



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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18th January 1985

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D.P.P. needed?
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*Prime Minister
CDP
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Dear Charles,

You are aware that the Ministry of Defence referred the case of a diary written by the former Lieutenant N Sethia RN, who served on HMS Conqueror during the Falklands conflict, to the Director of Public Prosecutions. This diary contains a considerable amount of classified military and intelligence information. Extracts have been published in the British media on several occasions, including long extracts in "The Observer" of 25th November.

Further extracts have now appeared in two long articles about the diary published by the "Washington Post" on 23rd and 24th December; the newspaper claimed to have acquired a copy of the diary early in November. The articles include many extracts which have not previously been published, covering sensitive areas such as intelligence and submarine operations and equipment. The articles also draw attention to passages in the diary discussing assistance provided to us by Chile and various equipment failures experienced by HMS Conqueror.

The timing of the articles, just before the Christmas holiday may have led to their being overlooked for the time being. Nevertheless there is a risk that these articles will now be picked up by the British press, who may feel free to use the extracts quoted in the articles on the grounds that the information in them is already in the public domain. In addition, it will have drawn American attention to the diary and the sensitive information it contains, which may be damaging to our relations with the USA.

As to action which might be taken, as you know at the direction of the DPP the Metropolitan Police are investigating whether there has been a breach of the Official Secrets Acts in respect of the Sethia diary. The Defence Secretary is advised that there is not any action that we can take to prevent publication

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in this country of these new extracts from the diary. To intervene informally with editors here might draw their attention to the Washington Post's articles, and they would in any case be most unlikely to heed any request to desist from further publication given that the material had already been published in the US.

I am sending copies of this letter to Len Appleyard (FCO), Henry Steel (Law Officers' Department) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,
Denis*

(D BRENNAN)

18 JAN 1985



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