

## **“We Regret Very Much the Embarrassment”**

**Date:** October 26, 1983

**Participant:** Ronald W. Reagan

**Participant:** Margaret Thatcher

**Start Time:** Unknown

**Place:** Situation Room

President Reagan explained to British prime minister Margaret Thatcher the reasons why the United States had not given her prior notice of the U.S. invasion of Grenada, citing fears of leaks within his own administration. The invasion went off without a hitch, as Reagan explained publicly, with goals of protecting U.S. citizens, facilitating the evacuation of those who wanted to leave the country, and restoring Grenadian democratic institutions.

**Margaret Thatcher:** Hello? Margaret Thatcher here.

**President Reagan:** If I were there, Margaret, I'd throw my hat in the door before I came in.

**Thatcher:** Oh, no, there's no need to do that.

**President Reagan:** Listen—I'm—we regret very much the embarrassment that's been caused you, and I'd just like to tell you what the story is from our end out here. [*Thatcher acknowledges.*]

I was awakened at three o'clock in the morning, supposedly on a golfing vacation down in Georgia and was there with the Secretary of State [George P. Shultz], and so we met in pajamas out in the living room of our suite to—because of this offer or—this offer, this urgent plea from the Organization of East Caribbean States [OECS], pleading with us to support them in their—in this thing in Grenada. And we immediately got a group going back here in Washington, which we shortly joined, on planning, and so forth; it was literally a matter of hours.

We were greatly concerned, because of a problem here and not at your end at all, but here. We've had a nagging problem of a loose source, a leak, here. We were—at the same time, we had media surveillance, as well as we could without their knowing it was happening, on Cuba to make sure that we could get ahead of them if they were moving. And indeed, they were making some tentative moves. They sent some kind of command personnel into the island there.

When your message came—well, incidentally, let me tell you that we were being so careful here that we didn't even give a firm answer to the Caribbean states. We told them that we were planning, but we were so afraid of this source and what it would do, it could almost abort a mission with the lives that could be endangered. When your word came with your concerns, by the time I got it, the . . . zero hour had passed, and our forces were on their way.

**Thatcher:** Yes.

**President Reagan:** And, of course, the time difference made that it was later in the day when you learned of it, and for us over here it was only 5:30 [*slight chuckle*] in the morning when the—they finally landed, and at last we could talk plainly. But I want you to know, it was no feeling on our part of lack of confidence at your end; it's at our end. And so it happened, I guess, the first thing that we've done, since I've been president, in which [*chuckles*] the secret actually was kept until it happened. But our military and the planning only had, I really have to call it, a matter of hours to put this together. I think they did a magnificent job.

*End of excerpt.*

“Ronald W. Reagan and Margaret Thatcher on 26 October 1983,” Cassette 2A, *Presidential Recordings Digital Edition* [*The Presidential Recordings of Ronald W. Reagan*, ed. Kent B. Germany, Ken Hughes, Guian A. McKee, and Marc J. Selverstone] (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014–). URL: <http://prde.upress.virginia.edu/conversations/4022307>