

July 10, 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, decrying the attacks made on Botswana by South Africa, after Britain had made it clear that it could not support South Africa if it continued in those attacks. Implies that Britain will have to cease its support to South Africa.

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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 July, 1985.

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your letter of 5 July. I shall reply with equal frankness.

Yes, it is my Government's policy to combat terrorism wherever it may occur. My letter to you of 4 July made clear that we oppose violence whoever is responsible for it. But this does not lead us to condone an attack on a neighbouring state, in which innocent people, including children, were killed and injured.

You mention the IRA. There has, as you know, been a continuing series of terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland in which some 2000 soldiers, policemen, prison wardens and ordinary citizens have lost their lives. What would the international community think if Britain retaliated by launching attacks across the border into the Irish Republic, where many of the terrorists are? Rather we believe that close co-operation with the Irish authorities is the best way and indeed essential to the eventual defeat of the IRA.

As far as the attitude of Botswana is concerned, I can only say that President Masire, in a personal message to me, expressed his indignation at the attack. He also asked for our support at the United Nations and more widely for what he described as an unprovoked act of aggression. The fact that his Government has been ready to meet with you at regular

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intervals, and is even now prepared to resume the discussions interrupted by the raid, merely strengthens my view that this problem could and should have been resolved by diplomacy rather than by force.

I have to say, therefore, that your perception of this episode is not shared in this country. The impact on our bilateral relations has been thoroughly unfortunate and this at a time when Britain, almost alone in the international community, is attempting to resist pressure for economic measures against South Africa. This is why I was dismayed by your action and why I said that any further attack of this kind would leave us with no choice but to take specific steps to mark our repudiation of it.

Yours sincerely

Rajiv Gandhi

The Honourable P.W. Botha, D.M.S.

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Yours sincerely [written]

Margaret Thatcher [signature]

The Honourable P.W. Botha, D.M.S.