

[REDACTED]

Our Ref: 588/UNREG/694 Pt.11
Your Ref: QPE/66 1/8/5

R. Armstrong Esq.,
Deputy under Secretary of State,
Home Office,
Whitehall,
London,
SW1.

26th April, 1977

Dear

1. At the end of another year's work by the Special Demonstration Squad of Special Branch, I am writing to seek approval once again for the continuation of its operations for a further period.
2. During the past year, street demonstrations in London in support of, or opposition to, politically controversial issues, remained as prevalent as ever and, in fact the Metropolitan Police was responsible for keeping the peace at more public order events than even the previous year had produced. Whilst the 'causes' underlying such events varied little from before, the willingness of those supporting the extremes and propaganda, cast a fresh and disturbing light. The increasing vote obtained by the National Front in by-elections, together with the organisation's outdoor activities, acted as a spur to Trotskyists, Maoists and anarchists alike and numerous attempts were made to force violent confrontations.
3. Because of the potential danger to our officers which penetration of Irish extremists organisations would involve, coverage in this area is confined to the overt activities of such fringe bodies as the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 'Trade Union Committee Against the Prevention of Terrorism Act', an amalgam of Trotskyist and Sinn Fein supporters.
4. Non co-operation with the police is a current feature of ultra-left revolutionary philosophy and the primary, and almost unique, value of the Special Demonstration Squad lies in its ability not only to provide warning of forthcoming events but also to forecast the size of the support and the degree of threat to public order. This intelligence is of immense value to our uniformed colleagues who are able to assess the strength of police coverage required, as well as to deploy that strength

[REDACTED]

Cont'd/

operationally in the most suitable way, i.e. both overt and in reserve. Needless to say, this brings a side benefit in ensuring the most economic use of manpower. The fact that many of the individuals and organisations of concern to the Squad fall into the subversive category produces a by-product of information which is of direct interest to the Security Service and which is acknowledged by them as being of considerable assistance.

5. Security surrounding the operation has been maintained at a high level with the closed supervision of field officers as the cornerstone. In addition to the regular staff, senior Special Branch officers have made a number of visits to the headquarters flats and a close watch on the Squad's activities is kept by both the Commissioner and myself.

6. The greatest continuing problem facing the Squad remains that of obtaining adequate headquarters flats in 'anonymous' surroundings. Statutory rent control assists considerably in holding down costs but has a counter effect upon availability. One flat was changed in the course of the year, after a lengthy search, and attempts will have to be made during the next twelve months to replace the other. Using the 'bed and breakfast' clause to circumvent the Act, landlords are obtaining higher rents for the kind of furnished accommodation required as cover for individual officers and this is, of course, reflected in expenditure.

7. The provision of a second-hand car or van for the use of each field officer is a valuable asset, both in terms of operational mobility and as an aid to security in that it enables an officer to carry out his covert duties well away from his home neighbourhood. The fact that it remains a relatively cheap form of transport is emphasised whenever a vehicle is off the road for repair and the user is obliged to resort to public transport.

8. The budget of £3,600 for the financial year 1976/77 has proved to be adequate. Outgoings for the first nine months totalled £5,829 and it is not expected that expenditure over the last quarter will be much more than £2,000, leaving undrawn approximately £700 of the budget for the year.

9. Some increase will clearly be required for the forthcoming financial year. An unintended economy affected figures for the first three quarters of the current year when, through changes in personnel, it was possible to keep only eleven as opposed to the usual twelve officers in the field. The rise in rents for cover flats and the effect of inflation upon rates, fuel and operational expenses generally will all take their toll and it is considered prudent to seek an additional £1,200 for 1977/78. A figure of £9,800 would represent an increase of less than 14% over that for 1975/76 and is, in itself, an indication of the tight financial control which is exercised on the Squad.



3.

10. I would therefore ask that formal approval be given to the continuation of the work of the Special Demonstration Squad for a further period of twelve months.

Yours sincerely,

J. S. WILSON

J. S. WILSON
Assistant Commissioner (Crime)

