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July 4, 1985
Letter from UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to South African President P.W. Botha

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Summary:

Letter from Margaret Thatcher to South African State President P. W. Botha, condemning South African attacks on Angola and Gaborone, and warning of some sort of response by Britain should they continue. Also notes that Britain has offered to provide military training to Mozambique via Zimbabwe.

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English

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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

4 July 1985

Dear Mr. President

In our last exchange of letters I referred to a number of positive developments in Southern Africa earlier this year. I was much encouraged by these clear signs that progress was being made in overcoming some long standing problems.

I was therefore greatly concerned by the recent operations involving South African armed forces in Angola and even more so by the raid on Gaborone on 14 June. Such an attack on a neighbouring country must surely be inconsistent with your attempts to build a better relationship with your neighbours. Our strong views about it were made clear by the UK delegation during the recent United Nations Security Council Debate. The reaction in Britain was all the stronger because the target was a Commonwealth partner which has always pursued moderate policies.

I have always held strongly to the view that violence and confrontation, whoever is responsible for them, have no role in resolving the problems of Southern Africa. We have instead lent Britain's support to what has been done to improve co-operation between the countries of the area, and have in particular tried to make a helpful contribution through our many links with your country. But the recent actions of your Government make it very difficult to sustain the approach which we have adopted hitherto; and were there to be another incident of the kind which we saw in Gaborone,

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I do not see how we could avoid taking specific steps to mark our repudiation of it. This would cause me great regret and I sincerely hope that there will be no cause for it.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank you for your letter of 2 May and for your account of South African assistance to Mozambique. You suggested that the West should be doing more to help President Machel. As you will know, we have offered, with the agreement of Prime Minister Mugabe, training for members of the Mozambican army under the auspices of the British Military Advisory and Training Team in Zimbabwe. We have also agreed to provide some military equipment, for example radios and uniforms. President Machel has warmly welcomed this offer, the details of which have still to be worked out. I hope this initiative will serve to underline the importance which my Government continues to attach to the Nkomati process.

I have chosen to speak frankly because the issues at stake could have a very considerable effect on our bilateral relations. I do so in the same spirit of candour which has characterized our earlier correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Honourable P. W. Botha, DMS

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Yours sincerely [written]
Margaret Thatcher [signature]

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