

7 DEC 1979

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PO BOX 500  
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POLF50-6-50-13/DDG

6 December 1979

[Redacted]

Dear David,

Forgive me for taking so long to reply to your letter of 1 November about terms of reference for Special Branches. We have been discussing the matter internally and have come to the conclusion that little advantage would be gained from putting forward a redraft of the kind you propose.

2. My recollection is that the meeting under Sir Robert Armstrong's chairmanship on 7 December 1978 did not conclude that there was a need to revise the 1970 terms of reference. Indeed Sir Robert agreed with me that we should be in no hurry to reopen the question of the terms of reference, but thought that it might be necessary to do so if there were to be a change of Home Secretary following a General Election (para 5 of [Redacted]'s note of the meeting dated 12 December 1978). My understanding was that he was anticipating a need to face possible questioning from a new Home Secretary who might have doubts about the work carried out by Special Branches including that for the Security Service. There are, so far as we are aware, no such doubts in the mind of the present Home Secretary. Therefore we see no need now to revise the terms of reference and no virtue in reopening the matter with ACPO (or with the Scottish ACPO). To do so might lead to contention by a limited number of Chief Constables who have unorthodox views and particular local problems. We would be reluctant to open up this matter unless Sir Brian Cubbon thinks it is really necessary.

1. [Redacted] 4/12  
2. [Redacted] 4/12  
[Redacted]

... / ...

D Heaton Esq  
HOME OFFICE  
Queen Anne's Gate

*M. Phillips*

rather expected his reaction  
has discussed this approach  
with [Redacted], with whom I had best discuss.

*[Signature]* 4/12

[Redacted]



3. It would be valuable, however, if some regular procedure could be introduced whereby the attention of newly appointed Chief Constables could be drawn to the 1970 terms of reference and other relevant documents in their possession (eg our letter of 29 May 1974 about subversive activities in industrial disputes and that of 16 December 1975 about subversive activities in schools). Perhaps this could be done by HMCIC and his colleagues.

4. I think it would also be helpful if, in the light of experience last year, HMCIC could give further broad advice to Chief Officers concerning the limits of what should be said about Special Branches and their functions in Police Annual Reports. We would, for example, wish Chief Constables to exclude from their reports reference to the work done on behalf of the Security Service.

5. I will of course be very ready to discuss these matters with you, Bob Bryan and Jim Crane to whom I am copying this letter. We might at the same time discuss the adequacy of SB training about which I will write to you shortly.

*Yours ever,*

Sys Officer

