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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

11 July 1983

Prime Minister

To note. This came to our attention during the election campaign.

A.J.C. 12/7.

Dear John,

Forged Recording of a Telephone Conversation between
the Prime Minister and President Reagan

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary thought that the Prime Minister would wish to know that the Embassy in The Hague recently passed to London a tape recording of a purported telephone conversation between the Prime Minister and President Reagan during the Falklands crisis. The call was allegedly recorded by a source in British Telecom. This recording was originally passed to a number of Dutch newspapers before the General Election, probably with the intention of causing embarrassment to the Government at that time. We know that the US Embassy in The Hague were also passed a copy of the tape together with what was said to be a Dutch transcript of the conversation.

The tape itself is of poor technical quality. But at FCO request SIS have now examined it. I enclose a transcript which they have prepared of the remarks which the Prime Minister and President Reagan made during the alleged conversation.

On the basis of the technical analysis they have made so far, SIS have concluded that this is probably a 'voice-patch' forgery, perhaps drawing upon various statements which the Prime Minister and President Reagan have made publicly over recent months. As you will see, the remarks which Mrs Thatcher and President Reagan are recorded as having made do not hang together as a coherent dialogue. But this is scarcely surprising in the circumstances.

The basic objective of the perpetrators is perhaps better revealed from the letter which was sent to the Dutch newspapers with the tape, as well as in the 'transcript' in Dutch which the Americans have translated. There are major discrepancies between this 'transcript' and the actual recording. I enclose a copy of both this 'transcript' and of the letter.

/This

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This looks like a rather clumsy operation. We have no evidence so far about who was responsible. SIS doubt whether this is a Soviet operation. It is possible that one of the Argentine intelligence services might have been behind it: or alternatively it might be the work of a left-wing group in this country (some of the names quoted in the letter seem to point in this direction). But at present this is speculation. We shall ask the Security Service if they can throw any light on the provenance of the tape.

There is, however, little doubt that the voices in the recording are those of Mrs Thatcher and President Reagan. It would be useful to know whether any of Mrs Thatcher's comments can be traced to telephone conversations which she may have had on open lines or more probably to statements she has made either in Parliament or to the media. Perhaps you could look at this aspect and let me know whether it is possible to reach any conclusions on this point.

I will
check. It
will take
some time.
A.S.C. 12.

For their part, the Americans are attempting to make a similar check. Their preliminary technical analysis supports the conclusion that it is a clear fabrication. We understand that the Americans have agreed with the Dutch newspaper from which they received the tape that they will provide an analysis of the tape for publication. But the Americans are still some way from completion of their study of the material and will let us know their findings before anything is published.

I should add that the tape itself could be made available if you wished. But - as can be inferred from the gaps in the transcript - it is not at all easy to listen to.

I am sending copies of this letter to Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office), Sir Robert Armstrong, and the Director-General of the Security Service.

Answer
Fin

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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TRANSCRIPT OF ALLEGED CONVERSATION BETWEEN MRS THATCHER
AND PRESIDENT REAGAN

Cassette Log (Mins, Secs)	Speaker	Dialogue
0.00	- R T R ? R R	Big Ben I urge restraint. It is absolutely essential that the whole area be (transformed ?) that's the fundamental difference. Secretary Haig be able to find a solution. whatever the nature of the controls. the Argentinians were then moving that Secretary Haig had reached an agreement.
0.30	T R	Argentina (sic) was the invader. Force <u>has</u> been used it's been used as quickly as possible Oh God. It's not right to cause Those missiles that we followed on the screens we gonna have to and we're not going to let them do it.
0.47	? T T what I said before. Thank you. block (incentives ?) at all levels.
0.58	R a Third World submarine, ballistic missiles and (that ?) the United States forces remain deployed and the intermediate range missiles of US defence, the proposed (building ?) in Europe the economy /...

Cassette Log (Mins, Secs)	Speaker	Dialogue
	T	These are.....
	R Social Programme the United Kingdom is a a (revelation ?)
1.19	T the nature of the country's long term international markets.
	R	We are supported by our allies when we cannot
	T	I don't understand you.
1.26	R effective limitation of the Soviet Union
	T and Germany.
1.37	R	If any country except ours should endanger the (organisation ?, position ?) we might the area and correct the imbalance.
	T	(Dick, might?)
1.45	R	This will convince the Soviets to listen. We've demonstrated our strength The Soviets have little incentive to launch an attack
	T	Our good ?
	?	Let that be understood!