



Mr. Pinn

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

17 January 1989

The Prime Minister has written to President Vassiliou about the question of British troops training at Akamas. I enclose her letter and would be grateful if you could arrange for it to be delivered as soon as possible.

C. D. Powell

Richard Gozney, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T14/89



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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 January 1989

SUBJECT cc MASTER
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Dear Mr. President:

When you called on me on 25 November, you raised the question of British troops training at Akamas. You said that "bombing" gave you problems with your environmental lobby.

As you know, the British government strongly support measures to protect the environment. The record of the Ministry of Defence, in its careful husbandry of natural resources in military training areas in Britain and elsewhere, is exemplary. We have found in the United Kingdom that the restriction of public access to military ranges has resulted in these becoming nature reserves containing many rare species of flora and fauna.

The Akamas range area continues to be of great importance to Britain, and we value highly the provisions of the Treaty of Establishment which give our troops access to the area. But we have never used it for bombing from the air, nor have we undertaken any naval bombardment there since 1974. I can assure you that we have no plans for either in the foreseeable future. However, for the effective training of our troops they need to use the guns of their armoured reconnaissance vehicles, mortars and other weapons, together with battle simulation. We control very strictly the use of these guns, and the likelihood of damage to the Akamas is

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small. We accept that there is a greater risk of damage from fire during the dry season. The Commander, British Forces Cyprus will accordingly control strictly the use of ammunition which might possibly cause a fire during the summer months.

The High Commission has on several occasions made proposals to your Government for co-operation in conserving the Akamas Peninsula. Under these proposals, a committee would be set up involving those Cyprus government and other organisations which have an interest in the area. It would consult and advise on the use of Akamas. The Commander, British Forces Cyprus would like to be represented on such a committee. It could consider aspects such as the control of hunting, fishing, grazing, development and public access, as well as military training, so that the area continues to be a wilderness of outstanding natural beauty.

I believe that if such a committee were set up, it would underline our common interests in this important area and help to resolve any differences of approach that may arise. I hope very much that you will agree.

I look forward to seeing you again in early March.

Yours sincerely

Nagant Shalita

His Excellency Mr. George Vassiliou