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14 July 1983

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TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SPECIAL BRANCHES

Thank you for your letter of 8 July with which you enclosed a copy of the Police Authority resolution which followed your report of 3 May. I am grateful for the opportunity to comment on the resolution. Please encourage any of your fellow chief constables who are faced with similar problems in relation to Special Branch to get in touch with me or David Hilary after his arrival.

I enclose a suggested first draft of the sort of response you may wish to give with some blanks to be filled in. I am clear that it would be wrong in any circumstances to answer several of the specific points mentioned in the resolution. The one point where it would be hard to continue to avoid giving an answer if we were pressed relates to "what are the Home Office guidelines". The answer, as you know only too well as the signatory, is that there are ACPO guidelines, agreed with the Home Office and the Security Service, which are now being reviewed. That review is likely to result in Home Office guidelines but we have not so far referred publicly either to the existence of the ACPO guidelines or to the proposed review. If we mention either it will be an invitation to your Authority and to others to ask for them to be published.

As the meeting on 21 September is so far ahead we may have a go at a rough revision of the guidelines and circulate them beforehand so that we have a starting-point for discussion. I am sorry that the meeting could not take place until then but it proved very difficult to find a date when we could bring everyone together.

J G MILLER