

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

Agree reply (in attached
telegram) to
Senator Mason?

21 December 1983

Dear John,

A.S.C. 22/12

Yes m

Australia: HMS Invincible

Thank you for your letter of 12 December.

Senator Mason is the Deputy Leader of the Australian Democrat Party which has five seats only in the Australian Senate and none in the House of Representatives. The Party (and Senator Mason) has little influence in Australian politics. Any reply to Senator Mason's telegram will almost certainly be made public.

Our High Commissioner in Canberra has been instructed to tell the Australian Government that we are unable to depart from the established policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons; and to enter into private consultations with the Australian and United States Governments about the conditions attaching to visits by allied navies to Australian ports.

It would, in our view, add to the complications surrounding the RN Task Group's deployment in the Far East if we were to make public statements which served to stimulate further controversy in Australia. HMS Invincible is to visit a number of countries in the region. Continuing public discussion would increase the risk that other governments might follow Australia in placing difficulties in our way.

We recommend that our High Commissioner in Canberra be instructed to reply briefly to Senator Mason on the Prime Minister's behalf. I enclose a draft, in the form of a telegram to Canberra.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD).

Yours ever,

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

Peter Ricketts

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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Classification/Security

Precedence/Despatch

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FM FCO DECEMBER 83
TO PRIORITY CANBERRA
TELEGRAM NUMBER

YOUR TELNO 650: HMS INVINCIBLE, SENATOR MASON'S TELEGRAM TO PRIME MINISTER

1. Full text of Senator Mason's telegram as received by Prime Minister is as follows:-

BEGINS

Dear Prime Minister

On behalf of millions of Australians deeply opposed to presence of nuclear weapons on our soil, request you to order HMAS Invincible to leave Sydney and stay out pending assurances that she does not carry nuclear depth charges, freefall atom bombs or other nuclear devices. Respectfully suggest provocation of this kind could lead to sustained and effective boycott of British goods in this country.

Signed Colin Mason, Senator for New South Wales.

2. Please convey following reply from the Prime Minister to Senator Mason.

MESSAGE BEGINS:

NNNN ends telegram	BLANK	Catchword Thank
File number	Dept Private Office	Distribution SPD Defence D SEAD FED PS/Lady Young PS/Mr Whitney Mr Giffard Mr Wright Mr Cartledge DS5, MOD
Drafted by (Block capitals) PETER RICKETTS		
Telephone number		
Authorised for despatch		
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Classification and Caveats

Page

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PRIORITY

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1 ZCZC

2 Thank you for your telegram of 9 December about HMS Invincible.
3 Conditions for visits to Australian ports by RN ships are a
4 matter for the Australian Government.

5 It has been the policy of successive British Governments
6 neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at
7 any location at any particular time, and ~~I see no reason to~~ ^{we cannot}
8 change this policy in respect of Invincible.

9 MESSAGE ENDS

11 HOWE

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MB

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NNNN ends
telegram

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Catchword

21 Dec 1983

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