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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

11 May 1982

Dear David,

BBC PANORAMA : 10 MAY

Thank you for your letter of 11 May 1982 about the remarks which Mr Tam Dalyell made about the Chiefs of Staff on last night's BBC Panorama programme on the Falklands.

I have shown the Prime Minister the draft letter which your Secretary of State is being advised to send to Mr Dalyell, and as I told Nick Evans earlier this afternoon on the telephone, she is well content with it.

Yours ever,

Mavis Whitman.

David Omand Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

AH

PERSONAL



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~938 7022~~ 218 2111/3

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11th May 1982

Dear Sir,

BBC PANORAMA: 10TH MAY

As I told you on the telephone the Chiefs of Staff saw this morning a transcript of last night's BBC Panorama programme, and the remarks of Mr Dalyell. They were naturally extremely concerned at his remarks which they regarded as an irresponsible slur on them. I attach a copy of the draft of the letter which they have in mind that my Secretary of State should send to Mr Dalyell this afternoon.

Yours sincerely
D B Omand

(D B OMAND)

C A Whitmore Esq

PERSONAL

LETTER FROM THE DEFENCE SECRETARY TO MR DALYELL MP

I have seen this morning a transcript of an interview in last night's BBC Panorama programme in which you suggested that some of the Chiefs of Staff (and you name the Chief of the Air Staff in particular) had advised against the dispatch of the Task Force to the Falkland Islands.

As you know, there is an accepted convention - and one which I think it a most undesirable precedent to breach - that neither the Chiefs of Staff nor other senior advisers comment publicly upon the advice that they may have given to the Government of the day. I am nevertheless writing to make clear to you personally that there is no truth whatever in your assertion.

I should therefore be extremely grateful if you would be good enough to make known your withdrawal of your assertion and it would be courteous if you were to give an apology to the Chiefs of Staff.

Interviewer: What concerned Mr Dalyell was the military advice about the Falklands operation the Prime Minister had received from her Chiefs of Staff in the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Mr Dalyell: Quite frankly information came from a source that I have always found impeccable in the past that some of the Chiefs of Staff, the Air Staff, have not been happy. I looked John Nott and Francis Pym straight in the eye and they were both paying attention. Every MP has to take responsibility for his own statements. I am taking responsibility for saying that some of the Chiefs of Staff advised against this whole mission to the Falkland Islands.

Interviewer: You are saying that the Chiefs of Staff, or the Chief of the Air Staff, was unhappy from the first.

Mr Dalyell: From the beginning.

Interviewer: They thought that it would not be effective?

Mr Dalyell: That there was great vulnerability.

Interviewer: You cannot expect the Secretary of State for Defence to reveal the advice from the Chiefs of Staff to the Prime Minister on a mission like this.

Mr Dalyell: I assume that it would have been denied in the strongest terms.

Film of CAS in uniform.

Interviewer: The Chief of the Air Staff is Air Chief Marshal
Sir Michael Beetham.

One of Mrs Thatcher's former Ministers with excellent
contacts in the Ministry of Defence told me that there
have been reservations from the start by the Chiefs of
Staff.

AVM Hoad: I am not party to the deliberations of the Chiefs of
Staff but of one thing I am quite certain, the British
air staff had no illusions about the toughness of the
task which confronted all three services and the advice
they were giving would have been that air power is the
key to success or failure in this particular enterprise.

11 MAY 1982

