified yet.

The only thing which might be interpreted as a 'moan' is the suggestion that our forces are desperately short of any world news. This may be inevitable. The Prime Minister thinks that, if there is anything which could be done, we should consider how to keep our forces informed of developments.

(C. D. POWELL)

Miss Jane Binstead,
Ministry of Defence.