

Cover Sheet

Witness: First Witness Statement of Sir Charles Pollard

Exhibits Referred to: None

Date Statement Made: 25 October 2022

UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY

Witness: Sir Charles Pollard QPM

Occupation: Retired Chief Constable

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1. I have been asked to provide a voluntary witness statement to the Commissioner's Lawyers for the purpose of assisting the Undercover Policing Inquiry with matters relating to a Metropolitan Police department called A8 and my role in A8 dealing with public order during the Tranche 1 period (1968-1982).
2. I wish to emphasise at the outset that it has been a long time since the time period and events that I am asked to recall. As a result, I remember the detail very well in respect of some matters and less so for others. Notwithstanding the passage of time, I have sought to provide as full an account as I can to assist the Inquiry.
3. I have been shown the following documents in order to prepare this witness statement: MPS-0748288, MPS-0748289, MPS-0748293, MPS-0748294, MPS-0748299, MPS-0748305, MPS-0748331, MPS-0748332, MPS-0748333, MPS-0748342, MPS-0748343, MPS-0748344, MPS-0748345, MPS-0748346,

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UCPI0000034225, UCPI0000034224 and UCPI0000031845. I have refreshed my memory by looking at two documents of my own: a document which I refer to as my 'life story', and a pen picture concerning my police career. These are documents which I have prepared for my family over the last year or so and prior to being asked to make this witness statement. Aside from these two documents, I have not refreshed my memory by looking at any other document.

4. There is no restriction order in place in respect of my real name.

Personal details

5. My full name is Charles Pollard. My date of birth is [REDACTED]¹ 1945.

Police career history

6. The career history and dates which I set out below are principally based on the content of my four Central Records of Service (MPS-0748305). I have also refreshed my memory from the two documents named above.
7. I say at the outset that I never served in Special Branch during my police career and I never knew much about it.
8. I left school in 1963, at the age of 18, and before joining the police I was an articled clerk to an accountancy firm. I joined the Metropolitan Police on 14 September 1964. I went to Peel House, then one of two training centres for new entrants, for three to four months and was then posted to Bow Street police station (then in E Division) as a probationary Constable before being confirmed

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as a Constable. My Central Records of Service record the date for my transfer to E Division as 12 December 1964 (p.5), which sounds correct. Bow Street police station covered the Strand, Trafalgar Square, Soho, and Covent Garden and so it was a very good place to start. My Central Records of Service also record a transfer to C Division on 1 April 1965, however this must have been when the divisional boundaries changed and E Division largely became C Division and aligned with West End Central and Vine Street subdivisions. I remained principally at Bow Street police station from this date. This change enabled attachments within C Division, different to what was available at Bow Street, and so I spent six weeks at the Clubs Office during this latter period.

9. I left the Metropolitan Police on 25 December 1966 (Central Records of Service, p.6) to go travelling in the United States, Canada and Central America. I thought I returned to the United Kingdom in 1969, but I note that my Central Records of Service state I re-joined the Metropolitan Police on 7 October 1968 (p.1) so I must have returned earlier. The police records must be correct. I was keen to re-join straight away on my return, but I had to wait for approximately six months. During that time, I did local civilian administrative jobs.

10. After re-joining, I had to do the full training again. This time I went to the training school in Hendon. I was posted to Islington police station (in N Division) as a Constable. My Central Records of Service give this as 13 January 1969 (p.1), which sounds right. We had personal radios by this time and so policing was quite different to my earlier time as a Constable. I was keen to get promoted to Sergeant and took the promotion exam as soon as I could; I passed and secured

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a place on the Special Course, which meant promotion to Inspector within 12 months.

11. I was promoted to Sergeant on 13 July 1970 and posted to Stoke Newington police station (in G Division) (Central Records of Service, p.1). I attended the Special Course at Bramshill Police College from 4 October 1970 to 18 September 1971 (Central Records of Service, p.1).
12. I was then promoted to Station Sergeant on 28 December 1971 and posted to Hackney police station (also in G Division) (Central Records of Service, p.1). This posting lasted six months.
13. On 26 June 1972 I was promoted to Inspector and posted to City Road police station (Central Records of Service, p.1). This posting lasted three months.
14. Having been in the top two or three students on the Special Course, I was awarded a Bramshill Scholarship to go to university. I was accepted to the University of Bristol and studied for a three year law degree, completing it on 20 June 1975 (Central Records of Service, p.1).
15. On return from Bristol, I was posted to Marylebone police station (in D Division) as a uniform Inspector. My Central Records of Service gives the date of transfer as 30 June 1975 (p.1), which must be right given this was my first operational posting following my degree studies. We dealt mostly with IRA terrorism matters, such as bomb attacks and threats. I had to pick it up very quickly and it was very

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challenging. I would be the person in charge when a call came over the air saying, for example, that there was a bomb in Selfridges or a suspect package.

16. I was then transferred to Paddington police station on 24 November 1975 (Central Records of Service, p.1). Again, I dealt with terrorism matters. I was not happy about this transfer at the time, but it turned out to be a very good move. Bob Hunt, I think then Chief Superintendent of Marylebone, was my informal mentor. During this posting, I was temporarily seconded to Op Combo, which was an operation to flood London with plain clothed police officers to catch the people behind these attacks. I was one of a couple of people who had suggested the operation. I was involved in designing and organising the operation, for example where the plain clothes officers went, the operation briefing, where the cordon was placed during the Balcombe Street siege. I was then on the operation in plain clothes. After the Balcombe Street siege, I was involved in charging the terrorists that were caught and I worked to the terrorism Commander during the investigation.

17. I undertook the Inspector to Chief Inspector promotion course from 23 January 1978 to 3 February 1978 (Central Records of Service, p.1). On 30 January 1978 I was posted to West End Central police station (in C Division), on promotion to Chief Inspector, to deal with complaints against the police (Central Records of Service, p.1). I was then posted to Vine Street police station (again in C Division) as Chief Inspector in an administrative role (Central Records of Service, p.1).



18. My next role, still as Chief Inspector, was in A8. I was posted there on 20 November 1978 (Central Records of Service, p.1). Bob Hunt was Commander A8 when I joined. I think he had seen my aptitude at Marylebone and so brought me in as I was quite good with logistics. I was on A8 during the Winter of Discontent which was a very interesting time given the difficulties faced by public services. The law on picketing was also complicated at the time and I drafted a single page document for all Met officers, I think whilst I was on A8, setting out the circumstances in which persons could be lawfully arrested on a picket line. This document sought to give good, clear advice to officers on what they could and could not do as the previous official guidance was very vague. I received lots of plaudits for this document. I was in A8 until I left the Metropolitan Police to get experience of provincial policing as I thought this was necessary for my long-term career prospects.

19. On 22 September 1980, I joined Sussex Police (Central Records of Service, p.3). I was posted to Eastbourne as Superintendent in charge of that area. It was a completely different form of policing to that in the Metropolitan Police but still *challenging in its own way*.

20. From March to September 1983, I attended the 20th Senior Command Course at Bramshill Police College (Central Records of Service, p.3). After this, I was promoted to Chief Superintendent. I remained in Sussex Police and was posted to Operational Support HQ. It was essentially the same job as I had had in A8, but for a provincial force. I was in this role at the time of the Brighton bomb at the Conservative party conference.

- [REDACTED]
21. I transferred to Thames Valley Police as Assistant Chief Constable in January 1985 (Central Records of Service, p.3). I was initially ACC Personnel and then ACC Operations from 1986 to 1988.
 22. I returned to the Metropolitan Police as Deputy Assistant Commissioner on 3 October 1988 (Central Records of Service, p.3). For about the first year, I worked for Sir Peter Imbert, the-then Commissioner, as the main leader on the 'Plus' Programme which sought to change the institution's culture and improve relations with the public. This was at the time when the Metropolitan Police became the Metropolitan Police Service. I then moved back into uniform policing. I was based at Kingston Area HQ and ran 5 Area (South West London) which extended to Guildford.
 23. In 1991 I returned to Thames Valley Police as the Chief Constable. I thought this was in June 1991. However, I note my Central Records of Service states I left the Metropolitan Police on 27 January 1991 (p.4). My experience in A8 had been vital to this role. I retired from Thames Valley Police in February 2002, in the rank of Chief Constable.
 24. I was awarded the Queen's Police Medal (QPM) in 1989 and appointed Knight Bachelor for services to policing and criminal justice in 2001.
 25. I appeared in the True Spies documentary which aired in 2002. I knew Peter Taylor quite well and was quite happy to talk to him as a trusted journalist. Everything I was interviewed about concerned Thames Valley Police. I have been

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shown the transcripts for the three episodes of True Spies (UCPI0000034225, UCPI0000034224 and UCPI0000031845). I do not specifically remember what I said when I was interviewed, but the sections of the transcripts attributable to me read like what I would have said.

A8 generally

26. A8 was the unit that put everything together in an operation to police public order. If a demonstration was low level, we would leave it to the local division for example A Division who were responsible for policing central London. Otherwise, A8 would be involved. When I was on A8 the Metropolitan Police was learning how to deal with public order and I believe A8 became really good at it. At that time there was a demonstration or march at least every week, and on a Sunday there might be two or three. These demonstrations were not just UK led, but at embassies in London as well. The volume of demonstrations pushed us to the limit but we had a culture of delivery.
27. A8 worked to Deputy Assistant Commissioner Operations A Department – David Helm, when I was on the unit – who had the power to move huge numbers of police officers around which was vital for public order. The Deputy Assistant Commissioner could go to any division in the Metropolitan Police District and tell them that they needed to provide a particular number of police officers for a Met-wide operation in London next Saturday or Sunday.
28. To this day I do not know when A8 was created. When I became Chief Inspector A8, A8 was still in the process of establishing itself in terms of the credibility and

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the huge power we had. For this reason, I assume A8 was created shortly before I got there. I took over from Chief Inspector Tony Speed; I do not know if he was the first Chief Inspector in A8.

29. When I joined, A8 was a really small unit; I think we were no more than 10 officers. It was led by a Commander, then Bob Hunt. The Chief Superintendent was John Perritt for pretty much the whole time I was there, I think, and the Superintendent was [REDACTED]². Perritt and [REDACTED]² were also in charge of the Special Patrol Group (uniform public order police) or very close to them. The Special Patrol Group would be called upon for assistance when going into heavy mode. They were very important to the job, but occasionally they went over the top: they were the suspects for, and proven to be, responsible for Blair Peach's death. I was the only Chief Inspector in A8. There were two Inspectors: one was staff officer to the Commander and so outside of the real role of A8, and I suppose the other worked to me. Initially there was one Sergeant and one Constable; the three of us did the bulk of the work, but over time this changed as the unit grew. When I left A8, I think there were two Sergeants, possibly two Constables and maybe a civilian in the unit. We were desperate for more staff because of the amount of work we did, but A8 had been set up as a small unit and it delivered. We worked very hard and as a result we were very efficient as a unit. We were not bureaucratic. We had a reputation for organising complex operations and responses to demonstrations and doing it well. I think we were highly regarded as doing an incredible job.

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30. I set out and discuss below the process by which A8 learned of, planned for and policed public order events and demonstrations. In my view, our process managed public order very well and so most demonstrations were policed very smoothly. This is what should happen if the planning and briefing was done well. It was only very few demonstrations which went pear shaped and this would be the extreme. In my experience of A8, there were only three or four demonstrations a year that went very wrong in that there was a lot of violence, they posed a threat to the public or a threat to the police either entirely unanticipated or differing from what we thought. These instances provided learning for the future and there would be briefings and discussions about how it came to happen. Very minor issues were dealt with internally. I was very proud of it how we managed public order, and I still am now.

My role in A8

31. Chief Inspector might sound like a senior rank but in A8 terms it was not particularly. I had peripheral tasks. Others, with my help, planned the operational response and my role was to make it happen. De facto, I was in charge of and supervised the Sergeants who put together the detail of operations and did the urgent work of drafting the detail in operation orders. I filled in at the end of briefings dealing with administrative matters such as which radio channel to use, and over time as I became more experienced and confident I ran the briefings. I also utilised the police helicopter to take pictures of London to use in the operation briefing so that we could show officers exactly what they had to do.

- [REDACTED]
32. Being involved in huge public order events was a steep learning curve. I had to learn quickly and I was very busy, and so there are particular matters that I might not know about.

How A8 found out about demonstrations

33. In the event of a planned demonstration, we would generally learn of its likelihood one to two weeks in advance but sometimes it might only be the day before. If the planned demonstration was really big we might learn of it earlier, perhaps months in advance. If we found out about a demonstration two or three months in advance, we would set up a group of people to monitor what was happening.
34. There were a number of ways in which we might find out about an upcoming demonstration. It was all about relationships. Sometimes we found out about it from the organisers because they telephoned A8 to inform us. We then held meetings with the organisers, usually in Scotland Yard, and my Inspector, Sergeant or I would meet with them. We knew exactly what questions to ask. We would almost help them with their demonstration; for example, if they were not sure about where they would be going, we might make suggestions. This meant we would know what would be happening and we could plan. We got on well with those people who repeatedly organised demonstrations. They liked their demonstrations, and they liked us to know about them because it helped them. There was a joint interest in their being able to demonstrate. If we found out about an upcoming demonstration from the organisers, we would inform Special Branch and tell them what was going to happen. Rather amusingly, on a Thursday we would then get a file marked "secret" with exactly the same information we gave

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them. Sometimes we found out about an upcoming demonstration from the media because it was public knowledge, and we would then get in touch with the organisers of the demonstration to have a chat.

35. We might also find out about an upcoming demonstration from divisional police. MPS-0748299 is a classic example of local contact which informs A8 about an event. A Division routinely met with organisers; sometimes A8 attended these meetings, and sometimes we organised them. It was fairly fluid. If a local division asked us A8 to attend a meeting with organisers, we might send someone.
36. Alternatively, we might find out about the demonstration from Special Branch. I cannot remember many instances of this happening. However, when it did happen, we reckoned that the demonstration would be more hairy because Special Branch had found out about it and the organisers had not come to us to tell us about it and so were keen to keep it quiet.
37. Sometimes I was not aware how we found out about a demonstration: unless I was personally involved in receiving the information, I would simply receive a message informing me of what was happening.
38. Most of A8's work was done on the phone. We did not have time to write everything down when we were working internally.



Information received by A8 from Special Branch prior to demonstrations

39. We were reliant on Special Branch for information. Once we were aware of an upcoming demonstration, we would ask Special Branch for an assessment. I believe we sought an assessment for all demonstrations. If it looked to be a minor demonstration we might not ask for an assessment but if there was a special circumstance, for example we knew that the last demonstration by that group was nasty, we would ask for one. The request for an assessment was a matter of routine; I, or someone more senior, would say "get an assessment". I think the request was made in writing, but it could have been done by telephone. We had a close working relationship with Special Branch. The more I think about it, the more I believe we had an officer whose role was Special Branch Liaison Officer. Requests for assessments would mostly have gone through them. Something comes to mind about a Detective Inspector ³ [REDACTED]. I did not know him at all. He was not in Special Branch but a general CID officer. I saw him very occasionally. He was in A8 and around the place, but not in the same office as me. He was not in the team doing the big planning, but probably a liaison officer in one form or another.

40. Special Branch assessments were in the form of a report, usually a single sheet of A4 paper in length. The report would be headed "secret". It opened with terminology which would identify where the information came from – "a secret and reliable source" or words to that effect. The report contained context, most of which we knew anyway. All I was interested in was the bit of the report which talked about the potential impact on public order. I would look for the key sentence in the report about risk: for example, if there was a small group of

[REDACTED]

troublemakers likely to join the demonstration, the assessment would say there was a risk there. It was all uncertain. Special Branch was in a difficult position too as nobody knew what was going to happen. Although some of the information provided by Special Branch might have been publicly known or could have been found elsewhere, it was their job to analyse the information and provide their assessment.

41. Special Branch reports dated 19 April 1979 (MPS-0748288), 20 April 1979 (MPS-0748293) and 23 April 1979 (MPS-0748289) all appear to be assessments. They are on the long side of the assessments that I saw during my time in A8. However, given the complexities of the organisations and situations that they concern I do not consider that they are over-long. Assessments were usually fairly low key, but Southall was a particularly hairy event.

42. Special Branch assessments usually came back to us within a week or two of our request. Special Branch knew when the demonstration was taking place and that A8 needed a minimum of three days to plan the policing operation and get everything together. Depending on timescales we might receive multiple assessments, but this was very rare. I think that Special Branch saw their job as producing one assessment. Assessments came to me as Chief Inspector A8. If I was not there, they would go to the Chief Superintendent or above. If new or urgent information came in from Special Branch, it would be telephoned through to A8. Special Branch was flexible like that. It could also be put in another assessment.



43. I have been shown a memorandum dated 20 April 1979 from Commander Special Branch to Commander A8 (MPS-0748294) which appears to enclose a Special Branch assessment regarding the proposed anti-National Front demonstration organised by the Indian Workers Association (Southall) on 22 April 1979. That assessment does not follow the memorandum. If a minute like this came to us with the assessment, I would not see it as particularly different or abnormal in terms of the process for Special Branch providing us with information. The content would obviously be concerning; in those days, the Trotskyists were regarded as particularly potentially violent and so it would have been helpful to have this information as an indication of potential disorder. I am not sure that the assessments were sent by Commander Special Branch to Commander A8; I cannot now remember what the position was, but it is certainly not unacceptable. As I said above, assessments came to me as Chief Inspector A8 or Chief Superintendent or above.

44. I understood from reading the assessments that Special Branch had informants, but I did not know anything beyond that or how Special Branch obtained the information provided to A8. I assumed that the Security Service and other units could have been involved but I did not know. There was no way for me to seek to found out more and I did not need to know. You did not ask Special Branch about things you should not be asking about. We had no authority over Special Branch and not even my bosses were in charge of them; Special Branch existed under C Department, they had a different chain of command and operated at arm's length from us.



45. I had no cause myself to challenge anything in Special Branch assessments, to ask anything more deeply or to give feedback to Special Branch. Sometimes we would make the jocular observation that they had told us what we already know. If their information implied a demonstration would be very violent, I would not query it but I would ask how sure they were that the demonstration would get like that. In some senses it was irrelevant for me to know, but I had to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Special Branch would often say they did not know or could not tell us. I cannot recall having informal conversations with Special Branch, for example following up an assessment. This might have been done by more senior officers because they were accountable for what would go wrong, but it would depend on personality. It is possible that, if pushed, A8 might go back to Special Branch and express particular concern about the demonstration and ask for help further to the information already provided.

46. Almost invariably we would take information from Special Branch at face value. Special Branch assessments were pragmatically quite accurate. Special Branch worked hard not to exaggerate what the risks would be. You got used to the terminology they used and you could read between the lines. In my experience, the information we received from Special Branch was reasonably accurate and as accurate as you would expect in the circumstances. It is possible that the information could have been more detailed at times, but that was the nature of assessments. Special Branch would not go into names of demonstrators, for example. It was pretty serious if you did not have an assessment when you could have obtained one. It was about covering our backs. In my view, Special Branch assessments were absolutely critical because you had to have an assessment

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about how risky the demonstration would be to inform the policing response. Without assessments, we would have been affected big time.

47. I was not aware of the Home Office requesting assessments from Special Branch.

48. I cannot remember receiving a report after the demonstration from Special Branch. I do not think this was seen to be part of their job. We might receive information from them verbally on the day of the event. Special Branch officers were out on the ground during the demonstration and if I was there I would see them around and get to know them. If a Special Branch officer on the ground came across something or had information about what was going to happen, they had a duty to speak to the Commander on the ground.

Planning the policing response to a demonstration

49. Having received an assessment, in the first instance there would be a discussion between me or another colleague in A8 and Chief Superintendent John Perritt about what Special Branch said. We worked collaboratively within A8 to determine the policing response. There were many models for policing a demonstration and we would decide which approach to take and how many serials (comprising one Inspector, three Sergeants and 20 Constables) were required. When I was on A8, I was instrumental in coming up with different methods for policing demonstrations. For example, I came up with the notion of static policing along a peaceful demonstration rather than having officers march alongside the demonstration and the former required about a third fewer serials.



50. Most of the decisions about how many police officers were to be involved, for example as a result of Special Branch information, came from higher up. For really large demonstrations, the Deputy Assistant Commissioner would make the decision about the number of officers to be deployed. Often on a Friday night we would discuss the demonstration and Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helm would say "Charlie, just put on another 10 serials" and it would be my decision where we go to find them. If A8 wanted another 30 serials, divisions would have to jump around like crazy to find them – but they had to. Divisions had a culture of 'bloody A8, they want more' and, having become a Chief Constable later in my career, I can understand why. However, at the same time, you would not want to be the one responsible for inadequate policing of a demonstration or event. A8 was not just concerned with the risk in terms of policing, but also credibility with the public.

51. More important than the number of officers required was who was going to be in command of the policing operation for the demonstration. A8 would call in who we needed to lead the operation on the ground and discuss the operation with them. If there was a large demonstration which the local division was not able to police and we were pulling in, for example, 500 officers, we would perceive it as an A8 operation. However, the policing response could still be led by someone like John Cracknell, Commander A Division when I was on A8, because of his expertise and experience in Central London. A8 also tried to develop specialists at the slightly lower level of Chief Superintendent; they were very good and we could trust them with overseeing public order operations too.

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52. If a local division was quite capable of dealing with the policing response to a demonstration locally, they would lead and A8 would liaise with them. This could mean liaising with someone like John Cracknell. He was excellent and really knew his stuff. We regarded him as one of us in the sense of having experience and common sense in public order and we would be very careful to second guess him. We would attach quite a lot of weight to the local view of policing. We had to act sensitively because the local Commander would think he ran the show. We would discuss all additional matters with them, for example reserves and equipment such as riot shields.

Operation order and briefing

53. Operation orders were generated by my office. I would design most of the operation order, the planning having taken place that week, and the Sergeants would type out the document on the Friday for a Sunday demonstration. The typed operation order would then come to me for review and be signed by Commander A8 or the Deputy Assistant Commissioner. In terms of content, the operation order would begin with a description of what was known and expected and set out who the organisation were, what they were protesting about, the plan to deal with it, call signs and descriptions of officers and roles of the officers.

54. MPS-0748346, MPS-0748332 and MPS-0748343 are examples of an operation order. MPS-0748346 is in principle the same as the latter two documents, but a smaller version. MPS-0748346 appears very ordinary; the format is exactly right for an operation order and the wording is absolutely classic. It is my signature for the Acting Chief Superintendent. I would have been authorising the operation

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order which was organised by A8. I had authority to sign on behalf of the Chief Superintendent or Commander and in a more senior position if they were out. I would have been in a meeting with someone or several people to work out how many officers were needed, or this might have happened at a higher level and in consultation with the local Commander. I would then be told the number of serials required and it would be for me and my team to work out where they came from. The number of serials and where they reported to would provide the outline of the operation; if at this point they were not given a specific role, it would be developed. One of the first things for an operation, particularly a large one, is putting divisions on notice of the need to provide aid. That is what this document does. I cannot specifically recall the operation detailed in MPS-0748346, but the middle paragraph indicates the scale of assistance provided. The operation could have been done on the hurry up after the realisation that there is real potential for public disorder on division after the demonstration on 23 April 1979 went badly wrong. What happened to Blair Peach was a real disaster for A8 and the Metropolitan Police.

55. Divisions received the operation order through the teleprinter at around 2/3pm on Friday for Sunday's demonstration. They knew to expect it. I think a copy of the operation order was also sent to Special Branch but the document did not specifically mention them. Officers on the operation knew we had access to Special Branch assessments but did not ask about them and did not need to know the specifics.



56. A briefing would also take place on Friday, in a briefing room at New Scotland Yard. It tended to be held a day or two before the demonstration because that was when we had the latest information. It might seem very last minute, but this meant that we got things right. Most operations were very similar and officers would quickly be able to work out from the operation order what their role was.

57. For any briefing, I prepared notes to help the more senior officers do a good briefing. MPS-0748331 is an example of this, and I discuss it in more detail below.

58. The briefing would be attended by officers of the rank of Inspector and above. This included Inspectors in charge of serials, Superintendents, someone from the operations room at New Scotland Yard and the officers in charge. If the briefing concerned a large demonstration, there might be 200 officers in attendance. This was big stuff in the Metropolitan Police. Commander A8 and Chief Superintendent A8 would also attend the briefing; they would welcome everyone and conduct most of the briefing. The tactics on the day would be covered in the briefing by either the Chief Superintendent, Commander or even Deputy Assistant Commissioner for a big operation. The senior officer in charge on the day might also address particular aspects of the operation in the briefing, for example if particular serials were required to deal with specific issues or parts of the day. The last part of the briefing concerned administrative matters, which I often dealt with. This would include matters such as the catering arrangements and inviting someone from communications to talk about the radio channels that would be in use. I thought this aspect was often quite trivial. I sometimes felt that the start of the briefing was not as clear as it should have been which is partly

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why I ensured aerial photographs and maps were available to assist and make it clearer for those in attendance. I probably attended briefings most Fridays and over time, as I became more experienced and confident, I became the main briefer.

59. There might be a verbal mention of Special Branch at a briefing. I do not think we would ask them to speak at a briefing but it might be left to me, or a more senior officer, to say we thought the demonstration would be peaceful or there was information that sections of the demonstration might be more unruly than others. My recollection is that more sensitive stuff would be dealt with orally at the briefing. Those in the briefing would not see Special Branch assessments: these were only seen by A8, particularly the Chief Superintendent, Commander and Deputy Assistant Commissioner.

The demonstration

60. On the day of the demonstration, I would usually be in the control room rather than on the ground. It was my choice. Sometimes I thought I ought to go out, and so I did. For a big central London demonstration, I would normally be in the control room at GT in Scotland Yard.

A8 reports for the Home Office

61. A8 had an ongoing relationship with the Home Office department responsible for the Metropolitan Police and public order and this relationship was always good. When I was on A8, I dealt principally with Phillip Mawer and Hayden Philips. We were on first name terms and worked very closely. I also dealt with two other

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people at the Home Office who were a bit more senior but I cannot now remember their names.

62. If a demonstration or event was fine or routine, we would not tell the Home Office about it. They were not in charge of us, but they wanted to know if something went wrong so that they could tell the Minister in the event of a Parliamentary question. If the demonstration or event was in the slightest bit hairy, if something went wrong or if it was likely to be the subject of a Parliamentary question, A8 would do a written report for the Home Office. The report would set out what the plans for the demonstration or event were and why, what the intelligence told us to expect, what we did operationally, where things went wrong (if they did) or things outside of our control that changed or happened unexpectedly. I think the reports were written at Chief Superintendent level or above. I might have been consulted about what went into the report but they would not go from me. I do not know if these reports were sent elsewhere.

63. We also held meetings between A8 and the Home Office and de-briefed them about what happened at demonstrations. The Home Office would be interested in how demonstrations were going and we would have a general chat about it. I remember telephoning Mawer and Philips up and having informal chats with them about particular events. For significant events such as Southall, there would have been big meetings with the Home Office about what happened and what went wrong but this would have been at levels above A8.



Dealings with the Security Service

64. I did not have direct dealings with the Security Service whilst I was on A8 and I am not aware that others did. I understood any liaison with the Security Service was mostly through Special Branch, and possibly at the highest ranks. I was not personally aware of it.

Knowledge of the Special Demonstration Squad

65. It is only as a result of being asked to make this witness statement that I have come to learn of the Special Demonstration Squad. I did not otherwise know it existed and I am quite staggered to learn of its existence. It was certainly not something I had knowledge of when I was in A8: I understood Special Branch had informants, but I did not know or even assume they used undercover police officers.

66. Although I appeared in True Spies, I was interviewed in relation to my time at Thames Valley Police. I did not watch the full documentary and so I did not take in the extent of the allegations made about the Special Demonstration Squad.

Case study events

67. I did not go to any of the Vietnam demonstrations at Grosvenor Square. I only re-joined the Metropolitan Police in early October 1968 and I would have been at Hendon, rather than in uniform, at the time of the October 1968 demonstration.

68. I do not think I was at the Red Lion Square demonstrations on 15 June 1974.

[REDACTED]

69. I do not think I was at the Battle of Wood Green on 23 April 1977. I was certainly not involved in the planning for this event, but I could well have been there as a divisional Inspector providing aid. I simply do not recall.

70. I do not think I was at the Battle of Lewisham on 13 August 1977, but it is possible I was there as a divisional Inspector providing aid. Lewisham in 1977 does not stand out in my memory; there were so many demonstrations around this time and so it could be that I attended but do not remember it. As a young Inspector you would always be called away to things such as this and I often volunteered to go anyway.

71. Two or three months before the Southall riots in 1979, there was a similar incident in Lewisham which I do remember. It was the first time the National Front held a demonstration in Lewisham prior to the general election campaign; it was like a forerunner to Southall. A lot of A8 work tended to be in Westminster, in A Division, and so it was routine to be in that part of central London. A Division was very good and like a mini A8 for local events in their area. However, as soon as you were in a demonstration outside of London – and Lewisham was the first for me – it was much more difficult to police because you liaised with different people and it was all much more unknown. I remember asking one of my Constables to put together a good map of Lewisham which we used at the briefing. We had an operation with as many as 15 buses – each containing 25 officers – and we had to move them around in Lewisham. Whilst listening to the radio, I managed to spot by using the map that we had messed up by sending most of these buses for reinforcement somewhere because they were needed elsewhere, and we had

[REDACTED]

sent them somewhere that was difficult to get out from. The map we had put together saved the day and that is why I remember this event so clearly.

72. I was involved in A8's planning for the Southall riots on 23 April 1979. This event is seared on my mind. On the day itself I was in the control room, which on this occasion was at Southall police station. I had been involved in preparing the operation and the maps which were used at the briefing and so I felt the control room was the appropriate place for me to be. An Operation Order for 23 April 1979 (MPS-0748332 p.2) refers to Chief Inspector [REDACTED]⁴ being posted to "High Street/School Passage". That is not a reference to me, but to [REDACTED]⁵ [REDACTED]⁵

73. Paragraph 2 of the undated report entitled "National Front Meeting 23 April, 1979 Southall Town Hall: Part 1" (MPS-0748342) refers to a meeting between "as many of the influential members of the Community as possible" and various police officers prior to 23 April 1979. This is likely to be a meeting at a local, divisional level. If a local division asked, we might send someone from A8 to a meeting like this. It was the job of a Community Liaison Officer at Chief Inspector level, locally, to liaise with different communities. Events at Southall would have been a sensitive area in terms of policing. For an event like this, in a local area and where police have inroads into the local community, we would expect local police to know about it. It is not entirely clear who wrote this report (MPS-0748342) but from its content it appears to have been written by a local officer involved in community relations.



74. I have also been shown a memorandum from XS Division at Southall police station dated 14 April 1979 (MPS-0748299) regarding a proposed public meeting of the National Front party on 23 April 1979. This report is from the local area. The extent of the information provided in the report shows that they are really in touch with their community. I am very impressed by this report; in some ways it is very thorough. It sets out the details of the meeting and what the local division is aware of, and that A8 would need to put aid on. You can see from the report the difficulty at a local level of responding to this event and so you would like to think that coming to A8 for help would assist. This report is probably early information to A8 about the event. Given the passage of time, I cannot say now whether this is the earliest information received by A8 about the events at Southall or whether the date of this report is when we first found out about these events. I imagine there was local anticipation before this formal report and the local division may well have telephoned to tell us prior to the report.

75. I note date of the report (MPS-0748299) and its proximity to the date of the Southall riots. My recollection of events leading up to Southall is that everything was quite last minute and we felt very rushed. That is not good for public order policing. We had been busy with the Winter of Discontent and had the general election coming up, and suddenly we had this big event in an immigrant community which appeared to have the potential to be very contentious. The community relations aspect of it made it hard and we knew it would be one of the more difficult events to police. In addition, there was the difficulty of an inexperienced local Commander. There were a lot of complexities and dynamics at play.



76. As I explain above, we would attach quite a lot of weight to the local view of policing and had to act sensitively as the local Commander – here, Commander X – was in charge locally. There was a tension between Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helm and New Scotland Yard on the one hand and Commander X on the other because of his perceived lack of experience with public order. His rank did not necessarily denote experience of public disorder. Information from the local division in a situation such as this was key, but we would also look for Special Branch assessments. It was a balance between knowing the local area and being competent at public order.

77. The document entitled “Briefing Notes: Public Order Events at Southall – 22nd and 23rd April 1979” (MPS-0748331) are the notes for speakers to use at the briefing at Scotland Yard for these events. It is unlikely that those in attendance at the briefing saw these notes. My name features against the topic of “Administrative matters” in both briefings (p.1): that was my part in the briefing. This was during the early days of my time in A8; as I have said above, over time as I got more experienced and confident, I led more of the briefing. It is likely that I wrote these briefing notes by hand and then someone else typed them up, resulting in this document. I thought about the different parts of the briefing and what needed to be known by everyone in attendance and I would have suggested which parts the senior officers dealt with. I do not think I personally circulated this document in advance but others might have, as was routine. The document probably went to Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helm to have a look, to other senior officers involved, and to Special Branch. It would not have been circulated as widely as the operation order. It was for the senior officers at the briefing to

[REDACTED]

give this information over orally, and it was for attendees to take notes if they wanted to. Those at the briefing would probably have been given the operation order beforehand and then we would brief with additional information and/or emphasise particular information in the operation order such as catering. I think I wrote the general introduction section (pp.1-2) for Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helm. I can only imagine that the information about numbers (p.2) and mood (p.3) came from Special Branch. I cannot remember if A8 met with the demonstrators; we might have met with the Indian Workers Association but I cannot remember if the National Front was willing to meet with us. Including "Special Branch – any further information, please?" (p.4) is almost certainly for Helm to use these words at the briefing. Special Branch would have been in attendance and at that point they would normally stand up and give an update. Generally we would not write down Special Branch information because it was secret. Some of the information in the briefing notes might have come from Special Branch, but it would not be expressly stated. Rather, it would be phrased in a way which leaves open the possibility that it has come from elsewhere such as from a meeting with organisers – for example, "it is thought...". The overhead and slides (p.6) would have been prepared by my team and I would have checked them. This was the map system that I sought to develop to assist briefings. The handwriting on the final page looks like it is mine. I think these are my notes for the matters I would have covered in the oral briefing. These notes would not have been typed up as I would have written them at the last minute as prompts for my part of the oral briefing.



78. MPS-0748332 and MPS-0748343 are operation orders for Southall, or part of them. They list the senior divisional officers, how many officers they are in charge of, and the time and place of parade, i.e. where and when they are posted. The second column from the left appears to list the divisions where the serials come from. These documents are detailed to the extent that they set out all of the serials, where they are supposed to be, what they are supposed to be doing and the locations they are supposed to be looking after. They appear to be more advanced operation orders because they say not just the number of serials but who is in charge and what they are looking after, which is indicative of more developed planning. However, I am not sure that either is the final, fully advanced version of the operation order. The final version would include not just the location of serials and officers in charge of the sectors but would set out in broad terms what their role was, for example, to police the meeting. This would ensure officers knew the broad purpose of their deployment so that they could ensure it was fulfilled whilst giving a broad discretion as to how to police it. The detail given about charge centres indicates an expectation of large numbers of attendees.

79. I have been referred to a Branch Note dated 25 April 1979 (MPS-0748345) which records the de-brief held following the events in Southall on 23 April 1979. I know most of the attendees listed below paragraph 1. I am not listed there, so it is right to say that that I was not present at this de-brief. I have no memory of being there and I did not know it took place until being shown this document for the purposes of this witness statement. A7 was the branch at Scotland Yard in charge of community relations and so was in overall charge of community relations in Southall. It would not be unusual to hold a de-brief following an event such as

[REDACTED]

this, but who attends the de-brief and what is discussed is very personal to the person running it. In the context of what happened at Southall, the whole situation was unusual. Had it been me in charge, I probably would have done the same and held a de-brief. Attendance of the Deputy Assistant Commissioner and Commanders gives you a feel for what happened; the de-brief was likely to be high level, and I would have thought this was a pretty good way of doing it. In this context, Chief Inspectors are pretty low level. It is possible Commander A8 or Chief Superintendent A8 were present, particularly since David Helm was conducting the de-brief, but I think he also had a staff officer so they may have attended instead.

80. The letter from David Helm to Assistant Commissioner 'A' dated 24 April 1979 (MPS-0748333) is a report after the events at Southall on 23 April 1979. Given the date, presumably it was written that night after the demonstration. The report describes what happened and what the Commander on the ground did to deal with it. It appears to be the first report about what happened. The final page indicates that copies of the report were sent to the Home Office and to those who needed to know in the Metropolitan Police, so it was obviously very important. It was pretty rare to do a report for the Home Office – only when things were quite serious.

81. I have also been shown the "Initial Draft Report" regarding the events at Southall on 23 April 1979 dated 12 May 1979 (MPS-0748344). I do not remember seeing this report at the time, but I could well have been involved in drafting it or been asked to comment on it. It is quite a formal report; it was an initial draft report for



the Home Office and would become the report from the Commissioner to the Home Office. There could be a lot of changes to the draft report, with people feeding in, before it goes to the Home Office. The report it drafted at a top level: It is signed by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helm, who was in charge of the whole event and under whom A8 came. It would take time for all to become clear after an event like this, which might be the reason why the report is dated nearly a month after the event. I am pretty vague on how this report fits into A8's general routine or process which I have described above. This kind of thing, and a death on a demonstration, was very unusual indeed.

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed:  6

Dated:  7