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*From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service*  
Sir Robin Butler GCB CVO

Ref: AO93/3580

1 December 1993

*Dear Gillian,*

Many thank for your prompt clearance of a line to take on the allegations made in Monday night's 'Panorama' programme, that the Security Service bugged the Hume/Adams talks. In the event, as you will know, the line was not needed for Prime Minister's Questions but No 10 propose to hold it 'on the stocks', in particular for Prime Minister's Questions tomorrow.

I am therefore circulating the line, agreed yesterday also by the Home Office, SIS and the Foreign Office IS Bill Unit, more widely. The answer to the main question "Did MI5 bug the talks?", was cleared by Sir Robin Butler. It is intended to preserve the integrity of the standing line on similar allegations - neither to confirm or deny them - but to recognise that in situations of particular sensitivity, it may be preferable, without breaking the established line, to draw attention to the lack of substantiation for the allegation. It does not commit the user to a denial, however indirect, of the allegation. The line does not, and is not intended to, go as far as the line previously agreed during the spate of allegations of bugging of the Royal Family, which was accepted as a special case which should not set a precedent for the future.

--- I am copying this letter and the attachment to the Private Secretaries to Sir David Gillmore, Sir Clive Whitmore, Sir John Adye, 'C', and to Alex Allan, Ivan Callan and Ian Gerken, and Gerry Warner.

*Yours ever,*

*Melanie*

Melanie Leech  
(Private Secretary)

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