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Dear Stephen

SPECIAL BRANCH GUIDELINES

The Committee is aware that the work of Special Branches is guided by terms of reference drawn up and issued by the Association of Chief Police Officers in 1970. A review of these terms of reference was begun in 1983, as a result of which it was decided that they should be replaced by guidelines issued under the authority of the Home Office. The review has taken account of the changes in Special Branch duties since 1970, particularly in relation to the growth in terrorist activity since then and the consequent responsibilities placed on Special Branches by the prevention of terrorism legislation.

Work on these new guidelines has just been completed, and they are today being issued to chief constables. The previous terms of reference contained classified information and were not therefore made available outside the government and police service. But it has been found possible in drafting the new guidelines to avoid reference to confidential matters. It may be of assistance to the Committee in completing its review of Special Branch work to have the new guidelines before it, and I accordingly enclose a copy of them.

Yours ever



Parliamentary Clerk