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cc CO

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

23 December 1982

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 16 December about the Aldridge case.

On the point in your second paragraph, in both the Prime and Aldridge cases the view was taken that the person charged with an offence should not be interrogated for the purpose of the Security Commission's investigation until criminal proceedings were complete. In Prime's case, the information available virtually all derived from Prime's confession to the police, and it would have made little sense for the Security Commission to start an investigation until there had been some interrogation of Prime. In Aldridge's case, enough information is available to enable a useful start to be made with the investigation without having to wait for further interrogation of Aldridge.

I am accordingly proceeding with the reference of the Aldridge case to the Security Commission; but, as I told you in my earlier letter, I shall not announce the reference until the criminal proceedings are complete.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Rt. Hon. Michael Foot, M.P.

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Security  
2.6 AH

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

SECURITY COMMISSION : MISS RHONA RITCHIE  
AND LANCE CORPORAL ALDRIDGE

Thank you for your minute of 21 December  
(A082/0607).

The Prime Minister has signed letters to  
Lord Bridge and Mr Foot in the terms  
which you suggested, and I attach copies  
of them.

F.R.B

23 December 1982

AIA

Ref. A082/0607

MR BUTLER

Prime Minister  
Two letters attached for  
Signature, please.

FERS

22.12.

Security Commission: Miss Rhona Ritchie and  
Lance Corporal Aldridge

--- The Prime Minister wrote to the Leader of the Opposition on  
15th December proposing that the Aldridge case should be referred  
to the Security Commission and Mr Foot replied on 16th December  
agreeing to the reference.

2. The way is now clear for the Prime Minister formally to  
refer both the Ritchie case (as has already been announced to  
Parliament) and the Aldridge case to the Commission. A draft letter  
for the Prime Minister to send to Lord Bridge for this purpose  
--- is attached.

--- 3. In his letter of 16th December Mr Foot also asked for an  
explanation of why it is possible to refer the Aldridge case to  
the Security Commission before criminal proceedings are completed  
--- when it was not possible to do so in the Prime case. I attach  
a self-explanatory draft of a letter which the Prime Minister might  
send in reply.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

21st December 1982

DRAFT LETTER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO

The Rt Hon the Lord Bridge of Harwich  
House of Lords  
LONDON  
SW1A OPW

SECURITY COMMISSION: MISS RHONA RITCHIE AND LANCE CORPORAL  
ALDRIDGE

In the light of your advice and after consulting the Leader of the Opposition, I have decided, in accordance with the arrangements announced in 1969, formally to ask the Security Commission to investigate and report upon the cases of Rhona Jane Ritchie and Lance Corporal P L Aldridge. The terms of reference are:

"To investigate the circumstances in which breaches of security have, or may have, occurred arising out of the case of Rhona Jane Ritchie, who was convicted on 29th November 1982 of an offence under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911; and to advise in the light of that investigation whether any change in security arrangements is necessary or desirable."

and

"To investigate the circumstances in which breaches of security have or may have, occurred arising out of the case of Lance Corporal P L Aldridge who has been charged with an offence under section 7 of the Official Secrets Act 1920; and to advise in the light of the investigation whether any change in security arrange



ments is necessary or desirable."

It will be for the Commission to decide whether the issues raised in these cases overlap with your current investigation into the case of Geoffrey Arthur Prime and whether to report on the three together or separately. However, until the pending criminal proceedings on the Aldridge case have been completed it will not be possible to interrogate Aldridge himself or to make any public announcement about this reference.

CONQUEROR



DRAFT LETTER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO

The Rt Hon Michael Foot, MP

Thank you for your letter of 16th December about the Aldridge case.

On the point in your second paragraph, in both the Prime and the Aldridge cases the view was taken that the person charged with an offence should not be interrogated for the purpose of the Security Commission's investigation until criminal proceedings were complete. In Prime's case, the information available virtually all derived from Prime's confession to the police, and it would have made little sense for the Security Commission to start an investigation until there had been some interrogation of Prime. In Aldridge's case, enough information is available to enable a useful start to be made with the investigation without having to wait for further interrogation of Aldridge.

I am accordingly proceeding with the reference of the Aldridge case to the Security Commission; but, as I told you in my earlier letter, I shall not announce the reference until the criminal proceedings are complete.