



3 DSA

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

21 October, 1983

Dear Mr. Rowlands.

Thank you for your letter of 10 October about Belize. I can assure you that reports suggesting that the garrison is about to be withdrawn are unfounded. Our position on the presence of British troops in Belize has not changed since Belize's independence, when we agreed that the garrison would stay for an appropriate period. This is still the case. We want to see as soon as possible conditions under which the garrison can safely be withdrawn. We continue to keep the position under review.

As you will know, it was hoped that progress towards Belizean independence and a settlement with Guatemala would proceed along parallel paths. The United Kingdom, Guatemala, and Belize did in fact sign Heads of Agreement on 11 March 1981, but no treaty of settlement followed. Belize therefore proceeded to independence in September 1981 with the dispute unresolved. Since then, there have been a number of unsuccessful attempts to reach a settlement. We remain willing to help and to attend any future negotiations as observers if both parties wish.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Ted Rowlands, Esq., M.P.

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