

Gist of T1 witness statements received by the UCPI from the following officers who have real and cover name restriction - HN21, HN41, HN109, HN241, HN302, HN341, HN355.¹

Time period

1. The first of these seven officers' deployments began in the late 1960s and the last began in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

Recruitment to the SDS and Training

2. Most of the officers concerned had done no undercover work before joining the SDS. Some had reported on similar groups to those infiltrated during plain clothes Special Branch work, which involved attending meetings and demonstrations. One officer describes having prior experience which shared similarities with SDS work, although the SDS deployment was very different. Some identify experiences or work done which they believe are likely to have prompted the approach to them by SDS management. Several officers had been posted to other parts of Special Branch dealing with relevant areas of activity before their SDS posting. Officers in Special Branch were expected to be politically aware.
3. Most of the officers concerned were married or in stable relationships at the point at which they were recruited. However, one officer states:
"I was a single man at the time, so I did not have any family encumbrances. I was told by [HN294] it would involve long hours away from home, and that if my deployment was successful it would involve working undercover for a period of up to 4 years... There was no discussion about what impact working undercover might have on me."
4. Another recalls *"The SDS management warned me about the practical impact of the work on my social life due to the late nights I would be working... There was some discussion about common sense safety measures, such as not to socialise in your private time in the geographical areas where you were deployed."*
5. Another said *"I do not remember specific conversations being had with me about the effect doing undercover work would have on me or my family, but I definitely did not go into it blind. Once you joined the unit... you had ample opportunity to discuss what you would be doing, how you would be doing it, and ask any questions that you wanted both of the SDS management and officers already deployed in the field."*
6. Another officer recalled SDS management visiting his wife, and considered the information which was given to them to be accurate, and sufficient for him to understand what the work would entail and how it would impact his family.
7. Another officer states that no one from the SDS spoke to his wife about the impact this work would have on her:

¹This does not include HN86, HN125 and HN337 (no witness statements have been received), and HN333 and HN349, in respect of whom redacted statements have been published. Please see Tranche 1 Disclosure Note (paragraph 28).

"She didn't realise how deep I would get into the work and it became difficult for her. I remember telling her about the hours I would have to work, but I didn't really know then how much it would end up taking out of me. Had I known I would never have joined the SDS."

8. Another officer notes:

"I was told nothing specific about secrecy, security, consequences for my private life or career. I was married, but no manager spoke to my spouse about the [SDS] or about her expectations. This is a shame because I attribute the breakdown in my first marriage to my SDS work... Looking back at it from today's perspective, it was poor in terms of health and safety planning".

9. This officer also states:

"The impact of my deployment on my family was the breakup of my first marriage. My wife experienced the insecurity of living with someone who was constantly on the edge, and who became paranoid. The deployment gave me a sense of needing to evade the truth and distrusting everybody."

10. All officers confirm that there was no formal training when they joined the SDS. Two officers mention receiving training in the general work of the Branch as a Special Branch probationer. One officer noted his understanding that specific training might be given if the role required it.

11. All officers state that they spent several months in the back office as an introduction to the unit and to prepare for their deployments. One officer comments that this period provided ample opportunity to get to know the job and what it involved. Work in this period consisted of preparing to go into the field, acting as a clerk to deployed officers, attending meetings at the safe house and meeting deployed officers, collecting in and reading reports, and reading background political material. One officer describes learning about the role by talking and listening to the people who were already deployed undercover and asking them questions about the best way to do things. That officer also describes reading literature relating to the proposed target field. Another officer describes providing what was effectively secretarial support to undercover officers whilst in the back office. Several officers noted that skills were also acquired during the course of the work, and from spending time with other deployed officers at the SDS safe house, and in the form of information and ongoing instructions from managers about aspects of the work. One officer recalls being given details of a more experienced undercover officer to contact for advice, akin to an informal mentor. The officer recalls using this facility.

12. One officer considers that *"with hindsight, the training seems inadequate (because there was none), but I did not think about it at the time."*

13. There were regular group and individual meetings with managers, and most officers recall also making daily telephone calls to management. As to the quality of support from managers, officers said:

- a. Managers *"were astute but ultimately relied on what you told them... They were all nice people but there was no structure to the support"*.

- b. *“Personally, I felt the office went to great lengths to support the undercover officers in the field. I thought that the undercover officers who would complain were really just letting off steam because they were under pressure.”*
 - c. *“I was adequately supervised throughout my deployment, and the SDS was run well”.*
 - d. They were *“...extremely efficient in terms of looking after you... nothing was too much trouble... The role of management was to manage the wellbeing of SDS operatives. It is hard to say, from an operative’s point of view, how much welfare supervision occurred. It felt like very little until I decided... that I had had enough. But they probably picked up on more than I knew. They understood the stresses and strains we were all under, and it is important not to under estimate the peer-to-peer support”.*
 - e. *“Welfare was managed superbly”.*
 - f. *“During my deployment welfare was addressed by daily calls, at the regular meetings, including through one-to-one meetings with managers. There was also an open invitation to raise issues with management and I always felt able to do so, although I cannot recall anything specific that I had to raise”.*
 - g. *“The managers just acted as a conduit for the information as far as I am aware... There were no arrangements in place for monitoring my welfare during the course of my deployment nor after it”.*
14. Two officers recall a loose-leaf folder which contained accrued knowledge from previous undercover officers and some formal documents. One of these officers said he does not know how it came to be created, does not remember it being updated, and describes it as a document that was not particularly full. This officer suspects that they would probably have been referred to it by someone in management but cannot really remember. Another recalls that matters within it got refined over time and included practical advice and information likely to be from managers, as well as the accounts of undercover officers. This officer also contributed to the folder once he withdrew from his deployment.
15. While only some officers recall being expressly cautioned by managers against becoming an agent provocateur, all officers indicate they knew they should not become one.
16. It is also noted by one officer that *“there was general advice from SDS management not to get over-involved with individuals within the target groups... I do not recall being actively encouraged to involve myself in the private life of members of the target group.”*

Deceased Children’s Identities

17. Most officers adopted the names, dates of birth and/or places of birth of deceased children as their cover identities. These details were mostly obtained by reviewing public death records based on guidance given by managers at the time. One officer comments: *“I remember considering the moral implications of doing so at the time but considered it the right thing to do.”* This officer feels that it was the only effective and safe way to create a cover name at that time.
18. Another officer explains:

"We would use someone's basic details but nothing substantive from their lives. The only purpose of using this tactic was to ensure that if someone was suspicious of an undercover officer and searched the official record of births, deaths and marriages, a corresponding entry would be found."

Sexual Relationships

19. Several officers state that they were not, or do not recall being, formally told that they should avoid sexual relationships whilst deployed, but knew that this was something they should not do. Some were expressly told that they should not engage in sexual relationships.
 - a. One officer states *"I can say that we were not encouraged to have sexual or intimate relationships."*
 - b. Another recalls sexual relationships were not allowed.
 - c. Another officer recalls *"I have recollections of Geoffrey Craft telling me that it would be beyond stupid and would cause all sorts of problems"*.
 - d. A further officer states:
"I think it would have been morally wrong to have had a sexual relationship; it is not something I would have done. Nor was I ever put in the way of temptation. Regardless of the ethical questions, it would never have occurred to me because it was stupidly dangerous. The practicalities of having a relationship require hard work. It was difficult enough to maintain your cover, never mind in bed. It was just beyond contemplation. By today's standards it is certainly inappropriate."

20. Most officers state that they did not engage in any sexual relationships in their cover identities. The exceptions to this are:
 - a. One officer, HN302, describes a brief sexual encounter early in his deployment with a woman from a group reported on whilst undercover. He states:
"After a couple of meetings I developed a friendship with a woman, we had a drink ... after one of the meetings and then we went back to my [cover accommodation]. I was a single man at the time both in my real life and my cover identity... It did not go further than that night. I did not come across her again in my deployment... I did not set out to sleep with anyone, but the circumstances presented themselves to me and I did not say no. Having a drink with this woman did bolster my cover identity, but the fact that we ended up having sex did not, at least in my view, provide any additional benefit in terms of cover, and that is not why I did it. Any friendly interaction you had with anyone added layers to your legend but it was not necessary to sleep with people to have a well-rounded cover identity. It was not something that my management told me to do and I did not speak to my managers about it afterwards. I did not think it was necessary to do so, it was not relevant to any instructions or training I had received. It was just something that happened before my deployment had really got going that did not require any further actions on their part."
 - b. Another officer, HN21, describes having engaged in occasional sexual encounters with two women whilst deployed. During his deployment in the late 1970s and early 1980s HN21 attended an evening class. He attended the evening class in his cover identity but not with his target group. He never reported on the evening classes. He engaged in some kissing and fondling on a few occasions with one named woman from the

classes. He had sex a couple of times with another woman who was associated with the evening class and who attended socials after them. Neither woman was a target of his infiltration and he did not see either woman again. Neither of the women was involved in any of the groups he infiltrated.

21. One officer recalls being visited by HN300; *"He tearfully told me that he had fallen in love with a lady who was associated with his group... He was beside himself because he wanted to tell her everything including his undercover role which he realised could seriously impact the entire SDS operation."* With HN300's agreement, this officer then contacted the SDS office and acted as a conduit between this officer and managers.
22. One officer recalls being asked by Mike Ferguson (when a manager in the SDS) if anyone was having a sexual relationship. He recalls telling him he didn't know and that his colleagues probably wouldn't tell him if they were engaging in such relationships.
23. An officer also recalls having a conversation with Richard Clark (HN297) about the events which led to his withdrawal:
"He told me words to the effect... that he had had a couple of relationships with females in his cover identity that had led to him being compromised. The impression that he gave was that these were casual and short-term liaisons although I cannot now recall what precisely was said. I was horrified that such behaviour had happened from someone within the SDS. I recall that he said that the two females were close friends or lived together. The inference I drew was that he was telling one female one story and another a different story and that the stories did not match up and that led to him being exposed."

Reporting

24. Most officers describe gaps in the reporting they have been shown in their witness packs.
 - a. One officer notes that while he had reviewed a large number of intelligence reports, the reports provided seemed to be mainly from attendance at routine meetings. Some of his reports focusing on public order (including likely size of demonstrations and the mood of the group, including any propensity to violence) were missing.
 - b. Some officers note that their witness pack did not contain any oral reporting about upcoming public demonstrations which they believe would have been conveyed to the team preparing threat assessments for the upcoming event nor any oral reporting provided in telephone calls or at SDS meetings.
 - c. Another notes that the material he has been shown seems to be material that was sent to MI5 from the SDS, but that there may well have been general intelligence provided by him that was passed onto different squads in Special Branch or to uniformed colleagues, not in his witness pack. He notes there is no reference to the demonstrations he went on or information gathered about demonstrations in the documents in his witness pack.
 - d. Another officer describes speaking to the SDS office on a daily basis, passing on urgent information by phone, additional late night communication by phone, and reporting orally at the SDS safe house. Generally, he states such information would be public order related, and does not appear in his witness pack. He explains that none of the

reporting that he did in the lead up to larger demonstrations and events is in his witness pack. Nor could he see any assessment reports regarding public order events, or memorandums, minutes or handwritten notes between the SDS and other branches of Special Branch in his witness pack.

25. All officers explain that they would provide a draft of their intelligence report either handwritten or typed and the back office would type it up and add references. Most officers state that they did not see the final report.
26. Some officers explain that some of the reporting they had been provided appeared to be follow on enquiries undertaken by a member of the SDS office.
27. Most of the officers note that their reporting was copied to the Security Service, although some officers were unaware of the specifics at the time. However most officers noted that the Security Service had a national remit to deal with subversion at the relevant time and so did not find this surprising. Some of the witness packs contained requests made by the Security Service to provide information, but none of the officers were aware at the time of those requests. Some of the officers state that their reporting would have been beneficial to both Special Branch and the Security Service and express the view that the information could not have been obtained in any other way.

Deployments

28. SDS management would task the field of deployment. Most officers described the tasking being given orally. As to tasking one officer said:
"The general understanding that I had of what I was being asked to do was to find out what [my target group] were doing, planning and what their membership was and then to report that back. I was sometimes required to give answers to more specific questions put to me by my bosses. I had to establish the relationships that would allow me to provide these reports and answer questions. ...It was my role to know about things and report in things before they happened so that Uniform could be informed by the SB hierarchy. ...I would have provided information that I thought may be relevant as and when the opportunity arose."
29. One officer recalls being shown material to suggest that the infiltration of their target group had been requested by the Security Service.
30. All officers recall providing information on potential public order issues during the context of their deployments and most officers attended at demonstrations with their target groups. Some officers had seen first-hand the general level of public disorder at Grosvenor Square in October 1968, with one officer describing it as *"some of the worst street violence I have seen"*. Most officers saw public disorder during their deployments.
31. Most officers considered that the information they provided contributed towards effective policing. Officers state:
 - a. *"I believe that my contemporaries provided significant contributions to public order policing, and enabled our uniform colleagues... to more effectively police demonstrations and protests... The intelligence obtained allowed the MPS to more*

effectively and appropriately target its resources, not using additional resources where demonstrator numbers were due to be low, keeping costs down and preventing criticism of wasting public money and resources. It also prevented 'over-policing' and looking potentially confrontational which might, of itself, lead to an increase in violence or disorder."

- b. *"I believed that my reporting saved millions of pounds because uniformed police officers were deployed proportionally to our intelligence and were able to deal with specific issues".*
- c. *"I don't think you could have got the full intelligence picture without the SDS" and*
- d. *"I think my contemporaries and I protected London from extremists, we helped prevent public disorder and violence."*

32. One officer was arrested in their cover name at a demonstration whilst deployed. They do not recall being prosecuted, but did give their cover name when asked. Another officer also recalls that HN13 was arrested during his deployment. Most recall being told not to get involved in activities which could result in an arrest. Some officers recall becoming involved in minor criminality such as flyposting or graffiti during their deployment.

33. One officer recalls that *"[HN298] had a problem with someone in the target group who tried to 'out' him so [HN298] did the only thing he could, which was to start a fight with this person. That distracted everyone and maintained a front of outrage at the suggestion of being a 'spy'."* This officer notes that discussion of such topics was not typically shared with managers, but remained within deployed officers.

34. One officer recalls attending a meeting as part of their group with a serving Member of Parliament at the House of Commons. They state they did not report on the meeting as they felt this would have been wrong, and only attended the meeting as they could not find a way to avoid going. Other officers reported on elected representatives as they were speakers at large public meetings.

35. Some officers recall being involved in and/or witnessing violent confrontations with uniformed police during demonstrations. One officer was present at the demonstration at which Blair Peach sustained fatal injuries on 23 April 1979. They recall it being chaotic and being shocked as the police had lost control of the crowd. They left the demonstration a few hours before Blair Peach was killed. One officer was at the so called "Battle of Lewisham" on 13 August 1977, during which they witnessed serious violence towards poorly protected police officers which deteriorated into running battles. In both instances advanced and retrospective intelligence was provided about the events.

36. Another officer attended the funeral of Blair Peach. It is explained by this officer that this was a large event which they would have been expected to attend and so they did so in support of their cover identity which they feared would be undermined if they had not. They considered that the event had the possibility of public disorder. This officer also reported on the Blair Peach campaign but cannot recall who tasked them to do so.

37. It is recalled by several officers that there were visits, possibly annually, by MPS Commissioners to the SDS safe house. One recalls the visits involving congratulations for and acknowledgement of the good work that the SDS was doing. Another recalls messages being received from 10 Downing Street with respect to the success of the SDS in combatting public disorder.
38. Some of these deployments involved travel outside of the UK. This was done with the authorisation of the SDS management and, in at least one instance, the Commander of Special Branch. On this occasion the officer was told that *“the basis of the trip would be ‘annual leave’ so that if anything went wrong, it was nobody’s fault but my own.”*

Post Deployment

39. Most officers state that there was no counselling/welfare support made available at the conclusion of their deployments.
- a. One officer comments that following the conclusion of his deployment: *“[t]here was no provision whatever around well-being, whether physical or mental. I was told there was no budget for counselling in the police unless it was a very serious case.”*
 - b. Another officer states: *“there is an outrageous lack of funding for long term welfare in the MPS. I really think that access to counselling would have been a good idea”.*
 - c. Another officer comments that the lack of counselling/welfare support, *“was not specific to the SDS or the police as it was not the culture at the time”.*
 - d. Another observes that with hindsight they realise the advice and support offered by the SDS and MPS post-deployment was not good enough. The same officer also states that he complained (with others) about the lack of support for undercover officers and became involved in the SDS mentoring scheme (for about 18 months) which operated later. The officer stated that he didn’t think the mentoring was very successful, but it was better than nothing.
40. An officer states that it was commonplace for ex-SDS officers to be posted away from London or in other roles out of the public eye, and several described this happening at the conclusion of their deployments.

True Spies

41. One officer describes the decision by senior MPS officers to participate in the BBC documentary ‘True Spies’ as a serious error of judgement.

UCPI