



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

6 September 1985

Dear Charles,

Request by New Zealand for provision of a Diving Officer to assist in investigating the sinking of the Greenpeace vessel "Rainbow Warrior"

The New Zealand High Commission have transmitted to us an official request from their government for a mine clearance diving officer to assist in investigations into the sinking of the Greenpeace vessel, the "Rainbow Warrior". He would be required to travel to New Zealand to inspect the damage to the vessel in order to establish the type of explosive used, and the method and expertise used in doing so. The New Zealand Government would meet all costs. The officer would also need to be in a position to give expert evidence at later Court hearings.

The Foreign Secretary considers that we should agree to this request and suggests that the Prime Minister should write to Mr Lange informing him of this. The Prime Minister said in the House on 11 July that if the New Zealand authorities asked for help in their investigations we would consider giving it. As the Prime Minister said on 11 July, this is a matter for the New Zealand police, since the incident occurred in New Zealand waters; and there is no statutory requirement for HMG to mount an investigation. But the ship is British-registered and owned. We do therefore have an interest in the matter and it would, indeed, be open to us to conduct an enquiry if we were not satisfied with the local investigations.

The Ministry of Defence, who have already been approached informally by the New Zealanders, tell us that they would be able to provide an officer with the necessary expertise. To guard against the risk that an officer with operational experience might be drawn further than we would wish in giving evidence in the witness box, an expert with no operational knowledge of procedures would be selected.

To agree to the New Zealand request would be in keeping with the close ties and tradition of cooperation between our armed forces, in a context where we would not be inhibited by our current need to avoid undermining the "sanctions" imposed

/by





by the Americans as a result of the ships visit episode. A helpful reply would also be a fitting gesture in response to Mr Lange's robust dismissal as "mischievous" and "absurd" of suggestions in the French press that the British Secret Service was involved in the sinking. Finally, compliance with the New Zealand request would also provide an opportunity for a message of support to Mr Lange, which our Post in Wellington has said would be well received by the New Zealand Government. We thought that the Prime Minister would wish to have the chance to consider conveying a favourable decision in a personal message to Mr Lange. - I enclose a draft.

There is also the question of publicity for our decision. Particularly since the publication of the Tricot report in France, there have been calls from MPs of all parties for HMG to take some action. These have included a call by Mr George Foulkes MP for an enquiry into allegations of British Intelligence involvement in the sinking of the ship, a demand by Mr Teddy Taylor MP for a statement pressing the French Government for an apology to New Zealand and greater cooperation with them in their investigations and a similar demand by Mr David Steep MP. Greenpeace have also written to Sir Geoffrey Howe requesting a separate UK inquiry.

Sir Geoffrey considers that in order to counter this pressure we should be ready to reveal publicly that we have met the New Zealand Government's request for an expert, soon after Mr Lange has received the Prime Minister's message. It would in any case be likely to leak quickly in New Zealand. If the Prime Minister agrees, this point could be included in Sir Geoffrey's reply to Greenpeace, which will issue next week.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD).

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

*Yours ever,*  
*Peter Ricketts*

C D Powell Esq  
 10 Downing Street



DRAFT: ~~minutes/letter/teletype/letter/despatch/note~~

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

The Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

The Rt Hon David Lange MP

Copies to:

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SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

*understand that*  
 I have been informed of your Government's *has sought* request for the services of a mine clearance diving officer to help in *these* your investigations into the sinking of the British-owned Greenpeace vessel "Rainbow Warrior". I understand that he might have to give expert evidence at later court hearings.

I am happy to agree to this request *and* have asked our defence authorities to pursue the details with yours. ~~Like you, I abhor all such acts of terrorism. I was shocked to hear of the sinking of the "Rainbow Warrior" in Auckland Harbour as a result of sabotage, both because a British ship was involved and because this took place in a country with which we have such close ties.~~ I have been *closely* following developments *over the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior and Tare, if I may say so, been impressed by* the thoroughness of the New Zealand Police's continuing *investigation.* enquiries. I am delighted that we can be of practical assistance.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

We would have no objection to our expert giving evidence in court on technical matters concerning explosives. The need to avoid any possible compromise to the operating techniques of our own forces means that the expert we provide will have no knowledge of the way in which our

Special Forces would go about their business in war and he will not, therefore, be able to answer questions on these subjects.

In view of the probability that our expert will be required to give evidence, and that his presence will become public as a result, I propose that, <sup>y</sup>provided you see no objection, we should make public the fact that we had responded favourably to this request. Perhaps your people could confirm that you are content for us to do so.

I look forward to seeing  
you at the C'HOEN in  
October.

With best wishes

Q