



HOME OFFICE  
Queen Anne's Gate, LONDON, SW1H 9AT  
Direct line: 01-213 6207  
Switchboard: 01-213 3000

Our reference:  
Your reference:

3 December 1984

M Buck Esq OBE QPM  
Chief Constable  
Hon Sec ACPO Crime Committee  
Northamptonshire Police Headquarters  
Wootton Hall  
NORTHAMPTON NN4 0JQ

*D. Nairn,*

SPECIAL BRANCH GUIDELINES

Thank you for your letter of 24 September forwarding the Crime Committee's comments on the draft Guidelines on the Work of a Special Branch.

We are submitting the Guidelines for the Home Secretary's approval in the attached version. We have made amendments in paragraphs 6 and 9 to reflect the two comments set out in the annex to your letter.

We were also very grateful for Peter Imbert's letter of 26 September to [redacted], forwarding a comment from David Hall, who makes the valid point that Special Branches need to study not just existing known subversive groups, but also potentially subversive groups which may develop into new subversive organisations. I doubt however whether it would be wise to draw this out specifically in Guidelines, which it looks increasingly likely will be made public. I believe that the existing reference in paragraph 6 to "defending the Realm ... from the actions of persons or organisations ... which may be judged to be subversive to the State" is wide enough to cover those who it is reasonably believed may become subversive in the future, even if not at present engaged in subversion. This is even more clearly inherent in paragraphs 5 to 8 of the covering letter (which will not of course be published), and indeed you will see that we have, in the light of David Hall's comment, introduced a specific reference to the potentially subversive in paragraph 5. I hope you will agree that this suffices to make the position clear.

You will also see that amendments have been made to paragraph 11 of the guidelines and paragraph 10 of the covering letter, which refer to immigration and nationality work. These amendments take account of current practice in the light in particular of the new procedures promulgated in Home Office circular No. 11 of 1984 issued on 27 January 1984. I do not think however that you will find anything of great substance in these amendments.

I now plan to submit the new guidelines and covering letter for the Home Secretary's approval, and to issue them to Chief Constables shortly after that. This will mean that we shall be in a position to make the new guidelines available to the Home Affairs Committee if and when we find it prudent to do so in the course of their enquiry. I think it is inevitable that the Committee will press the Home Secretary when he gives oral evidence to say what guidance he gives Special Branches on the conduct of their duties, and that will probably be the moment to say that he has recently introduced new guidelines, and to offer to make them available to the Committee. An alternative would be to wait until the Committee has reported, and include the guidelines in our response to the report. We have of course been careful to ensure that there is nothing in the new guidelines that could not be made public, and I think there will in fact be positive benefit in making available guidelines which demonstrate that Special Branches carry out necessary functions in a properly controlled way.

I should very much like to discuss tactics in this and other respects when we meet on 7 December, and I look forward to seeing you then.

Copies go to Peter Imbert, Ken Oxford, and Colin Hewett; [redacted] (Security Service); [redacted] (SHHD); and [redacted] (NIO).

*Yours sincerely,*

[redacted]  
R A HARRINGTON