TOP SECRET

CLOSED
Room 171

VOL 1

CABINET OFFICE

THIS FILE MUST NOT GO OUTSIDE THE CABINET OFFICE

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CAB 163/207

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FILE TITLE

JIC

CLOSED

COMMANDER CRABB

J 1061

FILE BEGINS
ENDS 15-6-73
FILE No. 1061
Vol 1.

INDEX HEADINGS

REFERRED TO	DATE	REFERRED TO	DATE	REFERRED TO	DATE

[illegible]46233 1M 12/70 XLY[illegible]

TOP SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL

FOLIO 48

CONFIDENTIAL

FOLIO 49

M. Heenan

15th June, 1973

CA[illegible]E
Ref: A04390
15 JUN 1973
[illegible]ONS
FIL[illegible]

[redacted]
J 2833
22 JUN 1973
[redacted]
[redacted] 1061

SEC

D/Sec

A/Sec

Commander Crabb

Sir Burke Trend saw a copy of Sir James Dunnett's minute of 29th May to the Minister of State for Defence about the proposed BBC programme on Commander Crabb, and he has reported the current position to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has suggested that when the BBC finally approach Admiral Farnhill for clearance of their programme, there might be an opportunity for a further attempt to be made to persuade them to drop the idea completely. Sir Burke Trend would be grateful if Sir James Dunnett would bear this point in mind.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mark Elliott.

B. M. NORBURY

(B.M. Norbury)

A.J.H. Ward, Esq.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, S.W.1. 23 March, 1973

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL

FOLIO 48

CABINET OFFICE
A 5368
14 JUN 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

PRIME MINISTER

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

J 2832
22 JUN 1973
1061

MR. B.M. NORBURY
CABINET OFFICE

Commander Crabb

Thank you for your minute of 12 June. A02341

Seen by Sec D/Sec ASec B

The Prime Minister shares Sir Burke Trend's view that no further action is required at this stage. He has, however, suggested that, when the BBC approach Admiral Farnhill for clearance for their programme, that might provide the opportunity for a further attempt to persuade the BBC to drop the idea completely.

RTA

13 June 1973

CONFIDENTIAL

FOLIO 47

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2687
14 JUN 1973
1061

JIC(A) at this stage.

DlSec
13.6.73

CABINET OFFICE
Je 156
12 JUN 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

12th June, 1973

CONFIDENTIAL

CABINET OFFICE
A
Ref. A04341
12 JUN 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

M. Heaton

FOLIO 47

MR. ARMSTRONG

Commander Crabb

You may like to have the latest information we have been given by the Secretary of the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee about the proposed BBC programme on Commander Crabb.

Admiral Farnhill has been told by BBC Southampton that since they have been denied Ministry of Defence co-operation, and will not be allowed to interview witnesses on the programme, they have decided to go ahead with a documentary using their own resources and actors, but this will take some time to prepare and is unlikely to be ready for screening before the end of this year or early next year. The BBC say that they have a new informant who has given them "much useful information".

Admiral Farnhill has reminded the BBC of their need to secure clearance for the programme; and in the light of the Prime Minister's view recorded in your letter to Mr. Andrew of 28th March, Sir Burke Trend does not consider that any further action (at any rate at this stage) is required.

2687
14 JUN 1973
1061

B. M. NORBURY

Note her record.

Sec agrees that we need not inform JIC(A) at this stage.

DlSec
13.6.73

CABINET OFFICE
Je 156
12 JUN 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

12th June, 1973

SECRET

FOLIO 46

SECRET

COVERING TOP SECRET
FILE

0611
14 JUN 1973
1061

J.1061/Je.0838.

Sir Burke Trend
~~MR. NORBURY~~

I think Sir Burke Trend will wish to be aware of the latest position on the BBC's proposed programme about Commander Crabb, as outlined in the attached letter by the Secretary, Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee [Flag A]. /

It will be recalled that the high-level approach to the BBC considered at one stage was not pursued, and the Prime Minister agreed that no further attempt should be made to dissuade the BBC from proceeding with their programme [Folio 44 on attached File J.1061, refers]. /

L. E. Herman.
(M. E. HERMAN)
8 June, 1973.

Attachment: File J.1061.

R 12/6

It might be just worth giving No 10 the sense of Admiral Farnhill's minute of 23 May and telling them that, in accordance with the PM's earlier decision, we are taking no further action.
11/6

SECRET

COVERING TOP SECRET
FILE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, S.W.1.

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

45

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary: Rear Admiral K H Farnhill, CB, OBE
Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Cosham (Hants) 77187

Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON, SW1A 2HB

Ref DN/0309/DPBC

1 June 1973

[illegible]
J 2511
-4 JUN 1973
[illegible]
[illegible] 1061

FOLIO 36

ME Herman Esq
Secretary JIC
Cabinet Office
London SW1

Dear Mike,

Further to my DN/0309/DPBC of 7 March and subsequent minutes, I enclose a copy of a note of mine dated 23 May setting out the latest position on the proposed BBC programme on the Crabb incident together with one of PUS Ministry of Defence to the Minister of State, Ministry of Defence.

PUS knows that I am copying these notes to you.

A/SEC B

Sec – Sir B.T. Should be filed? latest position I think. 4/6

Yours ever

Kenneth

Encl 1

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CONFIDENTIAL

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PUS/73/1086
46/4

DN/0309/8140
31 MAY 1973
DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Minister of State

Copies to: PS/S of S
US of S(RN)
CNS
VCNS
DUS(Navy)
Sec/DPBC

You should see the above minute from the Secretary of the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee about the proposed BBC programme about Commander Crabb and all that. I think that Rear Admiral Farnhill has done all he could to cover the security aspect of the case and we can now only await developments.

LFO

29 May 1973

DEFENCE SERVICES SECRETARY
31 MAY 1973
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, S.W.1. 23 March, 1973

SECRET

62

Reference DN/0309/DPBC

PUS

THE CRABB INCIDENT

I spoke to Darlow (BBC Southampton) to-day about the proposed BBC programme on Crabb. He tells me that since they have been denied MOD co-operation and will not be allowed to interview witnesses on the programme, they have decided to go ahead with a documentary using their own resources and actors. This will take some time to prepare, will be expensive and is unlikely to be ready for screening until the end of this year and possibly not until early in 1974. Darlow says he has a new informant who has given much useful information; he had seen the item in the Daily Mail of 21 May (copy attached) and had "acted upon it."

I said that if they were thinking of so ambitious a programme they would clearly want to make sure that it was cleared before they spent money on it. He accepted this so far as security considerations were concerned but implied that he was unwilling to be deterred by anything else.

23 May 1973

(KH Farnhill)
Rear Admiral
Sec DPBC

Encl. 1

8.3.3

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, S.W.1. 23 March, 1973

SECRET

DAILY MAIL

MONDAY 21 MAY 73

Daily Mail, Monday, May 21, 1973

Was this Buster Crabb's capture? Navy man tells how he watched frogmen

LABOUR MP Mr Marcus Lipton is to ask the Prime Minister to make a statement in the Commons on the Buster Crabb affair.

He will also ask whether the Government officially recognises the headless body that was found in Portsmouth harbour as being Commander Crabb.

Crabb vanished in 1956 while diving in the vicinity of the Soviet cruiser Ordzhonikidze, which had brought Marshal Bulganin and Mr Kruschev on a State visit to Britain.

The British Government claimed that Crabb died while testing underwater apparatus. The Russians said he was a spy seeking information about their ships.

The Crabb case is being raised by Mr Lipton because of an account of events given by former Royal Navy petty officer Peter Fleetway, which raises the possibility that the frogman was taken prisoner in Portsmouth harbour by the Russians.

Former Petty Officer Fleetway, who lives near Wadebridge, Cornwall, said at the weekend: 'I was serving on HMS Starling, which was at anchor only about 100 yards away from the cruiser Ordzhonikidze.

'I was on deck and was struck by the unusual amount of activity going on around the cruiser.

'She had an extra climbing ladder down over the seaward side of the ship. Three small boats manned by Russian sailors were on station—one near the bow, the second about halfway along the hull and the third near the stern.

'I could see at least a dozen frogmen in the water. And it was obvious the Russians were hunting for something.

I saw three frogmen suddenly surface, make for the boat which was halfway along the hull.

'Two then seemed to push the third one into it and then more frogmen surfaced and seemed to gather around as a sort of escort. The last thing I saw was it making its way towards the climbing ladder.'

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, S.W.1. 23 March, 1973

SECRET

SECRET

SECRETARY OF STATE

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1

TELEPHONE 01-930 7022

File 46

Sir Burke Trend

c Mr Herman

CABINET OFFICE
A 4079
26 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

[illegible]
1557
-5 APR 1973
1061

SECRET

MO 23/2

23rd March, 1973

Dear Robert,

41 Lord Carrington A4001 who is out of London today has not seen your letter of yesterday to Sir Burke Trend about the BBC proposal for a programme on Commander Crabb. But when he saw Sir Burke Trend's minute of 20th March he indicated that he did not consider that it would be advisable to make a further approach to try to dissuade the BBC. Unless the Prime Minister feels strongly about the matter I believe, therefore, that Lord Carrington would not wish to speak to Sir Michael Swann. He will in any case be unable to do so next week as he will be in Finland.

I am sending copies of this letter to Sir Burke Trend and to Antony Acland.

Yours ever,

Robert Andrew

(R J ANDREW)

R T Armstrong Esq

SECRET

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, S.W.1. 23 March, 1973

SECRET

SECRET

44 file
Sir Burke Trend
c Mr Herman

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

PRIME MINISTER
1601
- 5 APR 1973
1061

CABINET OFFICE
A 4117
28 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

28 March 1973

/A6079

43

Thank you for your letter of 23 March about the B.B.C's proposal for a programme on Commander Crabb.

Seen by ASec B D/Sec Sec

The Prime Minister has seen your letter and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 23 March; and, in the light of the views of the two Secretaries of State, he has agreed that no further attempt should be made to persuade the B.B.C. not to put this programme on.

I am sending copies of this letter to Antony Acland and Burke Trend.

(SGD) R.T. ARMSTRONG

Robert Andrew Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

42

Sir Burke Trend
c Mr Herman

1580
R 1973
1061

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view that one more

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ill reduce the
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so much has been
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approach to the Corporation is that the fact of our representations, whether successful or not, may well leak from the BBC and become an issue in itself.

3. I do not think the risk worth running, and would prefer to let events take their course.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to Lord Carrington and Sir Burke Trend.

FOLIO 42

SECRET

CABINET OFFICE
A 4087
26 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

Sir Burke Trend
c Mr Herman

[illegible]
J 1580
-5 APR 1973
[illegible]
FILE No. 1061

PRIME MINISTER

PM/73/24

Commander Crabb

FOLIO 40

A 03778

In his minute to you of 20 March Burke Trend suggested that I might try to persuade the BBC not to show the programme they are preparing about Commander Crabb. I have also seen Robert Armstrong's letter of 22 March to Burke Trend recording your view that one more approach might be made.

FOLIO 41

2. I have some doubts about the wisdom of this course. If the BBC show the programme, it will no doubt cause us some embarrassment, though the refusal of the M.O.D. to co-operate will reduce the programme's impact. I should not have thought that the new evidence about the incident, such as it is, would be enough to arouse a great deal of public interest in a matter about which so much has been written already. As Burke Trend suggests, the difficulty about an approach to the Corporation is that the fact of our representations, whether successful or not, may well leak from the BBC and become an issue in itself.

3. I do not think the risk worth running, and would prefer to let events take their course.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to Lord Carrington and Sir Burke Trend.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, S.W.1. 23 March, 1973

SECRET

Secretary of the Cabinet

Mr Hermon ✓ 26/3

You will wish to be aware of this letter from Mr Armstrong.

I will find out from the Foreign Office and M/Defence whether their Secretaries of State have any comments and let you know.

J Robertson 26/3

SECRET

c W

OFFICE
61
1973
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10 Downing
Whiteha

22 March 1

1551
-5 APR 1973
1061

2 BT

FOLIO 40

A03778 (Herm

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Defence Secretary think otherwise,
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copies of this letter to Antony
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Yours ever

Robert Armstr

The Rt. Hon. Sir Burke Trend, GCB, CVO.

SECRET

c Mr Herman

Ple

41

CABINET OFFICE
A 4061
23 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

22 March 1973

[illegible] 1551
-5 APR 1973
[illegible] 1061

[illegible] BT

My dear Burke,

40

A03778 (Herman 21/3)

The Prime Minister has seen your minute of 20 March about the BBC's proposals for a programme on Commander Crabb.

Unless either the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary or the Defence Secretary think otherwise, the Prime Minister is inclined to think that one more approach should be made, to try to persuade the BBC not to proceed with the programme.

If an approach is to be made, the Prime Minister thinks it should be by Lord Carrington to Sir Michael Swann.

I am sending copies of this letter to Antony Acland and Robert Andrew.

Yours ever

Robert Armstrong

The Rt. Hon. Sir Burke Trend, GCB, CVO.

SECRET

CABINET OFFICE
A
20 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

SECRET

1578
27 MAR 1973
1061

Ref: A03778

PRIME MINISTER

Commander Crabb

32 You approved the general line proposed in my minute of 12th February. The BBC were accordingly informed that no co-operation could be given by the Ministry of Defence. They seem, nevertheless, to have decided to go ahead with the programme; and so far as we can judge they are likely to commit themselves to it fairly soon. In that case it is for consideration whether, as I suggested in my minute of 12th February, we should make one more attempt to dissuade them by discreet but direct representations at a high level. This would involve, I imagine, an approach either from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary or the Secretary of State for Defence to the Chairman or the Director General of the Corporation. I am rather divided about the wisdom of this, since I suppose that if it became known that an approach of this kind had been made and had been rebuffed, curiosity and suspicion would merely be increased. On the whole, however, I think that, subject to the views of yourself and the other two Ministers, it might be worth having a shot. In which case, perhaps the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would be the most appropriate Minister?

A/SEC B

I am sending copies of this minute to Sir Alec Douglas-Home and Lord Carrington.

BURKE TREND

20th March, 1973

CABINET OFFICE
A 3889
15 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

SECRET

BF
19/3

CM. Heenan

FOLIO
39

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-930 7022

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

PUS/73/610

14 March 1973

The Rt Hon Sir Burke Trend GCB CVO
Cabinet Office
Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

[illegible]
3 1579
27 MAR 1973
[illegible] 1061

Pl remind me about - X on Monday

Dear Burke,

COMMANDER CRABB

On learning that the Prime Minister had approved the course of action proposed in your minute to him of 12 February, A03471, I arranged for Farnhill to write to the BBC. This he did, explaining that no co-operation could be given by the Ministry of Defence. He has now heard from Darlow, the BBC producer concerned, that he is still anxious to make the programme. He has undertaken to let Farnhill know if the BBC does decide to go ahead and to tell us the approximate date when the programme will be shown. Subsequent to this conversation Farnhill learned that Darlow had invited Admiral Denning to lunch and had said in the course of conversation that the BBC had now given him a budget for the programme and had appointed a co-producer from London. (Darlow belongs to BBC Southampton.)

Seen by Sec BBecB

Although Darlow has not yet told Farnhill that a firm decision has been taken to produce the programme the latest information received via Denning indicates that the BBC is becoming committed. If, therefore, we are to make higher level representations to the BBC as suggested in your minute of 12 February we ought presumably to move fairly quickly. Perhaps I could have a word with you on the telephone as to how this might best be done.

X

Yours ever,
Ned Dunnett.

CABINET OFFICE
A 3889
15 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

SECRET

CM. Herran

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-930 7022

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

PUS/73/610

14 March 1973

The Rt Hon Sir Burke Trend GCB CVO
Cabinet Office
Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

[illegible]
J 1361
15 MAR 1973
[illegible]
[illegible] 1061

SEC

Dear Burke,

COMMANDER CRABB

D/SEC
(Private office have file)

On learning that the Prime Minister had approved the course of action proposed in your minute to him of 12 February, A03471, I arranged for Farnhill to write to the BBC. This he did, explaining that no co-operation could be given by the Ministry of Defence. He has now heard from Darlow, the BBC producer concerned, that he is still anxious to make the programme. He has undertaken to let Farnhill know if the BBC does decide to go ahead and to tell us the approximate date when the programme will be shown. Subsequent to this conversation Farnhill learned that Darlow had invited Admiral Denning to lunch and had said in the course of conversation that the BBC had now given him a budget for the programme and had appointed a co-producer from London. (Darlow belongs to BBC Southampton.)

A/Sec B
Sir Stewart Crawford should get a copy of this [illegible]

Although Darlow has not yet told Farnhill that a firm decision has been taken to produce the programme the latest information received via Denning indicates that the BBC is becoming committed. If, therefore, we are to make higher level representations to the BBC as suggested in your minute of 12 February we ought presumably to move fairly quickly. Perhaps I could have a word with you on the telephone as to how this might best be done.

Yours ever,
Ned Dunnett

SECRET

SF 38 36

SECRET

J.1061/Je.0655.

CABINET OFFICE
LONDON SW1A 2AS

01-930 5422

CABINET OFFICE
J 0326
15 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

13 March, 1973.

Dear Kenneth,

Thank you for your letter DN/0309/DPBC of 7 March, giving the current position on the BBC's programme on Crabb.

Sir Burke Trend, to whom I have passed the contents of your letter, is in agreement with what you propose "provided that we can prevent the BBC from committing themselves in advance by publishing the date of the programme before they send us the script".

No doubt you will be finding out in due course from the BBC whether in fact they have any date in mind yet.

Yours sincerely,

(M. E. HERMAN)

Rear Admiral K. H. Farnhill, C.B., O.B.E.,
Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

FOLIO 37

SECRET

COVERING TOP SECRET

J.1061/Je.0645.

[illegible]
J 0307
15 MAR 1973
[illegible]
1061

Sir Burke Trend

~~MR. NORBURY~~

FOLIO 36

I think Sir Burke Trend will wish to see the attached letter from Admiral Farnhill on the current stage reached in the BBC's proposed programme on Commander Crabb. A copy of the Admiral's letter of 19 February to Darlow is at Folio 34 on the attached File, J.1061.

It is apparent that the refusal of MOD co-operation, or of authority for revelations by the naval officer, has not dissuaded the producer from hoping that he can still make a worthwhile programme. But he does not seem to be making much progress. I suggest that we should accept Admiral Farnhill's advice that we should wait until the producer has submitted his script before approaching the BBC at a different level. If Sir Burke agrees, I will reply to Admiral Farnhill to this effect.

M. E. Herman

(M. E. HERMAN)
9 March, 1973.

Attachment: File J.1061.

M. Herman

Yes - provided that we can prevent the BBC from committing themselves in advance by publishing the date of the programme before they send us the scripts.
9/3.

SECRET

COVERING TOP SECRET

SECRET

S E C R E T

FOLIO 36

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary:
Rear Admiral K. H. Farnhill, CB, OBE
Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Cosham (Hants) 77187

Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

Ref. DN/0309/DPBC

7 March 1973

ME Herman Esq
Secretary JIC
Cabinet Office
London SW1

CABINET OFFICE
J 1235
-8 MAR 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

Dear Mike

THE CRABB PROGRAMME

Folio 34

A ~~Sec~~ B

Sec (thro' D/Sec)

I spoke to Darlow today about the proposed BBC programme. Since receiving my letter of 19 February he has not taken the matter further largely because Tom Mangold, who will present the programme if it goes ahead, has been occupied with other things. Despite the certainty of no cooperation from the MOD, Darlow still seems anxious to try to make a worthwhile programme. He has promised to let me know as soon as he decides what to do and, if he does decide to go ahead, to give me the approximate date of showing.

I do not think the time is yet ripe for an approach to the BBC at any other level. That may still prove to be unnecessary; Darlow is in any case committed to submitting the complete script of anything he does produce.

Yours
Kenneth

SECRET

S E C R E T

A SECRET TRIP TO DUBLIN . . . A MYSTERIOUS BRUNETTE AND A DARING PLOT

object of Crabb's mission had been.

It appears that during the interrogation Crabb had disclosed that he had entered the harbour with a small limpet mine secured to him. In accordance with his training he had automatically slipped it from his body and let it sink to the seabed when he was pounced on.

"But they weren't going to blow up the cruiser at King's Stairs?" I burst out.

No. There had been no intention of blowing it up. British Intelligence wanted to know if the Russians had caught up with our sophisticated asdic programme, and particularly whether the cruiser was fitted with the equivalent of a certain type of asdic.

I should explain that asdic (now called sonar) is a submarine detection device, projecting through the ship's bottom, encased in a retractable dome. To find its target, it transmits an impulse through the water which is reflected by anything that gets in the way and returns a message to the transmitting vessel.

A plane would be watching . . .

If the Ordzhonikidze carried the type of asdic the British wanted to know about, it would emit a certain impulse peculiar to that kind of set.

The limpet mine had been fitted with a device which, picking up this impulse, would explode the mine. Although this would cause no injury to anyone on board, it would temporarily slow the ship down, and this would be observed by aircraft on the look-out for just that thing.

If, however, the limpet mine did not explode after a certain number of hours—I think Roman gave it three days, though that seems rather a long period—this would indicate that the Russians did not have the type of asdic concerned, and the mine would detach itself and fall harmlessly into the depths.

In normal circumstances it is quite certain that a man of Crabb's calibre would have given no information about himself or his mission to the Russians.

But in his low state of health and, by all accounts, dangerously affected by alcohol, he was unable to stand up to the traumatic experience of being overpowered under the sea, restored to consciousness on a foreign cruiser amid unfriendly faces, and subjected to stern questioning, scrupulously correct as it may have been. No wonder he confessed.

And no wonder Roman was so pleased with himself.

★

"IS THERE anything to prevent you going over to Ireland?" The question came out of the blue from Roman at one of our routine meetings.

One thing was certain about this little lot: at no meeting could I ever be sure what they'd want me to do next, or where they'd want me to go.

I was somewhat cagey in my reply.

Anyway, were we talking about Northern Ireland or Eire?

To my surprise Roman said it was Dublin he had in mind. He told me that if I agreed and we could fix a date, I would be booked in at the Gresham Hotel under the name of Charles Casey of Bristol.

My hotel bill would be taken care of. I was to have my meals brought up to my room, and at exactly 9 p.m. I would answer a knock on my bedroom door, when a certain gentleman would inquire if I'd had a pleasant journey.

"Yes," I was to reply. "But I could do with a drink."

"Not a soft one, I hope," would be his next line.

Then I was to ask for an Irish coffee, and invite him to enter. He would then ring for drinks to be brought, and until they arrived and the waiter departed we were only to exchange pleasantries. After that we'd discuss whatever it was he wanted to see me about.

It so happened that I had accumulated some leave from my clerical post in the Admiralty's Underwater Detection Establishment at Portland and could take a weekend off. It was arranged that I should go to Bristol on a Friday, take an Aer Lingus flight to Dublin, return on Sunday, and motor back to Weymouth.

Roman settled the plane booking and said he would personally see me off from Bristol. No doubt he would also phone Dublin to say that I was airborne and on my way.

Everything went as planned. As Mr. Charles Casey I duly presented myself at the Gresham, had a quick bath, and changed. There was plenty of time before my appointment. Although I had been instructed to order my meals in my room, nothing had been said about having a drink. So down I went and got stuck into a glass of Irish whiskey.

During my second I found myself in conversation with a striking looking brunette—probably on the wrong side of 40, but no matter: where beauty and charm are, age matters not.

Then an odd remark about Irish coffee

It was fairly vague, inconsequential chat until she asked if I knew what Irish coffee was. It might have been an innocent remark, and certainly wasn't an out-of-the-way one in that setting. But could she just possibly be the "certain gentleman" who was to visit my room at 9 p.m.? I explained what Irish coffee was, and she said she'd try one after dinner.

She eventually departed and I went to my room, ordered a meal to be sent up, and after it had been cleared away waited for my visitor.

Precisely at 9 p.m. the expected knock came on my door. Half expecting to meet the attractive brunette I hurried to open it . . . and found to my dismay a shortish, pudgy, balding man in his early 50's carrying a document case and what turned out to be a small portable radio receiver.

We shook hands while reciting our identification phrases, and he came into my room. He said he had ordered drinks to be sent up, mine being a Jameson's whiskey.

"How do you know I drink Jameson's?" I asked.

"Don't tell me you've already forgotten your companion before dinner."

He refused to tell me who she was, and with the arrival of the waiter with the drinks we dropped the subject. It was not resumed.

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"*But surely, with all those secrets, there must be armed sentries?*"

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But I was now committed to helping to break into one of the Navy's most secret establishments.

NEXT: How we burgled the Navy

A SECRET TRIP TO DUBLIN...A MYSTERIOUS BRUNETTE AND A DARING PLOT

object of Crabb's mission had been.

It appears that during the interrogation Crabb had disclosed that he had entered the harbour with a small limpet mine secured to him. In accordance with his training he had automatically slipped it from his body and let it sink to the seabed when he was pounced on.

"But they weren't going to blow up the cruiser at King's Stairs?" I burst out.

No. There had been no intention of blowing it up. British Intelligence wanted to know if the Russians had caught up with our sophisticated asdic programme, and particularly whether the cruiser was fitted with the equivalent of a certain type of asdic.

I should explain that asdic (now called sonar) is a submarine detection device, projecting through the ship's bottom, encased in a retractable dome. To find its target, it transmits an impulse through the water which is reflected by anything that gets in the way and returns a message to the transmitting vessel.

A plane would be watching . . .

If the Ordzhonikidze carried the type of asdic the British wanted to know about, it would emit a certain impulse peculiar to that kind of set.

The limpet mine had been fitted with a device which, picking up this impulse, would explode the mine. Although this would cause no injury to anyone on board, it would temporarily slow the ship down, and this would be observed by aircraft on the look-out for just that thing.

If, however, the limpet mine did not explode after a certain number of hours—I think Roman gave it three days, though that seems rather a long period—this would indicate that the Russians did not have the type of asdic concerned, and the mine would detach itself and fall harmlessly into the depths.

In normal circumstances it is quite certain that a man of Crabb's calibre would have given no information about himself or his mission to the Russians.

But in his low state of health and, by all accounts, dangerously affected by alcohol, he was unable to stand up to the traumatic experience of being overpowered under the sea, restored to consciousness on a foreign cruiser amid unfriendly faces, and subjected to stern questioning, scrupulously correct as it may have been. No wonder he confessed.

And no wonder Roman was so pleased with himself.

★

"IS THERE anything to prevent you going over to Ireland?" The question came out of the blue from Roman at one of our routine meetings.

One thing was certain about this little lot: at no meeting could I ever be sure what they'd want me to do next, or where they'd want me to go.

I was somewhat cagey in my reply.

Anyway, were we talking about Northern Ireland or Eire?

To my surprise Roman said it was Dublin he had in mind. He told me that if I agreed and we could fix a date, I would be booked in at the Gresham Hotel under the name of Charles Casey of Bristol.

My hotel bill would be taken care of, I was to have my meals brought up to my room, and at exactly 9 p.m. I would answer a knock on my bedroom door, when a certain gentleman would inquire if I'd had a pleasant journey.

"Yes," I was to reply. "But I could do with a drink."

"Not a soft one, I hope," would be his next line.

Then I was to ask for an Irish coffee, and invite him to enter. He would then ring for drinks to be brought, and until they arrived and the waiter departed we were only to exchange pleasantries. After that we'd discuss whatever it was he wanted to see me about.

It so happened that I had accumulated some leave from my clerical post in the Admiralty's Underwater Detection Establishment at Portland and could take a weekend off. It was arranged that I should go to Bristol on a Friday, take an Aer Lingus flight to Dublin, return on Sunday, and motor back to Weymouth.

Roman settled the plane booking and said he would personally see me off from Bristol. No doubt he would also phone Dublin to say that I was airborne and on my way.

Everything went as planned. As Mr. Charles Casey I duly presented myself at the Gresham, had a quick bath, and changed. There was plenty of time before my appointment. Although I had been instructed to order my meals in my room, nothing had been said about having a drink. So down I went and got stuck into a glass of Irish whiskey.

During my second I found myself in conversation with a striking looking brunette—probably on the wrong side of 40, but no matter: where beauty and charm are, age matters not.

Then an odd remark about Irish coffee

It was fairly vague, inconsequential chat until she asked if I knew what Irish coffee was. It might have been an innocent remark, and certainly wasn't an out-of-the-way one in that setting. But could she just possibly be the "certain gentleman" who was to visit my room at 9 p.m.? I explained what Irish coffee was, and she said she'd try one after dinner.

She eventually departed and I went to my room, ordered a meal to be sent up, and after it had been cleared away waited for my visitor.

Precisely at 9 p.m. the expected knock came on my door. Half expecting to meet the attractive brunette I hurried to open it . . . and found to my dismay a shortish, pudgy, balding man in his early 50's carrying a document case and what turned out to be a small portable radio receiver.

We shook hands while reciting our identification phrases, and he came into my room. He said he had ordered drinks to be sent up, mine being a Jameson's whiskey.

"How do you know I drink Jameson's?" I asked.

"Don't tell me you've already forgotten your companion before dinner."

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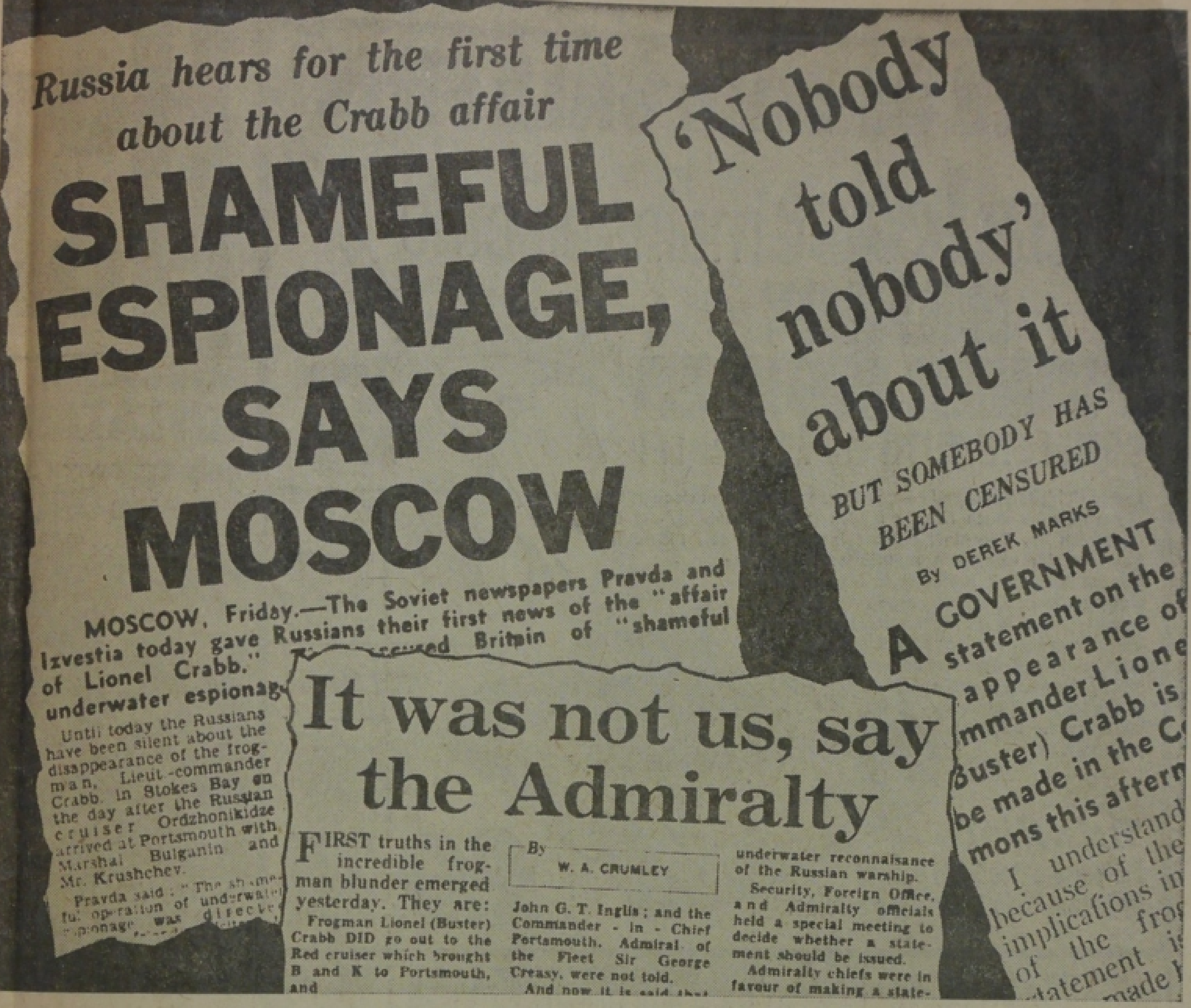

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SHAMEFUL ESPIONAGE, SAYS MOSCOW

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accused Britain of "shameful underwater espionag

Until today the Russians have been silent about the disappearance of the frog-man, Lieut.-commander Crabb, in Stokes Bay on the day after the Russian cruiser Ordzhonikidze arrived at Portsmouth with Marshal Bulganin and Mr. Krushchev.

Pravda said : "The shameful operation of underwater espionage was directe

'Nobody told nobody' about it

BUT SOMEBODY HAS BEEN CENSURED

By DEREK MARKS

A GOVERNMENT statement on the
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It was not us, say the Admiralty

By W. A. CRUMLEY

FIRST truths in the incredible frog-man blunder emerged yesterday. They are:

Frogman Lionel (Buster) Crabb DID go out to the Red cruiser which brought B and K to Portsmouth, and

John G. T. Inglis ; and the Commander - in - Chief Portsmouth, Admiral of the Fleet Sir George Creasy, were not told.

And now it is said that

underwater reconnaisance of the Russian warship.

Security, Foreign Office, and Admiralty officials held a special meeting to decide whether a statement should be issued.

Admiralty chiefs were in favour of making a state-

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the question of what it was really all about.

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NEXT: How we burgled the Navy

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THE SUNDAY EXPRESS London 1972

Operation Portland: A Briton who spied for Moscow presents an astounding new version of an affair that shocked the nation

HOW RUSSIAN UNDERSEA SENTRIES CAUGHT FROGMAN BUSTER CRABB

Frogman Crabb: Houghton says he died aboard a Russian cruiser

A CARELESS remark by a woman in a pub . . . that, says a former member of the Portland spy ring, alerted the Russians to be on watch for British frogmen near Russian warships in Portsmouth Harbour.

by HARRY HOUGHTON

FOR the first time in any publication in the West, I can tell the true story of what happened to Commander Lionel Phillip Kenneth Crabb, G.M., O.B.E., R.N.V.R.

Hardly a year goes by without some new rumour about the frogman who vanished while on a mysterious mission under the Russian warships in Portsmouth harbour in 1956.

It is said, for instance, that he is alive and well in Russia, that he is a captain training Russian underwater teams at Sebastopol.

Crabb is dead.

But I often wonder about how differently this affair might have turned out if the agent I knew as Roman and I had not decided to "get away from it all" one evening in the early spring of 1956 and go off into the country for a drink at the Crown Inn at Punckmowle, in Dorset.

There, I thought, we could relax and drink together without my having to explain away or introduce my friend to all and sundry.

It was in this remote country pub that Russian Intelligence got a line gratuitously on British Intelligence, neither seeking it nor expecting it.

It just came out of the blue. Roman and I had settled down in the smallish bar, rather crowded with locals. Roman was listening, fascinated, to the strong Dorset dialect of the villagers, when a woman who worked at the Underwater Detection Establishment at Portland arrived.

We knew each other quite well, and I also knew that the man with her was her current fancy, a naval bod from the local shallow-water diving team.

Like Roman and me, this couple had gone to the Crown to have a quiet drink where they wouldn't be known.

They certainly hadn't expected to bump into anyone they knew, but decided to put a good face on it and asked if they could sit at our table, there being no room elsewhere. I introduced Roman as a friend of mine in the Merchant Navy whose ship was in Southampton and who had come to pay me a visit.

After a drink or two the boy friend excused himself and left the table and when he had departed I commented that he seemed very quiet tonight, quite different from what I'd imagined him to be.

I hadn't known him to speak to before this meeting, but had seen and heard him from time to time in another pub I frequented.

The girl said, in effect, that we were to take no notice of his mood. He was a bit fed up, as he—or maybe it was *they*, I'm not sure after all this time—had been training for something special which had then been called off. He was still feeling a bit sore about it.

The statement meant nothing to me, but Roman said idly: "*I wonder what it was?*"

She didn't know—"But something silly, I suppose."

Very soon after this Roman said it was about time he started on his way back to Southampton, which surprised me. We had intended staying in the pub until closing time.

Getting into the car, I suggested that as it was early we should call in at a pub in Abbotsbury and have a snack. But he said he wanted to go straight back to my place and collect his toilet gear as he was returning to London immediately.

When I queried this sudden change in our previous arrangements, he asked if I hadn't heard what the "lady friend" had said. I replied that no one had said anything of any great interest, and frankly I'd been rather bored by the two of them.

"The trouble with you," he snapped, "is that you don't take enough notice of what is said. We'd get on far better if you'd only keep your ears open."

Thoroughly amazed by this outburst, I asked what on earth he was driving at. My own anger was rising at his tone.

"That diver chap who'd been training for something special," he said, "may be more important than you think."

At a loss to understand what he could possibly have made of that fragment of conversation, I let the matter drop.

He collected his bits and pieces, and I drove him to his car. I had one last go, quizzing him about this sudden departure.

He said: "You do know who is coming to Portsmouth soon?"

Then I vaguely remembered having read that Marshal Bulganin and Nikita Krushchev were to pay a state visit to this country in the near future.

When I asked what this had to do with his abrupt return to London, he merely said that they would travel to Portsmouth in a Russian warship and there might be some connection.

At the time I could see no possible connection between the pending visit and the girl's remark. But in Roman's mind the girl had triggered off suspicion.

He saw a possible relevance which was endorsed by the K.G.B. and passed on to the Soviet Admiralty, who ordered additional security precautions to be taken on the bottoms of the Ordzhonikidze and its attendant destroyers Smotryashchi and Sovershenny while in British waters.

When a spy project goes wrong . . .

AFTER the usual exchange of gun salutes at Spithead the Soviet cruiser and destroyers with the Soviet Prime Minister, Bulganin, and Communist Party Secretary Krushchev on board berthed at Kings Stairs, Portsmouth, on April 18, 1956.

Then the two distinguished guests of this country left by

put the failure on record in these terms:—

"During the stay of Soviet warships in Portsmouth, at 7.30 a.m. on April 19th seamen on board the Soviet ships observed a frogman floating between the Soviet destroyers. The frogman, who wore a black diving suit with flippers on his feet, was seen on the surface of the water for one to two minutes, and then dived alongside the destroyer Smotryashchi."

The note went on to say that Captain Koltov, in command of the Ordzhonikidze, had raised the matter with the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth; and it asked for an explanation.

There was a parliamentary uproar. The British Government apologised. And nine days after Crabb's disappearance the Admiralty announced:—

"Commander Crabb is presumed to be dead as the result of trials with certain underwater apparatus. The location of the trials was in Stokes Bay."

This was a clear admission that the Admiralty *was* in the picture at some stage, but all subsequent inquiries were met with the reply that further disclosures would "not be in the public interest."

An urgent meeting in a lay-by

But just what *did* happen to Crabb? I was aware, as early as July 1956, of the full story from the Soviet side. I could hardly have disclosed it at the time I was working for the Russians; then came a long period of imprisonment followed by a spell of parole.

It is only now that I'm clear of Soviet Intelligence, prison, and parole, that I am at liberty to make these disclosures.

Within days of Roman's sudden departure from the pub en route for London, I received an urgent summons to a meeting at the lay-by on the Puddletown-Salisbury road. The summons was in the shape of advertising matter purporting to come from the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada.

Roman met me there and earnestly told me that I was to find out all I could about the project from which the diver we had met had been withdrawn.

"It's essential to get anything you can on it," he said. "It may be very important indeed."

It was useless to explain that I knew nothing about the shallow-water diving team other than that such an organisation existed.

I didn't even know where they were accommodated, or what craft they dived from. I didn't even know for sure that they were based near by: they could be based at Portsmouth and come to Portland only as necessary.

It was difficult trying to get Roman to appreciate that the diving team was naval and my department was civilian, so that apart from working for the same firm—the Admiralty—we had nothing in common. However, I promised to try, knowing full well there was little I could do. In fact, in the end I did nothing at all about it.

Although he had mentioned the visit of B and K a few days previously, I couldn't really follow Roman's train of thought. It wasn't until the Crabb episode hit the headlines that I began to get a glimmering.

It was late July before I met Roman again, near Blackbushe Airport, in the car park of the Ely Hotel.

After tea at the hotel he suggested a stroll. We went into the scrubland where we could be neither seen nor overheard. And then he told me the truth about Crabb.

He started off by giving me a lecture on the necessity of taking note of everything I heard. The most casual remark could lead to something of the utmost importance. All this led up to his giving himself a pat on the back for his astuteness in following up and reporting the innocent remark we had heard in the Crown at Punckmowle.

He claimed that as a direct result of his hearing that young woman's remark in the pub, the Ordzhonikidze had been fitted out with two wire jackstays running the full length of the ship below the waterline as a support for underwater sentries to hold on to against the strong tides they would encounter in Portsmouth Harbour.

Six men would guard the ship's bottom at all times and all states of the tide.

They didn't have long to wait. B and K arrived on April 18, and the very next morning the precautions bore results.

In spite of the alertness of the underwater sentries, when Crabb appeared for the first time they lost him in the murky waters of the dockyard.

Some minutes later he was encountered again, and during the ensuing struggle his oxygen was turned off for long enough to make him pass out. His unconscious body was then hastily hauled on board and carried below out of sight.

By this time he was recovering consciousness, but on being taken to the sick bay he passed out again. After medical treatment he recovered and in answer to questions, began to make a confession. During this questioning he collapsed and died.

I asked whether force had been used on him. Roman assured me it hadn't. His opinions tied in with some of the stories which spread in this country later, about Crabb being in poor physical condition and on the verge of alcoholism.

Recovering consciousness in strange surroundings, Crabb was in no fit state to face up to any stringent interrogation. To have used force on him would have defeated the questioners' objectives. They were afraid of his dying—and he beat them to it by doing just that.

"How do you know all this?" I asked Roman.

The answer was straight: "*Because I was there.*"

This was verified later by a man I met a couple of times in Dublin and also, later still, by Gordon Lonsdale. From each of these three sources the story did not vary.

The intention of getting Crabb on board was twofold: to find out what the British wanted to know about the ship, and to be in the position of humiliating them by making a signal that someone had been caught on the ship's bottom and would the British Navy please come and collect him?

This would have been a masterly stroke. Unfortunately that bit went all wrong. With Crabb dying on their hands, the Russians could now find themselves being accused of his death, which had not been in the plan at all.

It was a delicate situation. What were they to do with the body?

It was decided to put him back in the water, lightly secured to the hull by spun yarn, so that by the time the ship had got under way and proceeded a mile or so the yarn would chafe and the body would come adrift. As things turned out, the body remained in the sea for 14 months, probably entangled in a submarine cable or a [illegible]. I

Having heard [illegible] I was anxious to know [illegible]

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THE SUNDAY EXPRESS London 11 1972

Briton who spied for Moscow presents an astounding
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SIAN UNDERSEA SENTRIES
ROGMAN BUSTER CRABB

sian cruiser

FOR the first time in any publication in the West, I can tell the true story of what happened to Commander Lionel Phillip Kenneth Crabb, G.M., O.B.E., R.N.V.R.

A CARELESS remark by a woman in a pub . . . that, says a former member of the Portland spy ring, alerted the Russians to be on watch for British frogmen near Russian warships in Portsmouth Harbour.

by HARRY HOUGHTON

Hardly a year goes by without some new rumour about the frogman who vanished while on a mysterious mission under the Russian warships in Portsmouth harbour in 1956.

It is said, for instance, that he is alive and well in Russia, that he is a captain training Russian underwater teams at Sebastopol.

Crabb is dead.

But I often wonder about how differently this affair might have turned out if the agent I knew as Roman and I had not decided to "get away from it all" one evening in the early spring of 1956 and go off into the country for a drink at the Crown Inn at Puncknowle, in Dorset.

There, I thought, we could relax and drink together without my having to explain away or introduce my friend to all and sundry.

It was in this remote country pub that Russian Intelligence got a line gratuitously on British Intelligence, neither seeking it nor expecting it.

It just came out of the blue.

Roman and I had settled down in the smallish bar, rather crowded with locals. Roman was listening, fascinated, to the strong Dorset dialect of the villagers, when a woman who worked at the Underwater Detection Establishment at Portland arrived.

We knew each other quite well, and I also knew that the man with her was her current fancy, a naval bod from the local shallow - water diving team.

Like Roman and me, this couple had gone to the Crown to have a quiet drink where they wouldn't be known.

They certainly hadn't expected to bump into anyone they knew, but decided to put a good face on it and asked if they could sit at our table, there being no room elsewhere. I introduced Roman as a friend of mine in the Merchant Navy whose ship was in Southampton and who had come to pay me a visit.

After a drink or two the boy friend excused himself and left the table and when he had departed I commented that he seemed very quiet tonight, quite different from what I'd imagined him to be.

I hadn't known him to speak to before this meeting, but had seen and heard him from time to time in another pub I frequented.

The girl said, in effect, that we were to take no notice of his mood. He was a bit fed up, as he—or maybe it was *they*, I'm not sure after all this time—had been training for something special which had then been called off. He was still feeling a bit sore about it.

The statement meant nothing to me, but Roman said idly: *"I wonder what it was?"*

She didn't know—"But something silly, I suppose."

Very soon after this Roman said it was about time he started on his way back to Southampton, which surprised me. We had intended staying in the pub until closing time.

Getting into the car, I suggested that as it was early we should call in at a pub in Abbotsbury and have a snack. But he said he wanted to go straight back to my place and collect his toilet gear as he was returning to London immediately.

When I queried this sudden change in our previous arrangements, he asked if I hadn't heard what the "lady friend" had said. I replied that no one had said anything of any great interest, and frankly I'd been rather bored by the two of them.

"The trouble with you," he snapped, "is that you don't take enough notice of what is said. We'd get on far better if you'd only keep your ears open."

Thoroughly amazed by this outburst, I asked what on earth he was driving at. My own anger was rising at his tone.

"That diver chap who'd been training for something special," he said, "may be more important than you think."

At a loss to understand what he could possibly have made of that fragment of conversation, I let the matter drop.

He collected his bits and pieces, and I drove him to his car. I had one last go, quizzing him about this sudden departure.

He said: "You do know who is coming to Portsmouth soon?"

Then I vaguely remembered having read that Marshal Bulganin and Nikita Krushchev were to pay a state visit to this country in the near future.

When I asked what this had to do with his abrupt return to London, he merely said that they would travel to Portsmouth in a Russian warship and there might be some connection.

put the failure on record in these terms:—

> "During the stay of Soviet warships in Portsmouth, at 7.30 a.m. on April 19th seamen on board the Soviet ships observed a frogman floating between the Soviet destroyers. The frogman, who wore a black diving suit with flippers on his feet, was seen on the surface of the water for one to two minutes, and then dived alongside the destroyer Smotryashchi."

The note went on to say that Captain Koltov, in command of the Ordzhonikidze, had raised the matter with the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth; and it asked for an explanation.

There was a parliamentary uproar. The British Government apologised. And nine days after Crabb's disappearance the Admiralty announced:—

> "Commander Crabb is presumed to be dead as the result of trials with certain underwater apparatus. The location of the trials was in Stokes Bay."

This was a clear admission that the Admiralty *was* in the picture at some stage, but all subsequent inquiries were met with the reply that further disclosures would "not be in the public interest."

An urgent meeting in a lay-by

But just what *did* happen to Crabb? I was aware, as early as July 1956, of the full story from the Soviet side. I could hardly have disclosed it at the time I was working for the Russians; then came a long period of imprisonment followed by a spell of parole.

It is only now that I'm clear of Soviet Intelligence, prison, and parole, that I am at liberty to make these disclosures.

Within days of Roman's sudden departure from the pub en route for London, I received an urgent summons to a meeting at the lay-by on the Puddletown-Salisbury road. The summons was in the shape of advertising matter purporting to come from the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada.

Roman met me there and earnestly told me that I was to find out all I could about the project from which the diver we had met had been withdrawn.

"It's essential to get anything you can on it," he said. "It may be very important indeed."

It was useless to explain that I knew nothing about the

thought. It wasn't until the Crabb episode hit the headlines that I began to get a glimmering.

It was late July before I met Roman again, near Blackbushe Airport in the car park of the Ely Hotel.

After tea at the hotel he suggested a stroll. We went into the scrubland where we could be neither seen nor overheard. And then he told me the truth about Crabb.

He started off by giving me a lecture on the necessity of taking note of everything I heard. The most casual remark could lead to something of the utmost importance. All this led up to his giving himself a pat on the back for his astuteness in following up and reporting the innocent remark we had heard in the Crown at Puncknowle.

He claimed that as a direct result of his hearing that young woman's remark in the pub, the Ordzhonikidze had been fitted out with two wire jackstays running the full length of the ship below the waterline as a support for underwater sentries to hold on to against the strong tides they would encounter in Portsmouth Harbour.

Six men would guard the ship's bottom at all times and all states of the tide.

They didn't have long to wait. B and K arrived on April 18, and the very next morning the precautions bore results.

In spite of the alertness of the underwater sentries, when Crabb appeared for the first time they lost him in the murky waters of the dockyard.

Some minutes later he was encountered again, and during the ensuing struggle his oxygen was turned off for long enough to make him pass out. His unconscious body was then hastily hauled on board and carried below out of sight.

By this time he was recovering consciousness, but on being taken to the sick bay he passed out again. After medical treatment he recovered and in answer to questions, began to make a confession. During this questioning he collapsed and died.

I asked whether force had been used on him. Roman assured me it hadn't. His opinions tied in with some of the stories which spread in this country later, about Crabb being in poor physical condition and on the verge of alcoholism.

Recovering consciousness in strange surroundings, Crabb was in no fit state to face up to any stringent interrogation. To have used force on him would have defeated the questioners' objectives. They were afraid of his dying—and he beat them to it by doing just that.

"How do you know all this?" I asked Roman.

The answer was straight: *"Because I was there."*

This was verified later by a man I met a couple of times in Dublin and also, later still, by Gordon Lonsdale. From each of these three sources the story did not vary.

The intention of getting Crabb on board was twofold: to find out what the British wanted to know about the ship, and to be in the position of humiliating them by making a signal that someone had been caught on the ship's bottom and would the British Navy please come and collect

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When a spy project goes wrong . . .

AFTER the usual exchange of gun salutes at Spithead, the Soviet cruiser and destroyers with the Soviet Prime Minister, Bulganin, and Communist Party Secretary Krushchev on board berthed at Kings Stairs, Portsmouth, on April 18, 1956.

Then the two distinguished guests of this country left by special train for London, where they stayed at Claridge's.

The whole world was intrigued by subsequent events.

Briefly, Crabb was missing after a dive to the bottom of the Ordzhonikidze. His accomplice, "Bernard Smith," had vanished from the Sallyport Hotel in Old Portsmouth, where he and Crabb had stayed. Inspector Lamport of the Portsmouth City Police removed all traces of their names by extracting a page from the hotel register.

Crabb's next appearance was without head or hands, the body still clad in his rubber diving suit, discovered by fishermen in Chichester Creek more than a year later—June 9, 1957, to be precise.

If the Secret Service pull off a job without being discovered, everything is fine. But if a covert project comes unstuck and the foreign Power against whom it's aimed finds out, then the Establishment hold up their hands in horror and deny all knowledge of it.

The Crabb fiasco was a routine job that went wrong. The Soviet Embassy formally

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● **This series is adapted from** *Operation Portland*, **to be published on June 27 by Hart-Davis (£1·95).**

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He said: "You do know who is coming to Portsmouth soon?"

Then I vaguely remembered having read that Marshal Bulganin and Nikita Krushchev were to pay a state visit to this country in the near future.

When I asked what this had to do with his abrupt return to London, he merely said that they would travel to Portsmouth in a Russian warship and there might be some connection.

At the time I could see no possible connection between the pending visit and the girl's remark. But in Roman's mind the girl had triggered off suspicion.

He saw a possible relevance which was endorsed by the K.G.B and passed on to the Soviet Admiralty, who ordered additional security precautions to be taken on the bottoms of the Ordzhonikidze and its attendant destroyers Smotryashchi and Sovershenny while in British waters.

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Roman met me there and earnestly told me that I was to find out all I could about the project from which the diver we had met had been withdrawn.

"It's essential to get anything you can on it," he said. "It may be very important indeed."

It was useless to explain that I knew nothing about the shallow-water diving team other than that such an organisation existed.

I didn't even know where they were accommodated, or what craft they dived from. I didn't even know for sure that they were based near by: they could be based at Portsmouth and come to Portland only as necessary.

It was difficult trying to get Roman to appreciate that the diving team was naval and my department was civilian, so that apart from working for the same firm—the Admiralty—we had nothing in common. However, I promised to try, knowing full well there was little I could do. In fact, in the end I did nothing at all about it.

Although he had mentioned the visit of B and K a few days previously, I couldn't really follow Roman's train of

country later, about Crabb being in poor physical condition and on the verge of alcoholism.

Recovering consciousness in strange surroundings, Crabb was in no fit state to face up to any stringent interrogation. To have used force on him would have defeated the questioners' objectives. They were afraid of his dying—and he beat them to it by doing just that.

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This was verified later by a man I met a couple of times in Dublin and also, later still, by Gordon Lonsdale. From each of these three sources the story did not vary.

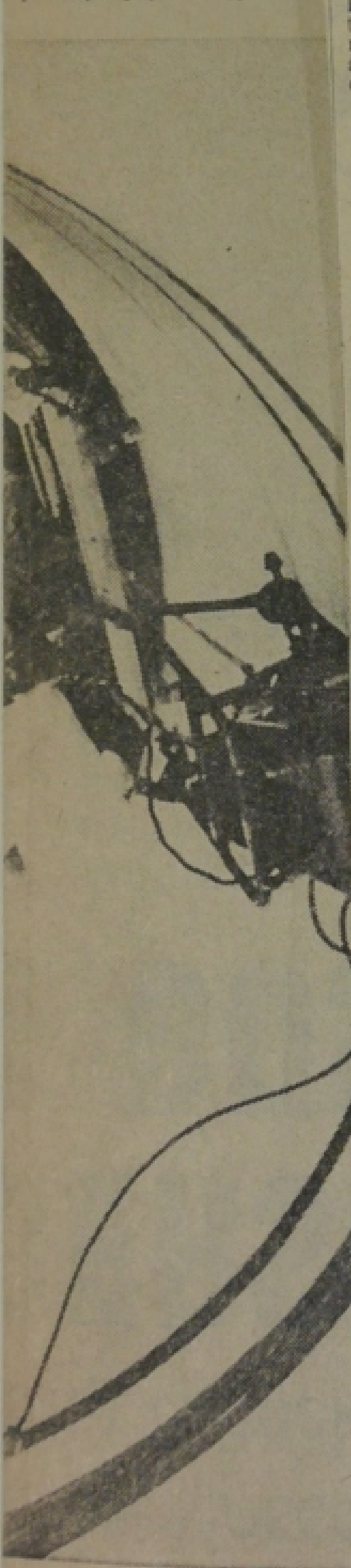
The intention of getting Crabb on board was twofold: to find out what the British wanted to know about the ship, and to be in the position of humiliating them by making a signal that someone had been caught on the ship's bottom and would the British Navy please come and collect him?

This would have been a masterly stroke. Unfortunately that bit went all wrong. With Crabb dying on their hands, the Russians could now find themselves being accused of his death, which had not been in the plan at all.

It was a delicate situation. What were they to do with the body?

It was decided to put him back in the water, lightly secured to the hull by spun yarn, so that by the time the ship had got under way and proceeded a mile or so the yarn would come adrift. As things turned out, the body remained in the sea for 14 months, probably entangled in a submarine cable or a wreck.

Having heard this much, I was anxious to know what the



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EXPRESS London June 11 1972

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London June 11

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JIC - File

Secretary of the Cabinet

Colonel Peat

O/R
SEC
D/Sec
A/Sec B

Sir Burke Trend

—

You wanted a word with Sir J Dunnett on this. 19/2

I have told him that, if Farnhill judges that a high-level follow up to his letter would finally dispose of this programme, he should let Dunnett or myself know.

20/2.

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19th February, 1973

873
20 FEB 1973
1061

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M. NORBURY

(B.M. Norbury)

W.D. Reeves, Esq.

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Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

19 February 1973

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Yours sincerely.

JIC-File

35
FOLIO

SECRET

19th February, 1973

CABINET OFFICE
Ref: A03543
19 FEB 1972

CABINET OFFICE
873
20 FEB 1973
1061

You will no doubt have seen a copy of Robert Armstrong's minute to Sir Burke Trend of 15th February about Commander Crabb, authorising action to be taken as proposed in Sir Burke Trend's submission to the Prime Minister, A03471 of 12th February. Could Admiral Farnhill now take the next steps?

I am sending a copy of this letter to Sir Stewart Crawford.

B. M. NORBURY

(B.M. Norbury)

SEC O/R
~~D/Sec~~
A/Sec B

W.D. Reeves, Esq.

34
FOLIO

Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
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LONDON SW1A 2HB

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JIC - File

34
FOLIO

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary:
Rear Admiral K. H. Farnhill, CB, OBE
Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Cosham (Hants) 77187

Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

19 February 1973

Ref. DN/0309/DPBC

David Darlow Esq.
British Broadcasting Corporation
Southampton Studio Centre
South Western House
Southampton S09 1PF

[illegible]
854
20 FEB 1973
[illegible]
1061

Dear Darlow.

I thought it best to give you as full an answer as possible to your letter of 31 January instead of confining myself to 'D' Notice aspects and have consequently had to consult others, which accounts for the delay in replying.

You say there are two ways of presenting your programme, one with official cooperation which would involve the participation of a naval officer and the other involving only your own reporting team and without official cooperation.

ABec
D/Sec
DIR.
Sec.

So far as the first is concerned, I am informed that no indemnity can be given for any naval officer or rating, whether serving or retired, to divulge official information. This means in effect that no such person could appear on your programme without putting himself at risk. As regards your second course, no authorisation has been given or will be given for the release of information beyond that already published about the Crabb episode of 1956, and no official cooperation in the making of a programme about that episode is to be expected.

If, despite what I have said, you still feel that "an authoritative and definitive film of real archive value" is practicable and decide to go ahead, the possibility of contravening a 'D' Notice might still arise, but I should need to study the full script before offering a firm opinion whether anything in it was in fact covered by 'D' Notices. All I can do at present is undertake to deal as quickly as possible with any script you may decide to produce.

Yours sincerely.

Kenneth Farnhill

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JIC - File

34

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JIC-File

SECRET

CABINET OFFICE
A 3316
16 FEB 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

33

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

CABINET OFFICE
872
20 FEB 1973
1061

SIR BURKE TREND

Commander Crabb

32

The Prime Minister agrees that you should proceed as you propose in your minute of 12 February. 'A03421

I am sending copies of this minute to Antony Acland and Robert Andrew.

RTA

SEC O/R.
~~D/Sec~~
A/Sec B

15 February 1973

SECRET

File

32

13/2

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separate diving operation was planned by the Navy against the Russian cruiser; that this second operation was officially cancelled before it took place; but that it was nevertheless carried out as a wholly unofficial enterprise. The BBC's current contact is said to have been one of those who took part in it; but the Ministry of Defence have so far been unable to identify him.

The BBC have now, in effect, offered the Secretary of the 'D' Notice Committee the choice between a production with, or without, official co-operation - the latter entailing, of course, the use of the materi
to be provided by the "serving senior naval officer". They maintain that a
programme of this kind would discredit the version of Crabb's death which
was put about by the former spy Harry Houghton last summer (in an articl

File

FOLIO 32

SECRET

JIC - File

Herman 13/2

FOLIO 32K

13th February, 1973

CABINET OFFICE
A
Ref. A03485
13 FEB 1973
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No...

CABINET OFFICE
J
30 OCT 1974
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

A03471 (Mr Herman 13/2)

Sir Burke Trend has asked me to send you the enclosed copy of the submission he put to the Prime Minister last night about the programme the BBC propose on Commander Crabb.

I am sending a copy of this letter, and of the submission, to Sir James Dunnett's Private Secretary.

B. M. NORBURY

(B.M. Norbury)

Sir Stewart Crawford, KCMG, CVO

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File

FOLIO 32

SECRET

744

14 FEB 1973

1061

M. Herman

13/2

Secretary of the Cabinet

SEC O/R

D/Sec

A/Sec B

Sir Burke Trend

—

Shall I ask Sir J Dunnett's office to get Adml Farnhill to take the necessary next step?

BN
16.2.73

Yes, please. (I think that we can assume the agreement of the two Secs of S). But I should like a word with Dunnett himself. 16/2

Commander Crabb

pril, 1972, I sent you a submission about a proposal by
ce a TV programme on the Crabb episode in 1956 - a
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E.R.

SECRET

M. Heseltine
13/2

File

FOLIO 32

Ref. A03471...

PRIME MINISTER

13 FEB 1973
FILE No. ....

744
14 FEB 1973
1061

Commander Crabb

On 26th April, 1972, I sent you a submission about a proposal by the BBC to produce a TV programme on the Crabb episode in 1956 - a programme which would include certain new information which, the BBC alleged, they had obtained from a retired naval diver who was still alive but was reluctant to participate for fear of disciplinary reprisals by the Ministry of Defence.

D/SSC

You approved a reply to the BBC to the effect that we could not provide them with official assistance for the purposes of this programme; that we advised them strongly to clear any script with the Secretary of the 'D' Notice Committee; and that any individual appearing on the programme, in order to relate his experiences while in Government service, should consider his position carefully.

A/SSC B

Thereafter there was silence until the BBC revived the project last December. They now envisage producing a programme later this year; and, once again, they are on the track of fresh information which could be embarrassing. Their original ex-naval contact has clearly had second thoughts and has backed out of the picture. But they claim now to be in touch with a "serving senior naval officer" who is prepared to disclose - always provided that this does not expose him to disciplinary action - that, in addition to the operation undertaken by Crabb, a quite separate diving operation was planned by the Navy against the Russian cruiser; that this second operation was officially cancelled before it took place; but that it was nevertheless carried out as a wholly unofficial enterprise. The BBC's current contact is said to have been one of those who took part in it; but the Ministry of Defence have so far been unable to identify him.

The BBC have now, in effect, offered the Secretary of the 'D' Notice Committee the choice between a production with, or without, official co-operation - the latter entailing, of course, the use of the material to be provided by the "serving senior naval officer". They maintain that a programme of this kind would discredit the version of Crabb's death which was put about by the former spy Harry Houghton last summer (in an article in the Sunday Express of 11th June 1972), i.e. that Crabb was caught by Russian undersea sentries. But this seems a very thin justification; and it is pretty clear that the BBC's real motive is to tell a good story, which they think that they have extracted from a Government who are anxious to hush it up.

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RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

In these circumstances we ought to prevent the programme from appearing if we can; and there is some reason to suppose that the BBC would be prepared to consider abandoning it if our reply to their request for co-operation steered them in this direction. It might be necessary, for this purpose, to reinforce the reply with discreet representations at a high level; and, if this proves to be necessary, I will let you know. As regards the reply itself, however, we should clearly refuse all official co-operation; and this is the more so in the light of the new information which has now become available, since we could hardly avoid being drawn into some discussion about the unauthorised operation and this could be very damaging indeed. We should therefore repeat our earlier refusal of help and tell the BBC that we can give them no assistance except by vetting the completed manuscript negatively from the 'D' Notice angle (where our scope is very limited, since we cannot invoke technical security at this distance of time); and we should emphasise, once again, that no indemnity can be given for any naval officer, whether serving or retired, to divulge official information.

To judge by what we have been told, the officer currently concerned is unlikely to consent to appear without some degree of official permission; and there is therefore a reasonable chance that, on this aspect of the matter at least, the BBC will have to choose between making unsubstantiated statements without a witness or saying nothing at all. May we proceed accordingly?

I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Secretary of State for Defence.

BURKE TREND

12th February, 1973

FOLIO 31

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

CABINET OFFICE
0153
14 FEB 1973
[illegible]
FILE No. 1061

J.1061/Je.0576.

MR. NORBURY

COMMANDER CRABB

I attach a draft submission to the Prime Minister as requested at yesterday's meeting.

Admiral Farnhill now tells me that he believes there is a chance of persuading the BBC, at a high level, not to proceed with the programme. He will be discussing this point with Sir Burke when he sees him at 12.30 to-day. I have not attempted to incorporate this thought in the present submission.

[M. E. HERMAN]

7 February, 1973.

Enclosure

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

DRAFT SUBMISSION TO THE PRIME MINISTER

I wrote to you on 27 April 1972 about the BBC's proposed television programme about Commander Crabb. You will recall that at that time the BBC claimed to be in touch with a retired naval diver who could give them fresh information. You approved a reply from the Ministry of Defence to the BBC saying that we could not provide official assistance with the programme, that D Notice clearance of the script was advisable and that any individual appearing on the programme to relate his experiences while in government service should consider his position.

It is now clear that the BBC wish to go ahead with the programme if at all possible, and are planning for production sometime this year. Their original ex-naval contact has got cold feet, but they claim now to be in touch with a "serving senior naval officer" who is prepared to tell his story on television provided this does not lead to disciplinary action. The BBC now know (from one or other of their contacts, or a combination of the two) that, in addition to the operation undertaken by Crabb, a separate diving operation was planned by the Navy against the Russian cruiser. They have also got wind of

[the fact

the fact this second operation, although officially called off, nevertheless took place as an unofficial enterprise. The BBC's latest contact (the serving officer) is said to have been one of those who dived; the Ministry of Defence have so far been unable to identify this officer, but there seems no reason to doubt the claim.

The BBC producer has now written to the Secretary, Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee offering in effect the choice of production with or without official co-operation. It is clear that, in asking for official co-operation, the main point which he has in mind is permission for one of the naval officers to participate in the programme, using an officially agreed form of words. He has put it to us that the story of this second operation would discredit the version of Crabb's death (that he was caught by Russian undersea sentries) put about by Harry Houghton last summer. The relevance is marginal; though no doubt a connection could be demonstrated in a TV programme. Clearly the producer's real motive is that he has stumbled across a good story and wishes to tell it.

I have discussed the matter with those concerned in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence, on the assumption that the programme would reveal that the

[second

second operation was planned, and took place without official approval. From security viewpoint, such revelations at a distance of 17 years would not be directly damaging to our intelligence or defence interests. The fact of a sensitive operation of this kind having taken place apparently in defiance of instructions could cause public comment; but provided no official confirmation was given of the story, this should not be serious. The main objection to the programme is the damage which it might do to our relations with the Russians. If these remain as they are at present, it is unlikely that it would make them chillier. There is however the risk that it would give the Russians an excuse to be obstructive about the measures (including an exchange of naval visits) which are now under consideration to improve relations, leading up perhaps to your own visit to the USSR next year. In this context the programme could do harm, especially if we are unable to influence the timing of its presentation. But the risk of serious damage does not seem sufficient to justify an approach to the BBC to get it stopped. We could not claim a genuine "security" interest; there are doubts whether the D Notice procedure could be held to cover all aspects of the operation; and we should invite the usual charge of attempting to suppress legitimate criticism of past events.

[Though

Though these factors suggest that we should not try to stop the programme, offering official co-operation would be a different matter. It might be difficult to avoid an admission about the unauthorised operation; and it would in any case be a dangerous precedent. The only likely benefit - that we might be able to influence the content and timing of the programme - hardly seems to balance the risks. (We can of course still try an approach to the Director General of the BBC if it turns out that the date proposed for screening is diplomatically unsuitable.) I believe therefore that we should tell the BBC that we are unable to assist, except by vetting the completed manuscript from a D Notice angle; and repeat our warning that no advance clearance can be given for the naval officer to divulge official information. It seems from what we have been told that he is unlikely to consent to appear without some official backing, so there is a reasonable chance that on this aspect of the Crabb affair the BBC producer may have a choice between making unsubstantiated statements, without a witness, or saying nothing at all.

You may wish to consult the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Secretary of State for Defence, who are receiving copies of this minute.

30

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary: Rear Admiral K H Farnhill, CB, OBE
Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Cosham (Hants) 77187

Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON, SW1A 2HB

Ref. 645

-7 FEB 1973
1061

b/f.

Crabb file

Dear Mike,

Here is a copy of Darlow's letter. If you would like some help with the draft for ministers let me know & I'll come over.

Yrs

Kenneth

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(42)

BBC

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BBC

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
SOUTHAMPTON STUDIO CENTRE
SOUTH WESTERN HOUSE SOUTHAMPTON S09 1PF
TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAMS SOUTHAMPTON 26201

DEFENCE PRESS AND
BROADCASTING COMMITTEE
-2 FEB 1973
D/N/0309/7928

31st January, 1973

Dear Admiral,

Thank you for your help in arranging our meeting with the Director of Naval Security regarding a documentary programme on Commander Crabb.

Clearly the problem is to make an authoritative and definitive film which will be of real archive value. At the same time we wish to put in its true perspective an affair which has been grossly distorted in the past - including one recent account which achieved national prominence.

There are two ways of presenting such a programme.......

1. With official co-operation, and as far as possible in the voices of those concerned.

   Here we recognise that for security reasons it may not be possible to fully-discuss certain details. Even where there are no longer security obstacles - as in the case of the "2nd Operation" - we will be prepared to agree a form of words which could then be told by one of the Naval Officers concerned.

the alternative is:

2. The facts of the Crabb affair (insofar as they are known) told by our reporting team, acting without official co-operation.

Continued/. . . .

The first alternative, we feel, would be the most satisfactory for all parties concerned. Since we are assured that there are no longer vital matters of security involved, there remain the purely political considerations. We therefore ask the co-operation of those government departments involved in the making of an accurate and authoratitive record of the Crabb affair.

Such a documentary would also be timely..... we are well aware of the interest of other (overseas) media who are actively prospecting the Crabb story embracing many of the myths that we can destroy.

I enclose a précis of our script on the "2nd Operation" for your comments, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

David Darlow

(David Darlow)

Admiral K.H. Farnhill,
Secretary,
Press and Broadcasting Committee,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building, Room 6368,
Whitehall, LONDON, W.1.

PRÉCIS OF PROPOSED SCRIPT

ON '2ND OPERATION'

1. Houghton's story is discredited by new information that has come into our possession......

2. An espionage operation was planned against the Russian warships by a specialist team of divers from the Royal Navy's Underwater Weapons and Countermeasures Establishment at H.M.S. Vernon in Portsmouth.

3. That operation was cancelled. It went ahead nevertheless. Who gave the order is still not known. There is a strong possibility that it was carried out on an unofficial basis, without Whitehall's knowledge.

4. While the Russian ships were anchored at Portsmouth, the frogmen entered the water. They were seeking important information on the Russian's sonar equipment - fixed to the underside of the ship. The men located and examined the apparatus, and brought back intelligence material of considerable value.

5. What they didn't find were any of the preparations listed by Houghton - patrols of underwater sentries clinging to staywires that had been rigged to the ship's hull.

6. We know the names of some of the men who took part in this operation. They are forbidden to talk about it on television by the Official Secrets Act - although the Navy acknowledges that after 17 years national security is no longer at stake.

Sf. 0.1

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SECRET - U.K. EYES A

J.1061/Je.0567.

S.F.

2 February, 1973.

J 0147
-7 FEB 1973
1061

28

I have just received the enclosed letter (DN/0309/DPBC dated 30 January 1973) from Rear Admiral Farnhill.

I hasten to pass it on to you because I understand that Air Vice Marshal Wakeford will be discussing it with you this morning. In the meantime, I have been informed by the MOD that the Chief of Naval Staff has requested that no action should be taken on the letter, nor any further distribution of it made until the Air Vice Marshal has discussed it with you.

For ease of reference I am also attaching a copy of our letter, referred to by Admiral Farnhill, together with copies of JIC(A)(72)(SEC)186 and JIC(A)(72)48th Meeting Minute 5, which may be relevant to your meeting with DS Int this morning.

[J. M. PETIT]

Sir Stewart Crawford, K.C.M.G., C.V.O.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
Downing Street [West].

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Sufficiency to keep

A. Sec. B 6

SECRET FOR U.K. EYES ONLY

SECRET - UK EYES A

Folio 28

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary:
Rear Admiral K. H. Farnhill, CB, OBE

Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Cosham (Hants) 77187

Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

CABINET OFFICE
J 589
-5 FEB 1973
1061

30 January 1973

Ref. DN/0309/DPBC

ME Herman Esq
Secretary JIC
Cabinet Office
London SW1

Dear Herman,

BBC TELEVISION PROGRAMME ON
COMMANDER CRABB

Folio 27

Your letter J.1061/Je.0483 of 19 December 1972. David Darlow came to see me on 25 January 1973 accompanied by David Mills and Tom Mangold who are respectively to produce and present the Crabb programme if the BBC go ahead with it. Colonel Macafee, the Director of Naval Security was also present.

Darlow said that although the Crabb programme had started as a BBC South project, it had now been accepted for full network screening, probably on BBC 2. The BBC wished to go ahead with it if at all possible because they believed that the Crabb affair was still of great public interest and because they had obtained new evidence which in their opinion discredited the accounts put out by Houghton in his book "Operation Portland" and in the Sunday Times Magazine. This new evidence showed, they claimed, that a separate operation from that undertaken by Crabb had been mounted by Naval personnel who had dived under the Russian Cruiser and had found no trace of Crabb or of the equipment said by Houghton to have been placed on the hull of the ship by the Russians themselves as a counter to possible underwater activity. They were in contact with a "Serving Senior Naval Officer" who claimed to have taken part in this operation and was prepared to tell his story in front of the cameras provided he could be assured that he would not be putting himself or his pension prospects at risk by so doing. Darlow wanted to know if this "Serving Senior Naval Officer" would be allowed to appear and tell his story subject to what he said being vetted by myself or Colonel Macafee and added, that, if we wished, either or both of us could be present when the interview was recorded so that we could stop anything being said that ought not to be said.

/Colonel Macafee ...

SECRET FOR U.K. EYES ONLY

SECRET - UK EYES A

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Colonel Macafee explained the effect of the OSA and said that the "Serving Senior Naval Officer" would be in breach of that Act if he imparted information, classified or unclassified, which he had acquired through his Service unless the release of that information had been specifically authorised. This rather naturally prompted the question whether, since all this had happened almost 17 years ago, release could be authorised, to which we replied that neither of us was able to venture an opinion on that partly because we did not know whether the story was true or fabricated and partly because, as the Crabb affair had at the time proved the subject of an exchange of notes between HM and the Soviet Government, it was beyond our competence.

After considerable discussion in which Darlow stated that the "Serving Senior Naval Officer" had not so far told him anything and would not do so until he had received a clearance, we agreed that we could not proceed further until we had seen a synopsis of the script of the programme which Darlow promised to send to me as soon as possible.

Whilst it may be true that the "Serving Senior Naval Officer" has not said anything so far, it was clear to both DNSY and myself that Darlow has got hold of a fairly detailed story from someone. Having clearly devoted a lot of time and effort to the programme he is anxious to go on with it and was plainly disappointed with the result of his meeting with us; his colleagues on the other hand seem more ready to grasp the implications of what was said and realise, I feel sure, that they are likely to get into very deep water if they are not very careful.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth

Secretary of the Cabinet

Sir Burke Trend

You will recall your submission to the Prime Minister of last April (folios 8 and 9) The top folio gives the present state of action on the programme

R 5/12

A. Sec/B 6

P 27

S File copy

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

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01363
20 DEC 1972
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19 December, 1972.

ELEVISION PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

y the JIC(A) at their meeting on
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ister. I should therefore be most
d continue to keep me informed of develop-

I am copying this letter to DGI.

✓

[M. E. HERMAN]

Rear-Admiral K. Farnhill, C.B., O.B.E.
Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

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suffice to keep him informed

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A. Sec. B 6 Sec,

pt. 27

S File copy

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

J.1061/Je.0483.

19 December, 1972.

01363
20 DEC 1972
1061

BBC TELEVISION PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

As instructed by the JIC(A) at their meeting on 14 December, I have told the Secretary of the Cabinet of the Committee's latest discussion on this subject. In his reply, Sir Burke Trend has asked that I should keep him informed of any further developments, since at some stage, when it is known how the script emerges for vetting, he may wish to minute the Prime Minister. I should therefore be most grateful if you could continue to keep me informed of developments in the case.

I am copying this letter to DGI.

✓

[M. E. HERMAN]

Rear-Admiral K. Farnhill, C.B., O.B.E.
Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

sufficient to keep him informed

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SECRET - U.K. EYES A

SF

J.1061/Je.0484.

A Su/B. 6 sec, pl.

01362
20 DEC 1972
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19 December, 1972.

27

I attach a copy of a letter dated 19 December, reference J.1061/Je.0483, from me to Admiral Farnhill, asking him to keep me informed of developments in the case of the BBC TV programme on Commander Crabb.

It occurs to me that there may be aspects of the case (e.g., action by MOD security authorities to forestall leaks to the BBC) which might not necessarily fall within the province of Secretary DPBC to report. In view of Sir Burke Trend's interest in the case I should be very grateful if you could arrange for me to be kept in the picture on any major developments.

[M. E. HERMAN]

Enclosure

Vice-Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, K.B.E., C.B.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

suffice to keep him informed.

CODE 18-75

1061

23m

Reference...

25

Secretary

1. See attached draft to D.G.I.

19/12

A/tu JB

I think this provides us with an excuse for asking both Denning and the "security" bits of the Navy (via DGI) to keep us informed. Could you please draft a couple of notes.

20 DEC 1972

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MG 18/12

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Type 2 letters pl.

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M. Herman 20/12

OGRAMME

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James Dunnett

Thank you. Please … informed about … meetings, since I may wish to minute the P.M. when we know how the script emerges from the vetting.

B. 15/12

M. E. Herman

[M. E. HERMAN]

15 December, 1972.

Enclosure: Copy No.27 of Confidential Annex JIC(A)(72) 48th Meeting, Minute 5.

Copy No.55 of JIC(A)(72)(SEC)186.

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

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of the meeting to Burke … sufficient to keep him informed.

D/Sec

CODE 18-75

1061

Folio 23m

Folio 24

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

M. Herman 20/12

J.1061/Je.0468.

01341
20 DEC 1972
1061

MR. NORBURY

COMMANDER CRABB - TELEVISION PROGRAMME

1. When JIC(A) discussed this subject at their meeting yesterday, the Committee instructed me to keep Sir Burke Trend informed. I would therefore be grateful if you would draw Sir Burke's attention to the attached record of the Committee's discussion.

2. For ease of reference I am also attaching a copy of JIC(A)(72)(SEC)186 which was the paper under consideration by the Committee.

21

3. Sir Burke may wish to know that the Director General of Intelligence has undertaken to keep Sir James Dunnett informed.

Thank you. Please keep me informed about developments, since I may wish to minute the P.M. when we know how the script emerges from the vetting.

B.
15/12

M. E. Herman

[M. E. HERMAN]

15 December, 1972.

Enclosure: Copy No.27 of Confidential Annex JIC(A)(72) 48th Meeting, Minute 5.

Copy No.55 of JIC(A)(72)(SEC)186.

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

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of the meeting to [illegible]
sufficient to keep him informed.
DlSec

CODE 18-75

SECRET
UK EYES A

Reg
23m

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COPY NO 34-6

UK EYES A

CABINET

JOINT INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE (A)

CONFIDENTIAL ANNEX

JIC(A)(72) 48th Meeting Minute 5
THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER 1972 at 11.00 am

5

5. COMMANDER CRABB - TELEVISION PROGRAMME

Previous reference: JIC(A)(72) 15th Meeting, Minute 7.

THE SECRETARY, introducing JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 186, a note on this subject, said that he thought the Committee would wish to be appraised of this latest development. He had received recent confirmation from Admiral Denning that the script of the proposed television programme on Commander Crabb would, if it materialised, be submitted for vetting under the D Notice procedure. The only action that could be taken at present was to warn the BBC's new alleged contact of the dangers of making any unauthorised disclosures. Arrangements were in hand by the Ministry of Defence to attempt to identify the officer concerned and warn him accordingly.

The Committee:

1. Took note of the statement by the Secretary and instructed him to keep the Secretary of the Cabinet informed.

2. Invited the Ministry of Defence to keep the Committee informed of further developments.

Cabinet Office

15 December 1972

UK EYES A
SECRET

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of the meeting to Denne was
sufficient to keep him informed.

CODE 18-75

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

PERSONAL

① A. Sec. B.

Sec, pl.

② B.U. 13.12.72.
to Mr. Herman, pl.

J.1061/Je.0458.

CABINET OFFICE
01318
11 DEC 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

8 December, 1972.

You will have seen that I have put the latest information about the BBC's television programme on Crabb on the Agenda for next week's JIC(A) [JIC(A)(72)(SEC)186 dated 7 December]. My reason for writing to you now is that in my Secretarial Note I deliberately did not include one piece of information mentioned by Admiral Denning. This was that the BBC's new informant or contact is apparently still serving in "Vernon". One presumes from this that, if it is true, he could be identified without too much difficulty and warned off the course by the MOD authorities.

I did not broadcast this point to the Committee since action against a Serving Officer on a basis of information volunteered to the Secretary DPBC might be a delicate matter to handle. However, I feel you should be aware of this possibility of identifying the contact, as the question of MOD action to forestall new disclosures to the BBC is almost certain to arise in Thursday's discussion. It is very probable that you will have heard

[about

Vice-Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, K.B.E., C.B.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET - U.K. EYES A

PERSONAL

---

of the meeting to Burke will
suffice to keep him informed.

CODE 18-75

about this either direct from Admiral Denning or from other sources within the MOD, but I thought I would write you this note just to make sure.

[M. E. HERMAN]

of the meeting to Burke will suffice to keep him informed.

CODE 18-75

11 DEC 1972
10/61

Reference..............................

SECRETARY (Thru A/Sec B).

So many words have already been written on the unfortunate Crabb. I doubt the proposed BBC programme will come up with anything new, unless Darlow manages to persuade his contact to talk. As the contact is reputed to be a serving officer in Vernon all sorts of pressures can be put on him to make him keep his mouth shut.

It seems to me that the contact is the key to the situation. Therefore the Committee should invite DSI to pursue the matter further in conjunction with the Security Service and pinpoint the officer concerned and tell him to keep quiet. DSI should report back to the Committee when he is in a position to do so.

A copy of the relevant minutes of the meeting to Burke will suffice to keep him informed.

D/Sec

SF 20

SECRET

UK EYES A

Registry

FOLIO 21

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 186 COPY NO 48

7 December 1972

-7 DEC 1972
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CABINET

JOINT INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE (A)

COMMANDER CRABB: PROPOSED TELEVISION PROGRAMME

Previous References: JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 101
JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 112
JIC(A)(72) 15th Meeting, Minute 7

FOLIO 14/18
FOLIO 5

1. The Committee will wish to be informed that the Secretary of the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee has learnt that plans for the BBC television programme on Crabb, in abeyance for some months, have been revived and funds voted for production some time in the New Year. Admiral Denning has again stressed to the producer concerned, Mr Darlow, that he is in no position to give clearance for Darlow's contact to talk to the BBC. The contact, apparently a serving officer, who had been involved in the Crabb case, is unwilling to co-operate with the BBC without prior security clearance.

2. Admiral Denning has therefore advised Darlow that his contact should first get in touch with his own security officer before entering into any discussions of his experiences with the BBC.

3. The Committee may wish to consider what action, if any, needs to be taken at this stage. I am accordingly placing this item on the Agenda for the JIC(A) meeting on THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER 1972.

Signed M E HERMAN

Secretary
Joint Intelligence Committee

Cabinet Office
7 December 1972

DISTRIBUTION

JIC(A)
Vice-Admiral Sir Norman Denning, Room 6354 MOD
Mr C J Child

UK EYES A

SECRET

SF

FOLIO 20

SECRET

J.1061/Je.0441.

4 December, 1972.

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FOLIO 19

Thank you very much for your DN/0309/DPBC of 30 November about the proposed BBC programme on Commander Crabb.

As previously (e.g., JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 112 of 3 July) I will keep the JIC(A) informed by circulating the gist of your letter.

[M. E. HERMAN]

Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, K.B.E., C.B.,
Ministry of Defence,
Room 6354,
Main Building.

SECRET

SECRET

FOLIO 19

DEFENCE ~~SERVICES~~, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary: Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, KBE, CB
Telephones:
Office, 01-930-7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Micheldever (Hants) 268

Room ~~0373~~ 6354
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON, S.W.1

Ref DN/0309/DPBC

30 November 1972

5435
- 1 DEC 1972
1061

ME Herman Esq
Secretary JIC
Cabinet Office
Whitehall SW1

Dear Herman,

A Sec B
D Sec.
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Reference JIC(A)(72)112 of 3 July 1972, David Darlow phoned me yesterday in view of the fact that he had read of my forthcoming retirement as Secretary.

He informed me that although the proposed BBC television programme on Crabb had lain dormant for some months, it had now been revived and the necessary funds voted for production sometime in the New Year. He clearly wanted my help to enable one of the officers with whom he had been in contact to talk. I again emphasised to him that I was in no position to give any assurance to his informant who apparently is still serving in "Vernon". My only advice was for his informant to contact his own security officer before saying anything.

Yours sincerely
Norman Denning

By D Sec

One wonders why the Admiral writes to us. DSI is the right person, since the informant involved is a serving offr.

SECRET

FOLIO 18

STY'S GOVERNMENT

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comments that "clearly from his conversation he has unearthed the true story concerning the operations of the naval diving team". Darlow was told that any introduction of this aspect would be contrary to "D" Notices, and he has given a firm assurance that he would consult with Admiral Denning and submit any scenario and script under the "D" Notice system.

Signed D E Chamberlain
for Secretary
Joint Intelligence Committees

Cabinet Office

3 July 1972

DISTRIBUTION
JIC(A) (Limited)
Vice-Admiral Sir Norman Denning, Room 6354, MOD
Mr Childs

SECRET
U.K. EYES ONLY

18

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 112

3 July 1972

- 3 JUL 1972
1061

COPY NO 45

UK EYES ONLY
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OFFICERS

CABINET

JOINT INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE (A)

COMMANDER CRABB: PROPOSED TELEVISION PROGRAMME

Previous Reference: JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 101

The BBC producer concerned, Mr Darlow, has informed Vice-Admiral Sir Norman Denning that he has discovered that his diver informant (see reference) had not, as claimed, been involved in the intelligence operations. However, Mr Darlow had been put in touch with an officer who had been involved but who was not willing to co-operate with the BBC without security clearance. Admiral Denning told Darlow that he was not in a position to give such security clearance but felt sure that any approach to the security authorities concerned would meet with the strongest advice to his contact not to discuss his experiences with the BBC.

2. Darlow mentioned that he had read Houghton's article in the Sunday Express dated 11 June 1972.on the Crabb case, which had further aroused his interest, and that he would still like to undertake a film on Crabb. Admiral Denning comments that "clearly from his conversation he has unearthed the true story concerning the operations of the naval diving team". Darlow was told that any introduction of this aspect would be contrary to "D" Notices, and he has given a firm assurance that he would consult with Admiral Denning and submit any scenario and script under the "D" Notice system.

Signed D E Chamberlain
for Secretary
Joint Intelligence Committees

Cabinet Office
3 July 1972

DISTRIBUTION
JIC(A) (Limited)
Vice-Admiral Sir Norman Denning, Room 6354, MOD
Mr Childs

Copy to M. Herman, JIC

17

H 9JX

Sec/ I believe that JIC(A) should be informed of this development
A Sec B.

With the Compliments of

Clifton Child

Registry
Please file.

CABINET OFFICE
Historical Section,
Queen Anne's Chambers,
41, Tothill Street,
London, S.W.1
Telephone: WHItehall 5422

3142
27 JUN 1972
1061.

16

th June 1972

Commander Crabb

Many thanks for your letter, reference D/N/0309/DPBC, of 26th June, of which I am sending a copy to Mike Herman, the Secretary of the JIC, together with a copy of this reply.

I read Houghton's articles in the Sunday Express with a sense of horror and revulsion in no way diminished by the knowledge that this man is going to make more out of treason (the publishers being all poised, I gather, to promote the book into a best-seller) than many a serious historian earns from a book based upon a lifetime of research.

It may at least be in some measure reassuring that the BBC are definitely committed to clearing their script with you.

(C.J. Child)

Noted

Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, KBE., CB.,
Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee,
Room 6314,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
London, S.W.1.

Copy to M. Herman, JIC

17

H 9JX

27th June 1972

BBC Programme on Commander Crabb

Many thanks for your letter, reference D/N/0309/DPBC, of 26th June, of which I am sending a copy to Mike Herman, the Secretary of the JIC, together with a copy of this reply.

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It may at least be in some measure reassuring that the BBC are definitely committed to clearing their script with you.

(C.J. Child)

✓ Noted

Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, KBE., CB.,
Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee,
Room 6314,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building,
Whitehall,
London, S.W.1.

SECRET

DEFENCE, XXXXXX PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary:
Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, K.B.E., C.B.

Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Micheldever (Hants.) 268

Room 0XX 6314
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON S.W.1

26 June 1972

Ref. D/N/0309/DPBC

Copy No 1 of 14

CABINET OFFICE
H 691
27 JUN 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

C J Child Esq
Historical Section
Cabinet Office
Queen Anne's Chambers
41 Tothill St
LONDON SW1H 9JX

Dear Clifton,

BBC PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

Reference: D/N/0309/DPBC of 23 May 1972

DARLOW?

Parker phoned me on 20 June having just returned from a holiday. Before proceding on holiday, he had informed me that he had discovered that his original informant was not a member of the naval team which operated against the Russian cruiser, but he had been put in touch with an officer who had been but the latter was unwilling to talk without security clearance. I told him that I was not in a position to give security clearance and I was sure that any approach to the security authorities would meet with the strongest advice to his contact not to talk.

Whilst on holiday he had read Houghton's story in the Sunday Express concerning the Crabb case which had further aroused his interest and he was still very keen to do a film on Crabb. Clearly from his conversation he has unearthed the true story concerning the operations of the naval diving team. I told him that any introduction of this aspect would be contrary to 'D' Notices. However, I fear he may be determined to introduce some element of it but I have his complete assurance he will consult me and submit to me any scenario and script.

Yours
Norman Denning.

SECRET

SECRET

DEFENCE, XXXXXX PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

M. Heseman

This is now a spare copy

16

Secretary:
Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, K.B.E., C.B.

Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Micheldever (Hants.) 268

Room 0XX 6314
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON S.W.1

Ref. D/N/0309/DPBC

26 June 1972

Copy No 2 of 14

CABINET OFFICE
A 8618
27 JUN 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

J 3151
27 JUN 1972
1061

C J Child Esq
Historical Section
Cabinet Office
Queen Anne's Chambers
41 Tothill St
LONDON SW1H 9JX

COPY TO:

PS Sir Burke Trend ✓
PS PUS
DUS(P)
AUS(D STAFF)
CPR
AUS(NS)
Head of DS5
Head of DS11
Head of C2(AD)
DPR(N)
FCO (Mr Rose)

Dear Clifton,

BBC PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

Reference: D/N/0309/DPBC of 23 May 1972

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Yours
Norman Denning

SECRET

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FOLIO 14

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JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 101

30 May 1972

CABINET OFFICE
30 MAY 1972
[illegible]
SER. No. 1061

COPY NO 45

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CABINET

JOINT INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE (A)

COMMANDER CRABB: PROPOSED TELEVISION PROGRAMME

Previous Reference: JIC(A)(72) 15th Meeting, Minute 7

FOLIO 5

1. Following the Committee's discussion at reference, the Ministry of Defence replied to the BBC on the lines indicated in discussion. The reply was also seen and approved in draft by the Secretary of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister.

2. The BBC producer concerned, Mr Darlow, has now informed Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning that the wife of the diver who might have appeared in the programme was highly strung and was against her husband taking part in the reconstruction of events concerning Crabb. In the circumstances, Darlow does not consider it wise to press matters further at present. If and when he finds it possible to proceed with the programme, Darlow has given an assurance that he will keep in touch with Admiral Denning.

Signed D E CHAMBERLAIN

for Secretary
Joint Intelligence Committees

Cabinet Office

30 May 1972

DISTRIBUTION

JIC(A)(Limited)
Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning
Mr Child

SECRET
U.K. EYES ONLY

FOLIO 13

CABINET OFFICE
2691
25 MAY 1972
1061

25th May 1972

BBC Programme on Commander Crabb

Many thanks for your letter DN/0309/DPBC of 23rd May, which I have shown to the Secretary of the JIC.

I am grateful to be kept informed.

ABse B

(C.J. Child)

Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, KBE., CB.,
Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee,
Room 6354,
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building, Whitehall,
London, S.W.1.

FOLIO 12

Trend

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AY 1972
1061

FOLIO 12

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(Vice Admiral)

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Copy to:

PS/Sir Burke Trend
PS/PUS
DUS(P)
AUS(D Staff)
CPR
AUS(NS)
Head of DS5
Head of C2(AD)
DPR(N)
FCO (Mr Rose)
Head of DS11

CONFIDENTIAL

DEFENCE ~~XXXXXXX~~ PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Sir Burke Trend

FOLIO 12

Secretary:
Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, K.B.E., C.B.

Telephones:
Office, 01-930 7022, Ext. 2206
Home, Micheldever (Hants.) 268

Room 0XXX 6354
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON S.W.1

23 May 1972

Ref. DN/0309/DPBC

CABINET OFFICE
A 8036
23 MAY 1972
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FILE No. ....

CABINET OFFICE
2683
25 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

CJ Child Esq
Cabinet Office
Historical Section
Queen Anne's Chambers
41 Tothill Street
London SW1H 9JX

FOLIO 10

BBC PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

AUS(Defence Staff)/271 of 22 May 1972, I contacted Mr Darlow again yesterday 22 May 1972 who informed me he had run into snags. Apparently the diver's wife is a neurotic and is against her husband taking any part in the reconstruction of events concerning the Crabb case. In the circumstances Darlow does not think it wise at present to press matters further. If and when he finds it possible to proceed with the film he assures me he will keep in touch with me.

BO ASecB
30.5

NORMAN DENNING (Vice Admiral)

Copy to:

PS/Sir Burke Trend
PS/PUS
DUS(P)
AUS(D Staff)
CPR
AUS(NS)
Head of DS5
Head of C2(AD)
DPR(N)
FCO (Mr Rose)
Head of DS11

Mr. Chamberlain

FOLIO 11

CONFIDENTIAL

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1

TELEPHONE 01-930 7022

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

PUS/72/991

22 May 1972

Sir Burke Trend GCB CVO
Cabinet Office
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

CABINET OFFICE
A 8047
23 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

CABINET OFFICE
J 2682
25 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

Dear Burke,

Seen by Sir Burke Trend on 23/5

THE CASE OF COMMANDER CRABB

You mentioned to me the other day that when you consulted the Prime Minister about the above case he commented on the time it had taken the Ministry of Defence to deal with it.

I asked my people to look into this. The fact of the matter is that the BBC producer concerned got in touch, in the first instance, with an information officer on the Navy Department's side here and I am afraid it took the Navy Department two months before they brought the matter to the attention of the Central Staffs in the Ministry of Defence. They have been duly admonished.

BU ASecb
30.5.

I am afraid this is one of those cases that happen from time to time when a number of people, not knowing quite what to do with the issue before them, shuffle the papers between themselves.

Yours ever,

Ned Dunnett.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Sir Burke Trend

FOLIO 10

E.R.

AUS (Defence Staff)/271

Cabinet Office (Mr Child)

Copy to :

PS/Sir Burke Trend ✓
PS/PUS
DUS (P)
CPR
AUS (NS)
Sec/DPBC
Head of DS 5
Head of C2 (AD)
DPR (N)
FCO (Mr Rose)
Head of DS 11

CABINET OFFICE
A 8023
23 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

CABINET OFFICE
2684
25 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

BBC PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

Admiral Denning has reported to me that Mr Darlow, the BBC producer concerned, telephoned him the other day seeking an assurance that the diver (of whom, of course, we have already heard) would not endanger his pension rights if he took part in the programme about Commander Crabb. Admiral Denning naturally responded that he was in no position to give such an assurance. He did, however, extract from Mr Darlow that he could expect to receive the BBC script on the proposed programme about Commander Crabb for vetting, in due course. Clearly, therefore, the BBC have not made much progress so far.

~~BU~~ ASecB
38.5

(Sgd) P. T. E. ENGLAND

P T E ENGLAND
AUS (Defence Staff)

22 May 1972

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

FOLIO 9

CABINET OFFICE
7635
MAY 1972
INSTRUCTIONS
No.

2609
22 MAY 1972
1061

Secretary of the Cabinet

M. ~~Heaman~~

To note (and hold please)

B N

18.5.72

CABINET OFFICE
J e 52
18 MAY 1972

File: 1061

A ~~H~~ B

Committee?

Crabb

approves the draft
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A01729

FOLIO 8

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He will be grateful
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1 May, 1972

I have spoken accordingly to Sir J. Dunnett, who is contrite.

17/5.

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BURKE TREND

27th April, 1972

SECRET

FOLIO 9

PRIME MINISTER

10 Downing Street
Whitehall

CABINET OFFICE
A 7635
-1 MAY 1972
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FILE No. ....

CABINET OFFICE
J 2609
22 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

SIR BURKE TREND

Commander Crabb

FOLIO 8

The Prime Minister approves the draft letter attached to your minute A01729 of 27 April.

He thinks that it is deplorable that it has taken two months and three weeks to reply to the B.B.C.'s letter. He will be grateful if you will make an immediate inquiry into the cause of the delay, so that those responsible can be rebuked and action taken to ensure that it does not happen again.

RTA

1 May, 1972

I have spoken accordingly to Sir J. Dunnett, who is contrite.

B.T. 17/5.

SECRET

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BURKE TREND

27th April, 1972

8

Miss Grand

Reference..............................

~~A/Sec/B.~~ → D/Sec

To note. Please advise me about keeping the Committee (and Chairman) informed. Coordinators should also see these papers.

1/5.

CABINET OFFICE
Je 37
1 MAY 1972
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FILE No. ....

CODE 18-78

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But it is perhaps not likely at this interval after the event to do them much harm.

BURKE TREND

27th April, 1972

SECRET

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CABINET OFFICE
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

CABINET OFFICE
SECRET
2607
22 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ...10.61..

8

Miss Grand

Ref. A01729

PRIME MINISTER

Commander Crabb

The BBC are considering the production of a 30-minute TV programme on the mysterious disappearance of Commander Crabb in 1956. They claim that almost the whole of this programme will consist of material which has already been published; but they profess to have obtained certain additional information from another diver who is still alive but is reluctant to appear for fear of reprisals by the Ministry of Defence! The BBC maintain that this individual whose identity they are not prepared to disclose at this stage will say that Crabb died in Stokes Bay. This, so far as it goes, is in line with the official version of Crabb's death, i.e. that he died while testing new apparatus in Stokes Bay. But there can, of course, be no certainty that this new witness would necessarily confine himself to this story once he appeared before the cameras.

The matter has been considered by the FCO and the Ministry of Defence, who have agreed the attached draft letter to the BBC. I am rather doubtful whether this will prevent either the BBC from making the programme or the unidentified individual from taking part in it. But given the amount of information about the Crabb affair which has already been published (particularly by the Sunday Times in their colour supplement some time ago) I doubt whether we can press our objections any more strongly - or whether we should be wise to try to do so. It cannot do our relations with the Soviet Government much good, particularly if the new witness confirms that we sent divers under the Soviet ships. But it is perhaps not likely at this interval after the event to do them much harm.

BURKE TREND

27th April, 1972

SECRET

E.R.

FOLIO 7

AUS (Defence Staff)/234

PS/Sir Burke Trend

Copy to :

PS/PUS
DUS (P)
CPR
AUS (NS)
Sec/DPBC
Head of DS 5
Head of C2 (AD)
DPR (N)
FCO (Mr Rose)
Head of DS 11

[illegible]
2608
22 MAY 1972
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1061

BBC PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

1. We spoke. I gather that the JIC machinery has not yet submitted to you the slightly revised version of the MOD draft which was agreed at the JIC(A) meeting on 20 April. I had therefore better send it to you myself, copy attached. The Ministry of Defence is perfectly content with it and, if you are too, could you please telephone AUS (NS) (Federal 2216) or Head of DS 5 (Federal 2861) so that the letter can be issued as soon as possible.

2. Otherwise, JIC(A) invited the Ministry of Defence "to ascertain the stage which the programme had reached and to inform the Foreign and Commonwealth Office accordingly". We are taking this up.

P.T.E. England

P T E ENGLAND
AUS (Defence Staff)

25 April 1972

SECRET

UK EYES ONLY

SECRET

UK EYES ONLY

SECRET

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
718
AUS (D. STAFF)
LONDON

Secretary of the Cabinet

Sir Burke Trend

I have told the Ministry of Defence that their letter to the BBC may go (so as to avoid further delay), but confirmed my message to that.

1/5

PC put with GEN 19 pp for meeting tomorrow. 1/5.

BB

phone, DGI put this matter before the JIC this
the view that our response should be a low level
a high level approach to the BBC. They therefore
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new draft which DGI feels reflects the attitude
grateful if you would consult us again before
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to know that, apart from MOD aspects of the
essed in Committee emanated from the FCO, who are
mes such as this should not appear at a time
beginning, at last, to blossom a little. The
any news about the BBC's intentions in this

John I Davies
J I DAVIES
Wg Cdr
DISSEC E
4148, Ext 6085

19 Apr. 72

SECRET

UK EYES ONLY

SECRET

UK EYES ONLY

UK EYES ONLY
SECRET
UK EYES ONLY

SECRET

LOOSE MINUTE

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
718
AUS (D. STAFF)
LONDON.

D/DISSEC 4/7/6/9

Hd DS 5

Copy to:
AUS(NS)
AUS(D Staff)
Sec JIC

BBC PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

1. As I told you on the telephone, DGI put this matter before the JIC this morning. The Committee took the view that our response should be a low level letter and not, at this stage, a high level approach to the BBC. They therefore considered the draft letter which might go from DPR(Navy) and felt that its general tone was too acquiescent. They therefore asked if we would harden the line taken in it and I attach a new draft which DGI feels reflects the attitude of the Committee. I would be grateful if you would consult us again before making any substantive changes to the draft.

2. It might be useful for you to know that, apart from MOD aspects of the matter, the principal fears expressed in Committee emanated from the FCO, who are particularly anxious that programmes such as this should not appear at a time when Anglo-Soviet relations are beginning, at last, to blossom a little. The FCO would be grateful to receive any news about the BBC's intentions in this matter.

John I Davies
J I DAVIES
Wg Cdr
DISSEC E
- 4148, Ext 6085

19 Apr. 72

SECRET
UK EYES ONLY
SECRET
UK EYES ONLY

DRAFT

1. I am sorry not to have replied earlier to your letter of 9 February concerning your proposal to make a television programme about the late Commander Lionel Crabb.

2. I have consulted my colleagues on this matter and I am sorry to have to tell you that there seems no way in which we can assist you, except to advise you strongly to clear any script you may produce with Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, Secretary of the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee. I press this advice because, as you will appreciate, should there be any improper disclosure of information the responsibility would lie with you and with any other persons concerned with, or appearing in, the programme. Moreover, I obviously cannot comment on the possibility of action being taken against any individual but clearly it would be only fair for you to point out to any person or persons concerned that they should very carefully consider their position before contributing to your programme.

FOLIO 6

Sir Burke Trend

Secretary of the Cabinet

Before deciding, I should like to know whether Sir J. Dunnett and Sir S. Crawford have seen the 'draft' letter and are content with it. Could this please be ascertained?

S.

Both are content 21/4

R 25/4

SECRET -

U.K. EYES ONLY

CABINET OFFICE
0475
22 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

COMMANDER CRABB

FOLIO 5

on Thursday, the JIC(A) discussed
on programme on Commander Crabb and
minute is attached.

ligence Staff have now amended the
o the BBC to reflect the Committee's
rstand that Peter England will be
amended version to Sir Burke Trend
fore despatch to the BBC.

Defence have not yet finally decided
separate approach to the BBC in order
the programme has proceeded but the
by Naval Press Relations through
Admiral Denning.

M. E. Herman

[M. E. HERMAN]

24 April, 1972.

Enclosure: Minute 7

SECRET -

U.K. EYES ONLY

FOLIO 6

SECRET -

U.K. EYES ONLY

CABINET OFFICE
0475
22 MAY 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

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Sir Burke Trend

MR. NORBURY

COMMANDER CRABB

FOLIO 5

At their meeting on Thursday, the JIC(A) discussed the proposed television programme on Commander Crabb and a copy of the relevant minute is attached.

2. The Defence Intelligence Staff have now amended the original draft reply to the BBC to reflect the Committee's discussion and I understand that Peter England will be sending a copy of this amended version to Sir Burke Trend for final approval before despatch to the BBC.

New attached

3. The Ministry of Defence have not yet finally decided the details of their separate approach to the BBC in order to ascertain how far the programme has proceeded but the approach may be made by Naval Press Relations through Admiral Denning.

M.E. Herman

[M. E. HERMAN]

24 April, 1972.

Enclosure: Minute 7

SECRET -

U.K. EYES ONLY

J1061

FOLIO 5

Reference..

(5A)

A/Sec/B

Brian Norbury said - though not making a great point of it - that Burke Trend had rather expected a note from us on the JIC decision, especially because of his special interest in publications.

2. I gather England has been in touch with Norbury; not sure if he has given him the MoD draft reply.

3. Could you do a note drawing his attention to the minutes? It would also be v. useful if you could find out how MoD are proposing to "approach" BBC, and/or the amended text of their letter.

W.O.H
28/4.

CODE 18-78

held on 20.4.72

SECRET
UK EYES ONLY

) 7th Meeting Minute 7

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d. The draft reply from the Ministry of Defence to the BBC producer concerned should be amended to avoid giving the impression that the subject was exceptionally delicate, whilst still discouraging the whole project and especially the production of new evidence. The BBC should be invited to submit the script of any programme to Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning.

2. Invited the Ministry of Defence -

a. To reply to the BBC on the lines indicated;

b. To ascertain the stage which the programme had reached and to inform the Foreign and Commonwealth Office accordingly;

c. To inform the Committee of the outcome in due course.

J1061
FOLIO
5

EXTRACT from JIC(A)(72) 15th MEETING held on 20.4.72

SECRET
UK EYES ONLY

7. COMMANDER CRABB: PROPOSED TELEVISION PROGRAMME
Previous reference to Commander Crabb: JIC(A)(69) 7th Meeting Minute 7

SIR HAROLD MAGUIRE said that the BBC had approached the Director of Naval Press Relations on the subject of a proposed television programme on Commander Crabb. The Secretary of the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee had advised that no assistance should be offered but that the BBC should be invited to submit the script of any programme to him under the 'D' notice system for any necessary amendment on security grounds. The BBC claimed that some new information was available from a diver who had also been involved in the intelligence operations and who had been formerly employed by the Ministry of Defence.

The following main points were made in discussion -

a. It would be difficult to persuade the BBC completely to abandon the programme on security grounds in view of the amount of material which had already been published on Commander Crabb.

b. However, the new material might well be damaging.

c. Even if new revelations could be prevented, a programme on Crabb's activities would be undesirable at the present juncture in the light of FCO's endeavours to normalise relations with the USSR.

d. The draft reply from the Ministry of Defence to the BBC producer concerned should be amended to avoid giving the impression that the subject was exceptionally delicate, whilst still discouraging the whole project and especially the production of new evidence. The BBC should be invited to submit the script of any programme to Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning.

2. Invited the Ministry of Defence -

a. To reply to the BBC on the lines indicated;

b. To ascertain the stage which the programme had reached and to inform the Foreign and Commonwealth Office accordingly;

c. To inform the Committee of the outcome in due course.

EXTRACT from JIC(A)(72) 15th MEETING held on 20.4.72

THE CHAIRMAN summing up the discussion, said that the reply from the Ministry of Defence should be sent to the BBC, amended on the lines indicated in discussion. It would also be helpful if some suitable approach could be made to ascertain how far the BBC programme and preparations had proceeded, and to what extent the decision to go ahead with it would depend on the use of the new material. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office would then wish to consider, in the light of this information, whether an approach to defer the programme should be made by them to the BBC.

The Committee -

1. Took note with approval of the Chairman's summing up.

2. Invited the Ministry of Defence -

   a. To reply to the BBC on the lines indicated;

   b. To ascertain the stage which the programme had reached and to inform the Foreign and Commonwealth Office accordingly;

   c. To inform the Committee of the outcome in due course.

UK EYES ONLY

SECRET

UK EYES ONLY

SECRET

Secretary

File Crabb P.O.

FOLIO 5m

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DISSEC 4/7/6/9

CABINET OFFICE
J 2124
24 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
CARD No ...1061

Hd DS 5

Copy to:
AUS(NS)
AUS(D Staff) ✓
Sec JIC ✓

BBC PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

1. As I told you on the telephone, DGI put this matter before the JIC this morning. The Committee took the view that our response should be a low level letter and not, at this stage, a high level approach to the BBC. They therefore considered the draft letter which might go from DPR(Navy) and felt that its general tone was too acquiescent. They therefore asked if we would harden the line taken in it and I attach a new draft which DGI feels reflects the attitude of the Committee. I would be grateful if you would consult us again before making any substantive changes to the draft.

~~A/SE~~ B

2. It might be useful for you to know that, apart from MOD aspects of the matter, the principal fears expressed in Committee emanated from the FCO, who are particularly anxious that programmes such as this should not appear at a time when Anglo-Soviet relations are beginning, at last, to blossom a little. The FCO would be grateful to receive any news about the BBC's intentions in this matter.

John Davies

J I DAVIES
Wg Cdr
DISSEC E
Rm 4148, Ext 6085

19 Apr 72

SECRET

UK EYES ONLY

SECRET

UK EYES ONLY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT

1. I am sorry not to have replied earlier to your letter of 9 February concerning your proposal to make a television programme about the late Commander Lionel Crabb.

2. I have consulted my colleagues on this matter and I am sorry to have to tell you that there seems no way in which we can assist you, except to advise you strongly to clear any script you may produce with Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, Secretary of the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee. I press this advice because, as you will appreciate, should there be any improper disclosure of information the responsibility would lie with you and with any other persons concerned with, or appearing in, the programme. Moreover, I obviously cannot comment on the possibility of action being taken against any individual but clearly it would be only fair for you to point out to any person or persons concerned that they should very carefully consider their position before contributing to your programme.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRET AND PERSONAL

c M. Herman

4

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1
TELEPHONE 01-930 7022

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

PUS/72/747

17 April 1972

CABINET OFFICE
A 7427
18 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

CABINET OFFICE
J 2155
25 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
File No. 1061

Sir Burke Trend GCB CVO
Cabinet Office
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2AS

(Herman 14/4)

Dear Burke,

Thank you for your letter of 13 April - your reference A01623 - about the projected BBC programme on Commander Crabb. Our people are in touch with the FCO. It will then be, as you say, for Stewart Crawford to decide if he wants the matter discussed at the JIC.

I note that you would like to be kept informed of developments.

A copy of this letter goes to Stewart Crawford.

Yours ever,

Ned Dunnett.

SECRET & PERSONAL

DN/0309

FOLIO 3

Secretary of the Cabinet

hll 17/4

Carrie

Please attach to the other pps. we sent to you earlier today.

Graham Neville

14/4

CABINET OFFICE
J° 30
17 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

ASec. B: Wd you be kind & attach to A01623 Pt.

19-4

FOLIO

april, 1972.

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CABINET OFFICE
J 2021
18 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

ts/1/72/C2a(AD)

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from Peter England) to the
IC, as well as to Brian Norbury in
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stances, I will not comment on your
vid Darlow until I know if the JIC

(C.J.Child)

[illegible] that whole question is
being considered [illegible] the Chairman. But we should be
very glad to have Clifton's advice — orally to you, or by
letter — or the assumption will [illegible] that Chairman will refer to JIC
hCll

SECRET

SECRET

FOLIO 2

FOLIO 3

With the Compliments of

Clifton Child

CABINET OFFICE

Historical Section
Queen Anne's Chambers,
41, Tothill Street,
London, S.W.1

Telephone: WHitehall 5422

pril, 1972.

ts/1/72/C2a(AD)

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CABINET OFFICE
J 2021
18 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

Proposed BBC Television Programme on Cdr. Crabb

Thank you for your minute 1/72/C2AD of 13th April.

The question of the proposed TV broadcast on Crabb seems to me (as I have told Peter England by telephone) to raise issues of possible JIC interest. I am therefore copying your minute (as I have copied the previous minute from Peter England) to the Secretary of the JIC, as well as to Brian Norbury in our Private Office.

In the circumstances, I will not comment on your draft letter to David Darlow until I know if the JIC have views.

(C.J.Child)

A/Sec(D)

Child told. 19-4

Please tell Child that whole question is being considered by the Chairman. But we should be very glad to have Clifton's advice – orally to you, or by letter – on the assumption that Chairman will refer to JIC

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M. Herman

FOLIO 3

SECRET

ext. 1.

14th April, 1972.

CABINET OFFICE
A 7358
14 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

CABINET OFFICE
J 2021
18 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

W.D.Cribbs Esq.,
C2 (AD).,
Ministry of Defence.

Proposed BBC Television Programme on Cdr. Crabb

Thank you for your minute 1/72/C2AD of 13th April.

The question of the proposed TV broadcast on Crabb seems to me (as I have told Peter England by telephone) to raise issues of possible JIC interest. I am therefore copying your minute (as I have copied the previous minute from Peter England) to the Secretary of the JIC, as well as to Brian Norbury in our Private Office.

In the circumstances, I will not comment on your draft letter to David Darlow until I know if the JIC have views.

(C.J.Child)

A/Sec(P) Child told. 19-4

Please tell Child that whole question is being considered by the Chairman. But we should be very glad to have Clifter's advice — orally to you, or by letter — on the assumption that Chairman will refer to JIC

MH

SECRET

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Encl 1 to BR/Manuscripts/1/72/C2a(AD)

Cabinet Office (Mr Child)

Copy to: CPR

PROPOSED BBC TV PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

In his minute of 12 April, copied to you, AUS (Defence Staff) asked that I should prepare a draft reply from DPR (Navy) to the producer of the proposed programme and that this should be referred to you.

I attach a first "cockshy" draft and would be most grateful for your advice and suggested amendments: I assume that you have already seen the previous correspondence. One point which occurred to me on reading the letter from Mr Darlow was that the un-named ex-naval diver has already committed a prima facie contravention of the Official Secrets Act in telling Mr Darlow that he and others actually went under Russian ships. I have mentioned this to AUS (Defence Staff) who feels that we would not at this stage wish to take this further and that in the letter to the BBC mention of the "D" notice is sufficient.

W D CRIBBS
C2(AD)
MB Ext 5006

13 April 1972

~~SECRET~~

DRAFT LETTER TO DAVID DARLOW, BBC, AS FROM DPR(NAVY)

I am sorry not to have replied earlier to your letter of 9 February about your proposal to make a television programme on the late Commander Lionel Crabb.

I have consulted my colleagues on this matter and I am sorry to have to tell you that it appears unlikely that there is any way in which we can usefully assist you. Having said that, it also appears appropriate to remind you that despite the passage of time this is a subject which could well be fraught with security difficulties and I am sure that should you nevertheless decide to proceed you will have a very careful eye to this aspect. You will appreciate that should there be any illegal or improper disclosure the responsibility would lie with you and with any other persons concerned or appearing in the programme, and clearly I cannot at this stage comment on the possibility of action being taken against any individual.

I would therefore strongly recommend that any script you may produce should be cleared with Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning, Secretary of the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee who will be able to advise you of any "D" notice angles.

M. Herman
C.M. Chief

FOLIO 2

13th April, 1972

CAB

Ref. A01623

14 MAR 1972

FILE

2064

19

1061

A/[illegible]/B.

I am grateful to Peter England for keeping me in touch with developments inside the Ministry of Defence about the projected BBC TV programme on Commander Crabb. I must confess that I am a bit disturbed about some of the possible implications of this enterprise - not least the apparent emergence of a man, still living, who claims to be able to throw fresh light on the whole affair. This need not amount to much; alternatively, however, it could be the beginning of quite a lot of trouble.

The project has obvious implications in terms both of security and of relations with the Soviet Union; and I should have thought that, before you enter into any commitment with the BBC, the FCO ought to be brought into the discussion. I have mentioned the matter to Stewart Crawford, who agrees and would be grateful if you could arrange for him to be briefed about the BBC proposal. I think that thereafter he may wish to discuss it at the JIC; but that is for him to say.

I am sending Stewart a copy of this letter; may I leave it to you to get in touch with him direct - although I should be grateful to be kept informed of developments.

BURKE TREND

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

Sir James Dunnett, GCB, CMG

28

SECRET Reference DN/0309

Staff)/193

1a

COVERING SECRET

[illegible]
J 1957
13 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS 1061
FILE No. ~~TPB~~

CABINET OFFICE
H 0739
13 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No.

MR. NORBURY

Proposed BBC Programme about Commander Crabb

A/SEC/B

Sec

Mr. P.T.E. England has copied to you his minute AUS (Defence Staff)/193 of 12th April. 1a

When Mr. England telephoned me about this yesterday, I said that (without having seen the back-ground papers) the matter seemed to be one of JIC interest.

I am therefore copying this minute, with a xerox copy of AUS/193, to Mr. Herman.

(C.J. Child)

13th April 1972

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12 April 1972

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SECRET

Reference DN/0309

FOLIO 4

AUS (Defence Staff)/193

C2 (AD) (Mr Cribbs)

CABINET OFFICE
H 646
13 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

Copy to :

PS/Sir Burke Trend
PS/PUS
AUS (NS)
CPR
Head of DS 11
Head of DS 12
Sec/DPBC
Cabinet Office (Mr Child) ✓

PROPOSED BBC TV PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

We spoke. Would you please draft a reply from DPR (Navy) to the producer of the proposed programme, Mr Darlow, and clear this draft with Mr Child of the Cabinet Office. On present advice, it seems to me that the reply should, in effect, say we are sorry there is no assistance we can usefully give but that the BBC should clear the script with Admiral Denning in case there are any 'D' Notice angles.

(Sgd) P. T. E. ENGLAND

P T E ENGLAND
AUS (Defence Staff)

12 April 1972

SECRET

SECRET

Reference DN/0309

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
541.
AUS (D. Staff)
LONDON, S.W.1.

AUS(DS)

Copy to:

PS/PUS
AUS(NS)
CPR
Head of C2(AD)
Head of DS11
Head of DS12

PROPOSED BBC TV PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

1. Your AUS(DS)/174 of 6th April 1972, the only 'D' Notice relevant to the case of Crabb is 'D' Notice No 10 British Intelligence Services.

2. So much has already been published on Crabb some factual, much speculative that I doubt whether any significant new light can be cast on the affair concerning Crabb himself.

3. However, it is a fact that a naval team from "Vernon" did - dive under the Russian ships and I suspect the new evidence is from one of these. The operation was kept secret and a revelation could have political/security difficulties.

4. I agree that MOD should give no assistance but perhaps CPR may like to suggest to Darlow that he clears his script with me.

5. In view of paragraph 3 I have classified this minute secret.

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

Norman Denning

Vice Admiral Sir Norman Denning.
Secretary/DPBC,
Room 6354, Ext 2206,
Main Building.

11th April 1972.

Sec/DPBC

Copy to :

PS/PUS
AUS (NS) } without
CPR } attachment
Head of C2 (AD)
Head of DS 11
Head of DS 12

PROPOSED BBC TV PROGRAMME ON COMMANDER CRABB

... 1. I attach a copy of a minute by AUS (NS) which is self-explanatory. Please see in particular paragraph 4. It seems to me :

a. any advice you may be able to give could be related only to any 'D' Notice which may be relevant to the case

b. if we are up against real political and/or security difficulties I must let the Cabinet Office know as soon as possible

c. the draft reply to the BBC should be cleared by Head of C2 (AD) as well as CPR so that we can maintain consistency in an area with which some of us are constantly involved.

Certainly this seems to be yet another case in which the Ministry of Defence should give neither assistance nor hostages to fortune.

(Sgd) P. T. E. ENGLAND

P T E ENGLAND
AUS (Defence Staff)

6 April 1972

CONFIDENTIAL

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
27
AUS (D. Staff)
LONDON, S.W.1.

DPR/107/1/39

AUS(NS)/411/72

PROPOSED BBC TV PROGRAMME
ON COMMANDER CRABBE

N.6

DUS(N)
(through Head of NL)

Copies to:- Sec.VCNS
AUS(D Staff)
CPR
DPR(N)
Cdre.(Int)DIS
DNSY
Head of DS5

At encl. 1 is a letter from a BBC Television producer seeking DPR(N)'s views on a programme he proposes on the Crabb case. The file went straight to VCNS after brief comment by Cdre.Int. and DNSY. Not surprisingly VCNS dislikes the idea of this programme which, despite the passage of 16 years, is unlikely to improve the image of the Navy or the Intelligence Services (and might conceivably tell the Russians something they do not already know).

/2.

Minute Sheet No. 2 Reference DPR/101/1/39

Minutes and Brief Details of Enclosures	Clas.	Encl. No.

2. As the BBC are not asking us for active assistance in preparing the programme, which we would presumably refuse very firmly, I would not think we can do much to discourage it other than to make it clear that the responsibility for any illegal or improper disclosures would rest firmly on the BBC and the individuals concerned. Any idea that we would indemnify them, collectively or individually, in advance against either proceedings under the Official Secrets Acts or review of a Service pension because of improper behaviour by the recipient is self-evidently absurd - however great the political and practical difficulties of either course. I understand that the Admiralty Board has power of review of a service pension but would be grateful if Head of NL would comment on this and any other relevant aspects.

3. Subject to this, and if you agree, US of S(RN) should be shown these papers and asked to approve that DPR(N) should tell the Producer, Mr. Darlow, that on the basis of the information in his letter of 9th February the Ministry of Defence can only

a. note that the BBC may make a programme about the Crabb case;

b. express a preliminary view that we are very unlikely to wish to assist in its preparation or be associated with it;

c. decline to comment formally on the hypothetical possibility of any individual being proceeded against under the Official Secrets Acts or for any other reason, but remind the BBC that they and the individuals concerned would be responsible for any illegal or improper disclosure.

4. Unfortunately, the BBC letter was a month old before it reached VCNS level and I am reluctant to widen the consultation further. But because of the special circumstances of the Crabb case and the possible implications for the Services Press and Broadcasting Committee, I am copying this minute and the BBC letter to AUS(D Staff) and CPR in case they wish to comment. It might be in order for example, to tell the BBC that they could consult Admiral Denning informally on points of doubt.

R. J. Penney

AUS(NS)

4th April 1972

BBC
BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
SOUTHAMPTON STUDIO CENTRE
SOUTH WESTERN HOUSE SOUTHAMPTON S09 1PF
TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAMS SOUTHAMPTON 26201

11 FEB 1972

9th February, 1972.

Dear Mr. Jack,

As I mentioned on the telephone, I am investigating the possibility of making a thirty-minute television programme on the mysterious disappearance of Commander Lionel Crabb in 1956. The programme would examine each of the various theories put forward, and would consist very largely of previously-published material. We would hope to break some new ground, however, and here I should welcome your advice on any security problems that might arise.

But, first of all a breakdown of the programme itself:

1. Crabb, the legend - heroic service during and after the war (library film) - his strange personality - the sudden disappearance.
2. The political background - B and K's visit - the Russian cruisers - Kruschev refers to a spy - talks end coolly - Eden's denial of espionage operation - body found by fisherman - inquest.
3. Sunday Times Theory: Crabb hired by British Intelligence - physically unfit - dived under cruisers, died of blood poisoning - trapped underwater in Langstone Harbour - drifted free fourteen months later - positively identified at inquest.
4. Bernard Hutton's Theory: Crabb dived under cruisers - captured by Russians - interrogated - alive in Russia today.
5. Official version: Crabb died testing new apparatus in Stokes Bay - now confirmed by another diver, colleague of Crabb's, who says that he and others actually went under Russian ships.

As you can see, almost the whole programme consists of widely published material. The only new information arises in (5.) - the diver who claims that Crabb did die in Stokes Bay. Whilst this does confirm the official version of Crabb's death, the man, nevertheless, is reluctant to appear on television for fear of reprisals by the Ministry of Defence.

In particular he fears that his Navy pension (he is now retired from the Service) might be jeopardised.

My own guess is that the criterion by which you would assess this matter is "whether or not it would tend to endanger national security", and in that case I think you would agree that the passage of time has rendered this incident harmless. It can have little relevance to present-day security operations or organisation.

I should welcome your observations on the programme, and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

David Darlow

(David Darlow)
Producer, Television

W. Jack, Esq.,
Room 0328,
Main Building,
Ministry of Defence,
Whitehall,
LONDON, S.W.1.

M7

DUS(N)

Copies to:
Sec/VCNS
AUS(NS)
✓ AUS(D Staff)
CPR
DPR(N)
Commodore Int Dis
DNSY
Head of DS 5

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
504
AUS (D. Staff)
LONDON, S.W.1.

Having consulted Head of NPP, I will deal first with the questions of pensions mentioned in para 2 of M6 and in the BBC's letter.

2. Under the Admiralty Pensions Act and the Forfeiture Act, the Department may at its discretion suspend (and restore later) or forfeit a pension on account of

a. Misconduct by the pensioner;

b. Conviction of a serious offence connected with the Service;

c. Grave criminal offences;

d. Any other criminal offence resulting in sentence of imprisonment exceeding six months.

It seems most unlikely that if the BBC's (anonymous) diver took part in the proposed programme we should have any cause to take action concerning his pension.

3. The said diver does of course remain subject to the Official Secrets Act and depending on what he says might lay himself open to prosecution for unlawful disclosure of information. I suspect, however, after the passage of time and bearing in mind the Departmental view that there is no security objection to the programme that the Director of Public Prosecutions would be unlikely to bring a prosecution.

4. At the inquest on Commander Crabbe, the Coroner returned an open verdict. If, therefore, the diver mentioned by the BBC has and discloses information relevant to the death of Commander Crabbe - which he deliberately withheld back in 1957 - he might find himself in trouble with the authorities on that score.

666173 1,450M 1/70 JIII

Minute Sheet No. STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

Minutes and Brief Details of Enclosures Clas. Encl. No.

5. On the general question of a TV programme about Commander Crabbe, I must invite attention to the fact that the Prime Minister personally made a statement in the House of Commons on 9 May 1956 (Col 1226-1229) in which he said:-

> "It would not be in the public interest to disclose the circumstances in which Commander Crabbe is presumed to have met his death."

On 14 May (Columns 1757 to 1788) on a motion by the late Mr Hugh Gaitskill (who divided the House) the Prime Minister again refused to be drawn on the subject of Commander Crabbe's death.

6. I do not personally know the story of the Crabbe affair but if the Prime Minister's reticence was due to political reasons or diplomatic reasons or security reasons (or a combination of such reasons) then even though security reasons can now apparently be discounted, Ministers may still not wish publicity to be given to this matter and may indeed wish the BBC to be discouraged (so far as this is possible) from proceeding with the proposed programme. Otherwise I agree entirely with AUS(NS)'s minute.

7. I have made this docket STAFF-IN-CONFIDENCE.

D K BOMFREY
Head of NL
5 April 1972

From : P T E ENGLAND, Assistant Under Secretary of State
(Defence Staff)
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building, Whitehall, LONDON S.W.1
Telephone: 01-930 7022, ext.

FOLIO 1a

CABINET OFFICE
A 7227
-7 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. ....

Our reference:
Your reference:

6.4.72

CABINET OFFICE
J 2065
19 APR 1972
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 1061

Dear Brian

Commander Crabb

I think I should let you know about this now.

I will keep you in touch -

I have told PS/PUS here that I am sending you this.

FOLIO 1a

Yours sincerely,

Peter England

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Group/Class CAB 163

Piece 207

MINUTE WHITE/SIR BURKE TREND

17.2.69

RETAINED BY DEPARTMENT UNDER SECTION 3 (4)

(date) 23.5.05

(Signed)

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Group/Class CAB 163

Piece 207.

MINUTE HOOPER/SIR BURKE TREND

12.2.69

RETAINED BY
DEPARTMENT
UNDER
SECTION 3 (4)

(date) 23.5.05

(Signed)

FOLIO REGISTER—FILE No.

FOLIO	DATE	CODE REF.	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
34	19.2.73	854	Farnhill/Darlow
35	19.2.73	873	Norbury/Reeves
36	7.3.73	1235	Farnhill/Sec
37	9.3.73	0307	Sec/Norbury
38	13.3.73	0326	Sec/Farnhill
39	14.3.73	1579	Dunnett/Trend
40	20.3.73	1578	Trend/PM
41	22.3.73	1551	Armstrong/Trend
42	23.3.73	1580	FCO/PM
43	23.3.73	1557	Andrew/Armstrong
44	28.3.73	1601	Armstrong/Andrew
45	1.6.73	2511	Farnhill/Sec
46	8.6.73	0611	Sec/Norbury
47	12.6.73	2687	Norbury/Armstrong
48	13.6.73	2832	Armstrong/Norbury
49	15.6.73	2833	Norbury/Ward
32K	13.2.73		Norbury/Crawford

10672 Demand 388321 2m 1/70 CHC 696

FOLIO REGISTER E No.

FOLIO	DATE	CODE REF.	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1 M	12.2.69		Hooper/Sir [illegible]
1.N	17.2.69		(D.C. White / Sir B. Trend
1	6.4.72	2065	A 7227 England / Norbury
1a	13.4.72	1957	H0739 Child / Norbury
2	13.4.72	2064	A01623 Trend / Dunnett
3	14.4.72	2021	A7358 Child / Cribbs. Je 30
4	17.4.72	2061	A 7427 Dunnett / Burke
5	20.4.72	~~[illegible]~~	JIC(A)(72) 15th mtg
6	24.4.72	0475	Herman / Norbury
5m	19.4.72	2124	Davies / HD DS5
7	25.4.72	2608	England / Trend
8	27.4.72	2607	Trend / P.M
9	1.5.72	2609	No 10 / Trend
10	22.5.72	2684	England / Child
11	22.5.72	2682	Dunnett / Trend
12	23.5.72	2683	Denning / Child
13	25.5.72	2691	Child / Denning
14	30.5.72		JIC(A)(72)(Sec) 101
15	11.6.72		Sunday Express article
16	26.6.72	3151	Denning / Child
17	27.6.72	3142	Child / Denning
18	3.7.72		JIC(A)(72)(Sec) 112
19	30.11.72	5435	DN/0309/DPBC Denning / Herman.
20	4.12.72	01306	Herman / Denning Je 0441
21	7.12.72		JIC(A)(72)(SEC) 186.
22	7.12.72		D/Sec / Sec
23	8.12.72	01318	Sec / Le Bailly Je 0458
24	15.12.72	01341	Je 0468 Herman / Norbury
23m	14.12.72		JIC(A)(72) 48th Mtg Minute 5
25	18.12.72		Herman / A Sec B.
26	19.12.72	01362	Herman / Le Bailly
27	19.12.72	01363	Herman / Farnhill
28	30.1.73	589	Farnhill / Sec
29	2.2.73	0147	Petit / Crawford
30	6.2.73	648	Farnhill / Sec
31	7.2.73	0153	Sec / Norbury
32	12.2.73	744	Trend / PM
33	15.2.73	872	Armstrong / Trend

10672 Demand 388321 2m 1/70 CHC 696