



A NEED TO KNOW

HMIC Thematic Inspection of Special Branch and Ports Policing



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Her Majesty's Inspector

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PREFACE

Whilst this Thematic Inspection had been planned for some time, the tragic events of 11th September 2001 significantly raised the focus on, and the profile of, the work being carried out by Special Branch and Ports Officers.

This report examines the way in which forces seek to meet the demands placed on SB and Ports Units and how they strike the balance between national security and local policing issues. In doing so it rightly pays tribute to the commitment, dedication and professionalism of many police officers and support staff throughout the country who, with others, work extremely hard to prevent and disrupt the activities of persons engaged in international and domestic terrorism, as well as supporting efforts to combat organised crime.

The key messages are that the threat from terrorist groups remains high and therefore the police service must seek constantly to enhance the part it plays in collaboration with key partners. Terrorists do not recognise geographic boundaries and therefore we must continue to build on our existing capabilities pro-actively to combat individuals and groups by further developing our intelligence systems and enhancing our ability for executive action. I acknowledge that some of the recommendations contained in this report would involve fundamental change to the existing structures. The proposals are not prescriptive – they are intended to inform the more detailed consideration of how the issues highlighted in the report are to be addressed. In formalising collaborative arrangements, chief constables should be re-assured that strategic intelligence reports will provide a stronger basis for resource allocation and deployment; whilst at the same time ensure that the critical mass and capability to deal with major enquiries is available.

The Inspection team visited eight Forces across England and Wales ranging from very small units to the largest. I am grateful to all the chief officers for supporting this project and to all those interviewed who gave such valuable contributions. I would also like to record my appreciation for the co-operation and support

volunteered by the significant number of colleagues from external partner agencies who provided an invaluable perspective on the partnership approach.

In accepting and welcoming this report the police service will demonstrate its continued commitment to improving our capability to protect our national security.

I commend it to you.

Sir Keith Povey QPM BA(Law)
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Introduction

About this report

- 1.1 Even though the nature of Special Branch business is sensitive, this report seeks to provide as much information as possible without compromising operational security. In achieving this objective and offering a comprehensive, transparent examination of Special Branch and Ports policing, readers should note that there are no confidential or secret annexes. The report is divided into three parts as follows:

Part 1 Includes the executive summary of findings.

Part 2 Provides the Strategic Overview with recommendations.

Part 3 Contains more detailed comments to support Part 2 and is primarily intended for practitioners.

- 1.2 Between February and August 2002, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out a thematic inspection of Special Branch and Special Branch ports policing in England and Wales. Eight police forces were visited; they were selected as a representative cross section in terms of size, number of officers, geography, demography and areas of responsibility such as air or sea ports. Whilst this inspection had been planned for some time before 11th September 2001, that day's events underlined the need to review Special Branch and to assess the effectiveness of its contribution to the national security structure of this country. The review also provided an opportunity to examine the wider context of Special Branch activities in support of the prevention and detection of serious crime and public disorder.

- 1.3 A reference group of key stakeholders comprising the Association of Police Authorities (APA), the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the Security Service and the office of the National Co-ordinator for Ports Policing (NCPP), was established to receive periodical updates regarding progress and emerging findings. HMIC is grateful for the support provided by the members of this group, it should however be noted that this report represents the views of HMIC and not necessarily those of the other agencies. One of the terms of reference for the inspection was to provide a foundation report upon which police authorities could carry out best value reviews of Special Branches. HMIC acknowledges that the strategic recommendations cover areas wider than ever would be

covered by individual best value reviews but nevertheless hopes that the report will inform the debate. Additionally, as there are no restrictions on circulation, HMIC considers the broad range of issues encapsulated within the report, particularly Part 3, will further assist the best value process.

Methodology

1.4 Phase 1

Involved a desk top review of documents provided by the eight forces relating to their policies and strategies for the running of Special Branch and including business plans and staffing policies as well as management and performance information. It also included a review of the current national Guidelines, relevant legislation and structural arrangements.

1.5 Phase 2

Consisted of field visits to the eight forces which involved interviews with Branch staff, chief officers and managers and Police authority representatives; focus groups were also conducted with Branch staff and their colleagues from other units such as patrol officers. HMIC also examined accommodation, security and resources, as well as operating systems and procedures. Other external agencies, identified locally, were also interviewed.

1.6 Phase 3

Involved field visits and interviews with key personnel from other agencies that have national responsibilities impacting on the work of Special Branch such as the Security Service, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, Her Majesty's Immigration Service and the National Criminal Intelligence Service.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A Brief History of Special Branch

- 1.7 The origins of the Branch can be traced back to 1883 when the Metropolitan Police formed the 'Irish Branch' to combat a bombing campaign then underway on the British mainland. The Branch subsequently expanded to cover anarchists and to screen arrivals at main ports and railway termini. The title Special Branch was first applied in 1887 to a section with national responsibility for covering extremists, Irish and others. Prior to the First World War the Branch was focused on foreign anarchists and German espionage and it was during this period that the key relationship with MI5 (now the Security Service) developed and has continued to the present day. After the War police forces outside London began to establish small but permanent Special Branches which in the 1930s were engaged in countering further Irish terrorist activity.
- 1.8 During the Second World War, Special Branch worked to counter German espionage, but by the end of the war the focus had shifted to Soviet espionage which remained a priority until the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. The 70s and 80s also saw the growth of terrorism, both domestic and international, prompting the expansion of Special Branch across the country. The period from the late 1980s to 2000 saw major changes in threat levels, first in the ending of the Cold War and subsequently, after the Provisional IRA attacks of the early 90s, in the Irish Peace Process and the 1994 Ceasefire. This led to a perception that the threat to UK national security was declining and that consequently the role of Special Branch was also diminishing. This reassuring picture was short lived as by the late 1990s the threat from international terrorism had escalated sharply; now, in the wake of the 11th September, Bali and other attacks the threat seems likely to remain high. Special Branch, as a key component of the UK's national security structure, shares in the challenge of countering this threat which is posed by increasingly complex and sophisticated terrorist organisations which, while using advanced technology, are prepared to sacrifice their adherents in suicide attacks.

Role and Structure

- 1.9 The role of Special Branch and Ports officers, as set out in the 1994 Guidelines, is essentially to gather intelligence to meet national security requirements as well as to support other policing priorities such as the prevention of disorder. In the context of national security, Special Branch works closely with, and in support of, the Security Service, as well as with other national agencies. Each Special Branch remains an integral part of the local force and is accountable to the individual chief officer. HMIC noted tensions between the national and local roles of Special Branch reflected in cases where Special Branch personnel were routinely diverted to tasks outside the normal remit of the Branch. Uncertainties also arose because the Guidelines do not reflect the major changes which have occurred since 1994 regarding the threat to national security, the operational and legal environment in which the police work, and public expectations. The resulting confusion would be reduced by clarification of the role of Special Branch and a revision of the Guidelines under which it operates.
- 1.10 There are Special Branch units in each of the 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales, ranging in size from just a few officers to several hundred in the Metropolitan Police Special Branch (MPSB). Special Branch officers provide coverage of air or sea ports within their force areas on either a permanent or temporary basis depending on the size, location and nature of the port. Each Branch is led by a Head of Special Branch (HSB), whose rank depends on the size and responsibilities of the unit and may range from Detective Sergeant to Commander (equivalent to Assistant Chief Constable) in the MPSB.
- 1.11 Whilst HMIC was impressed by the dedication and commitment of Special Branch personnel across the country, it was evident that the operational capability of individual units depends very much on their size, the smaller units having neither the officers nor resources to meet the full range of operational requirements. It was also apparent that the large number of Branches and the disparities in their size, command structures and influence creates difficulties particularly in their interaction with key partners. By way of example the Security Service has to interface with forces at a variety of command levels across the 52 UK forces whilst individuals from other national agencies were unsure as to who their point of contact should be. HMIC recognises that arrangements exist for mutual aid and collaboration and for regional co-ordination, but these also differ across the country; a more formalised structure would improve consistency.

Operational Activity

- 1.12 A key aspect of Special Branch intelligence gathering is that it extends the reach of the national agencies by utilising the close links between local police and the communities they serve, as well as the contacts and access which the Branch itself maintains; this linkage is a major strength of the UK's national security structure, and the envy of certain other countries. Much of the intelligence gathering work of Special Branch, whether undertaken solely by the branch or jointly with agencies such as the Security Service, involves specialised operational work such as surveillance or the management of human sources

(Covert Human Intelligence Sources – CHIS) for which formal authorisation is required under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000. Such techniques may be employed by Special Branch to obtain intelligence relating to threats to national security or in the context of serious crime or public order, whether localised or crossing force boundaries.

- 1.13 Special Branch Ports Units provide a presence at air and sea ports in keeping with their national security (mainly counter-terrorist) role as well as to counter organised crime and prevent child abduction offences. Together with the other border agencies, HM Customs and Excise and HM Immigration Service, they are able to monitor all movement into and through UK ports. Relationships between agencies are effective, particularly where accommodation and facilities are shared. Despite the importance of their role, the status of Special Branch Ports Units was found to be low in the Branch, and is reflected in the poor standards of accommodation and resources found at several ports. Although the morale and motivation of ports units was found to be high, many staff felt that their operational effectiveness would be enhanced through improvements to working facilities and resources, including secure locally and nationally networked IT. IT became a common theme of the inspection and is an aspect which HMIC sees as in need of urgent attention.

- 1.14 Special Branch, in keeping with the rest of the police service, is moving towards greater openness; this is also an operational necessity if the Branch is to establish closer links to front line officers in daily contact with the community. It is important, however, that this openness is not used as an excuse to relax security; most Special Branch business involves sensitive information, equipment and techniques which must be safeguarded to national standards. This applies also to the security clearance of staff; it is important that policies relating to the vetting of Special Branch staff should be consistent nationally both to enhance operational flexibility and to prevent inappropriate disclosure of classified information. All Special Branches should maintain an effective and comprehensive security regime on the basis of which they can also provide advice and assistance to their forces regarding wider security issues.



- 1.15 The National Intelligence Model is currently being implemented under ACPO auspices throughout the police service; this includes Special Branch. In large Special Branches which are effectively self-sufficient for resources, the tasking and co-ordination process detailed within NIM is largely internal to the Branch, being primarily concerned with prioritising and allocating Special Branch resources against competing Branch requirements.

For smaller Special Branches, however, the co-ordination is more likely to involve force resources, where the competition is with departments that have no need to know about sensitive Branch operations. The dilemma for the Branch therefore is whether to expose sensitive intelligence in the resource bidding process, to circumvent NIM by obtaining resources outside the bidding process, or to abandon the bid altogether. This problem was acknowledged by several forces, some of which have adopted compromise procedures. HMIC recognises that in the interests of security it may be necessary for Special Branches to take a pragmatic approach to NIM.

- 1.16 SB funding proved to be complicated and at times confusing. All policing provision is drawn from the main force budget, substantially funded by police and local authority grant. Where forces have exceptional security demands, the funding formula through which grant is allocated is weighted to take into account the additional pressures. There is a widespread mistaken belief that the allocative mechanism for these extra pressures requires forces to fund a particular number of posts. This is not so. Forces are concerned that there appears to be no certainty that a post currently assumed to be attracting additional funds would do so in the next year. Given this misinterpretation, HMIC considers a review of the funding mechanism to be necessary, whether or not any structural changes are made to Special Branch.
- 1.17 Special Branch training is provided on a national basis by MPSB and the Security Service with a strong in-force element of individual development. Each officer now undertakes a competency-based package, delivered over a period of time, which covers basics before moving on to specialised areas such as operational skills. This package, which is highly regarded, is managed by a national user group. HMIC found that in some forces, allocation of course vacancies tended to favour those in headquarters rather than in satellites such as Ports Units; not only is this professionally undesirable but it also risks further marginalising those working in remote locations.
- 1.18 HMIC also considered how Special Branch performance should best be measured. This is a problem area for all intelligence and security organisations for which the ultimate mark of success might be the absence of untoward events rather than something actually happening; nevertheless it is a question that will need to be answered in the forthcoming Best Value Review of Special Branches. HMIC examined several assessment strategies currently in use in Special Branch, all of which were based mainly on quantitative activity measurement and most of which could be distorted by different interpretation of the criteria. It was concluded that Special Branch performance should be assessed qualitatively against clear objectives and on the basis of feedback from those with whom the objectives were drawn up, including relevant external agencies, and from Special Branch's own management. This principle can be applied at the individual as well as the organisational level and could be supplemented by quantitative measurement of, for example, processes involved in collection or assessment of intelligence.

Regional and National Arrangements

- 1.19 Regarding the broader structure of Special Branch, HMIC found that the current regional groupings of Special Branch, which are primarily based around quarterly meetings of HSBs chaired by ACPO Regional representatives, vary in their effectiveness. Some provide forums for networking and exchange of views and perhaps some intelligence, whereas others undertake limited joint tasking, co-ordination and joint operational projects; all provide a useful platform for the Security Service and others to present briefings and take soundings. Some regions, however, are considering further co-ordination by, for example, centralising the management and response to fluid intelligence-led operations, such as the tracking of terrorists moving across the country; this might involve the establishment of permanent regional Police Main Base Stations to replace the force level structures intended mainly for static hostage-type incidents. Another example is the proposal to co-ordinate all the Counter Terrorism Security advisers in each region to ensure consistency and continuity of advice to the commercial sector and the public. On the Ports front, the National Co-ordinator of Ports Policing (NCP) has established regional groupings of ports which participate in joint operational initiatives, some of which have proved highly successful. These developments are welcome and groundbreaking, however, HMIC concluded that the current regional structure cannot provide the cohesion necessary to strengthen Special Branch sufficiently as a national resource.
- 1.20 At the national level there is no single organisation which has overall responsibility for the co-ordination of Special Branch. ACPO (TAM) is perhaps the national fulcrum particularly with regards to policy and structural issues, while the ACPO (TAM) Advisory Group, NCP as well as several units under the aegis of MPSB, are responsible for co-ordinating but not controlling, specific areas of Special Branch activity. Outside the police service, the Security Service maintains strong bi-lateral and interactive relationships with all Special Branches, and at the national and regional levels. These links are primarily based on Special Branch's role in supporting the Security Service and effectively co-ordinate much of Special Branch's intelligence and operational work. Other national agencies have similar but less extensive relationships with Special Branch, although the links with some, such as HMCE and HMIS tend to operate at local level.

HMIC identified five main areas requiring urgent attention if Special Branch is fully to play its part in countering the threats to national security. The main recommendations of this report relate directly to those areas as follows:

- **Issue:** The role and responsibilities of Special Branch are unclear; the 1994 guidelines do not reflect the changed environment.
- **Recommendation:** HMIC recommends that the Home Office review and update the current Guidelines in order to clarify the role of Special Branch thereby formalising its remit and priorities within the national security arena.

- **Issue:** Special Branch lacks the necessary national coordination and consistency; individual units differ greatly in size and capability; some Ports units are isolated and poorly resourced.
- **Recommendations:**
 - The creation of regional Special Branch units based on the current ACPO regions and under the executive control of regional directors answerable to the relevant regional chief constables management committees.
 - The appointment at Deputy Chief Constable level of a National Co-ordinator of Special Branch, a non-executive position with overall responsibility for ports policing, policy, training and issues common to Special Branch nationally.
 - The transfer of executive control of ports units to their respective regions, with national ports co-ordination provided by the NCPP who would be one of two deputies at Assistant Chief Constable level to the National Co-ordinator. The position of other units with national responsibilities including the NJU and NPO should be considered at this time.
- **Issue:** Arrangements for Special Branch funding, including DSP, are becoming over complicated and lack transparency..
- **Recommendation:** In conjunction with structural change HMIC recommends the Home Office reviews the funding arrangements for Special Branches; this should include Dedicated Security Post arrangements.
- **Issue:** The pressures on Special Branch staffing and resources are proving detrimental to the Branch's ability to meet operational demands.
- **Recommendation:** HMIC recommends that, irrespective of any funding review, police authorities and chief constables should ensure Special Branches and Special Branch Ports Units are appropriately staffed and adequately resourced to meet the continued and developing threats to national security.
- **Issue:** Special Branch lacks adequate IT; overall, a Special Branch national IT network would significantly enhance effectiveness.
- **Recommendation:** HMIC recommends that, as a result of the findings of this inspection and the concerns already raised through ACPO (TAM), as a matter of priority the Home Office enables identified national Special Branch IT requirements to be implemented and most importantly funded, through a clear, robust, time-tabled strategy.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Terms of Reference

- 2.1 This thematic inspection was planned some months before 11th September 2001 but the global impact of the events of that day, not least on government, law enforcement and intelligence organisations, have emphasised the need to review Special Branch and Ports policing in this country.
- 2.2 The Terms of Reference of the Inspection were to:
 - a) Provide an assessment of the role being carried out by Special Branch and Ports Policing officers against their current guidelines and national policing objectives;
 - b) Provide an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of supporting structures and systems;
 - c) Provide an assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of functional relationships with key partners;
 - d) Assess mechanisms for accountability, performance monitoring and reviews;
 - e) Provide options for change if appropriate, to increase the effectiveness of the contribution to policing made by Special Branch and Ports Policing officers;
 - f) Provide a foundation report upon which Police Authorities can carry out Best Value reviews of Special Branch activities.

Wednesday 31st July 2002

Terrorists strike at heart of city

- 2.3 One of the key lessons to emerge from the investigation into the 11th September attacks has been the vital importance of extending the reach of the national security agencies by further utilising the close links between local police and the communities in which they work. This two way linkage, or 'golden thread', is notably absent from the national security structures of some countries but in the UK Special Branch fulfils this role in the course of providing active support both for national agencies and local policing. Although not listed as a formal responsibility of the Branch, the importance of this aspect extends to all areas of its work; it therefore constituted an important element in this inspection and in the framing of the recommendations. It is in recognition of this aspect that this report is titled 'A NEED TO KNOW'. While acknowledging that for reasons of safety, security and sensitivity the need to know principle must still apply to much of the Branch's work, HMIC believes it should be balanced against the benefits of increased collaborative effort in the development and exploitation of intelligence. It was therefore pleasing to find that much of the mystique surrounding the work of Special Branch is already dissipating in a climate of greater openness generated by the intelligence and security agencies themselves. The benefits of this are becoming apparent through a better appreciation and integration of intelligence gathering activities. For example, greater efforts are now being made to brief front line police officers whose potential contribution to the intelligence picture arising from their position in the local community was often overlooked. Similarly, the general public have a major contribution to make but are unaware of much of the significant work taking place 'behind the scenes' in protecting national security; they too have A NEED TO KNOW and this report seeks to fulfil that need.

SPECIAL BRANCH – The historical dimension

- 2.4 The origins of Special Branch can be traced back to 1883 with the formation of the 'Irish Branch', a section of the Metropolitan Police whose role was to combat a bombing campaign then underway on the British mainland. Further sections were formed to counter a growing threat posed by foreign anarchists and to screen arriving passengers at the main sea ports and London railway termini. In 1887 an additional section was formed with national responsibility for Irish and other extremists; it was this unit that first used the name 'Special Branch'.

2.5 In the years prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Special Branch monitored the activities of Russian revolutionaries in Britain and later turned to countering the growing threat of German espionage. This saw the beginnings of co-operation with the fledgling MI5 (later the Security Service) whose deputy head was the previous head of Special Branch. The close relationship which subsequently developed has underpinned much of Special Branch's work over the past ninety years.

2.6 The war further strengthened these ties, laying the foundations for co-operation against subversion in the UK, and subsequently the IRA (Irish Republican Army) campaign in the late 1930s. Once the war was over, police forces outside London began to establish their own small but permanent Special Branches, laying the basis for the current structure of Special Branch across the UK.



The dynamite outrages in Westminster: general view of the damage in Scotland Yard

2.7 The Second World War again saw Special Branch working closely with MI5 against German spies, but by the end of the war the focus had shifted to the threat from Soviet espionage. Over the next twenty years Special Branch was involved in investigating and prosecuting cold-war espionage cases such as Fuchs, the Portland Spy Ring, Blake and Vassall. In 1978 the Metropolitan Police finally relinquished its responsibility for providing a presence at all major ports, a role now undertaken by Special Branch units of local forces.

2.8 The 1970s and 80s witnessed a sustained upsurge of terrorism in mainland Great Britain, both from Irish Republican groups as well as those of Middle East origin. This enhanced intelligence response to violent terrorism, coupled with increasing industrial unrest and public disorder in the 1980's, led to significant expansions in Special Branches.

2.9 The period from the late 1980s to 2000 saw unprecedented changes in the global and national scene that had major implications for national security and consequently for the role and status of Special Branch. These developments included the collapse of Soviet communism and the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and the beginnings of the Northern Ireland Peace Process which included the Provisional IRA cease-fire in 1994. These events contributed to a widely held perception that the overall threat to UK national security was declining and that consequently the role of Special Branch had diminished, perhaps to the point where many of its skills and resources would be better deployed elsewhere. The year 1992 also saw the transfer of responsibility for intelligence on Irish Republican terrorism in mainland Britain from the Metropolitan Police Special Branch (MPSB) to the Security Service.

2.10 By 1995 the threat to the UK and the West from Islamic extremist terrorist groups was already well developed, while the Irish situation remained fragile with groups on both sides, such as the LVF (Loyalist Volunteer Force) and the Real IRA, actively pursuing campaigns of violence. These developments required the continuing attention of Special Branch, as did the emerging threat to public order posed by extremists such as those within

the animal rights movement and others intent on the violent disruption of the global economy. Additionally, the impact of technology has both increased the vulnerability of the national infrastructures of developed countries whilst enhancing the capabilities of potential attackers. These threats have continued to develop, as was dramatically illustrated by the events of 11th September 2001 which highlighted both the potential global impact of well-targeted terrorism and the urgent need to monitor those who abuse democratic liberties to further their terrorist intentions.

- 2.11 Thus, despite the reassuring picture which was developing by the mid 1990s, the demands on Special Branch and Ports Police have now increased whilst the circumstances in which they work requires ever greater sensitivity to community interests and concerns. The nature of the threats facing the United Kingdom and the direction from which they emanate are changing. This HMIC Thematic Inspection provides a timely opportunity to review the role, structure, resourcing and effectiveness of Special Branch in a climate of heightened threat, while taking account of the competing demands for the limited resources available to the police service.

THE CURRENT POSITION - Force level

The Role Of Special Branch

- 2.12 Each of the 43 Forces in England and Wales (plus eight in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland) has its own Special Branch whose duties, in addition to core functions, may include coverage of air or seaports and VIP Protection. The size of the Branch is usually proportional to the size of the force, but the policing of major ports and other discrete responsibilities may be staff-intensive and can distort the size and structure of the Branch.
- 2.13 The role and responsibilities of Special Branch, and the relationship between individual Branches and their chief officers, are set out in the 'Guidelines on Special Branch Work in Great Britain', the current edition of which was issued in 1994 by the Home Office and the Scottish Home and Health Department. Whilst based on the principles underlying the evolution of Special Branch, these Guidelines reflect the operational context at that time. Significantly, they highlight the duality of Special Branch's role in meeting both national security requirements set by agencies outside the force and requirements in support of the policing priorities of the force itself. This is illustrated by two extracts from the Guidelines:
- 'Each Special Branch remains an integral part of the local force, accountable to individual Chief Officers and available to them to deploy on any duties flowing from their responsibility for the preservation of the Queen's Peace, including the prevention and detection of crime' and
 - 'Special Branches exist primarily to acquire intelligence, to assess its potential operational value, and to contribute more generally to its interpretation. They do so both to meet local policing needs and also to assist the Security Service in carrying out its statutory duty under the Security Service Act...'

- 2.14 According to the Security Service Act 1989, 'the function of the Service shall be the protection of national security and, in particular, its protection against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage, from the activities of the agents of foreign powers and by actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means
- 2.15 In identifying Special Branch's dual roles in national security and local policing, the Guidelines highlight an area of inherent tension within Special Branch and in its position within the force. Traditionally, most Special Branches have, with their chief officers' agreement, interpreted the guidelines as intending that their major role relates to national security, much of which involves national priorities which might not feature at force level. However, some forces, increasingly under pressure to deliver against policing objectives, see in Special Branch a source of highly trained and experienced officers with specialist techniques which could prove highly effective in other areas including combating serious crime.
- 2.16 Prior to 11th September 2001 some forces were downsizing their Special Branches on the basis of a perceived reduction in the overall threat to national security. Since then there has been a limited re-appraisal of commitment based on the UK response to global events and the evident requirement to ensure that the UK's security arrangements are fully effective. Some forces and their police authorities have included counter terrorism among their control strategies within the overall policing plans. Others have chosen not to adopt this approach and it was evident to HMIC, that as a consequence in some forces, counter-terrorism was not identified as a priority. The disparity across the country in formally recognising counter-terrorism as a core police responsibility and allocating appropriate resources to match the threat is of concern. In HMIC's view, the proposal to include counter-terrorism in the National Policing Plan is entirely appropriate.
- 2.17 HMIC also noted that in some forces, Special Branch officers are routinely abstracted to undertake tasks unrelated to national security, while in others Special Branch as a whole may be integrated with other force resources such as Force Intelligence. HMIC noted with concern that while such moves might make sense in terms of efficiency and economy of scale, they may diminish the Branch's capability to meet intermediate level national security requirements involving sustained use of resources. HMIC recognises that the pressures on forces to use experienced detectives, such as those in Special Branch, on priority investigations may result in their being routinely abstracted but urges chief officers to guard against this when at all possible.
- 2.18 Since the production of the 1994 Guidelines not only the nature of the threat has shifted but there have also been significant changes to the legislative and regulatory environment in which Special Branch operates. New legislation includes the Police Act 1997, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), as well as the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001. Each of these Acts has given rise to extensive explanatory and guidance notes, and in some cases, the legal implications of the new legislation has yet to be fully tested or resolved.

- 2.19 Special Branch is also affected by such issues as the general drive towards intelligence-led policing and the introduction of the ACPO-approved National Intelligence Model (NIM). In principle, this should be familiar territory to Special Branch but in some forces there is understandable discomfort over the requirement for the Branch to compete openly in Tasking and Co-ordinating Groups for resources to undertake sensitive activities. Further demands are imposed by advances in information and communications technology, the impact of globalisation and the increasing sophistication of criminality.
- 2.20 A recent development which has been widely welcomed by Special Branch is the introduction by the Security Service of an annual Statement of Joint Working Objectives. This is agreed with individual forces and, whilst it reflects the Security Service's national priorities and objectives, it is closely tailored to the local circumstances of each force. The Statement will serve not only as the planning basis for each Special Branch's work in support of the Security Service but will provide a template for assessing a Branch's effectiveness in the national security context.

Special Branch Structure

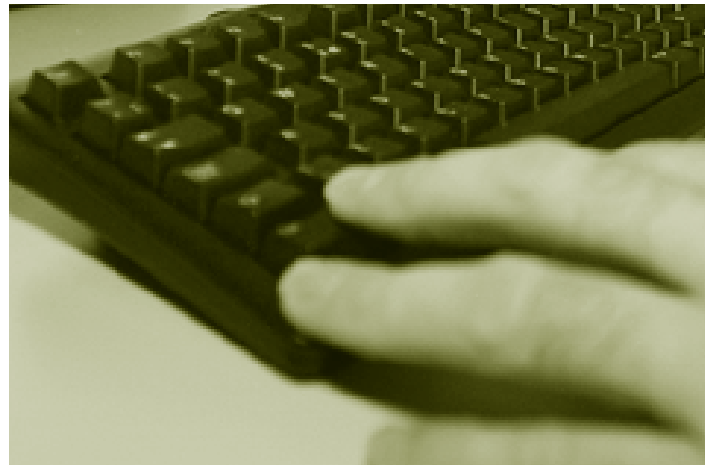
- 2.21 The position of Special Branch within each force structure varies widely in terms of its size, role and profile; most are situated within the Headquarters Crime Departments. Every Special Branch is led by a Head of Special Branch (HSB) whose rank, ranging from Detective Sergeant to Commander, relates to the size of the unit and the extent of its responsibilities. The HSB generally reports to the Head of CID, who in turn reports to the Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) or equivalent. In practice, the Head of CID might have little experience of Special Branch matters and it is accepted that HSB should have direct access to the ACC and, in certain circumstances, to the chief constable.
- 2.22 Whilst it has always been important that senior line managers in Special Branch's chain of command should maintain close engagement with Special Branch, the introduction of RIPA 2000, which requires in-force authorisation of many of the Branch's operational activities, has made this essential. Senior officers are now more accountable for the activities of Special Branch than ever before, while HSB and the Branch officers require legal sanction for the work which they are tasked to carry out both on behalf of the force and to meet wider national requirements. The mechanics of authorisation vary between forces but accountability invariably rests at the top of the chain. In at least one force HMIC noted the need for closer engagement at that level to meet both statutory requirements and to safeguard the interests of the force and the Special Branch officers concerned. HMIC strongly urges the senior management of all forces to ensure that the authorisation and accountability arrangements at ACPO level are sound and that there is adequate engagement with Special Branch at that level.
- 2.23 The disparity in rank between HSBs is reflected in the level of decision that can be taken within each Branch and in some cases, the ability of the HSB to secure the necessary resources for the Unit. This is particularly important when an urgent response requiring force resources is required in support of a national security operation. The HSB's rank also has a bearing on the status and influence of the Branch as a whole within the force, though

HMIC found that the relationship between Special Branch and other departments, particularly CID, was generally good with evidence of confidence and understanding on both sides. The variation in rank between HSBs, however, increases the complexity of the relationship between Special Branch and outside agencies such as the Security Service and the Immigration and Customs Services.

- 2.24 The Metropolitan Police has the largest Special Branch under the direction of a Commander (equivalent to Assistant Chief Constable). The size of the Branch permits a high degree of autonomy and specialisation and a full range of dedicated operational resources; it also reflects MPSB's major commitment to full-time VIP Protection.
- 2.25 In addition to the more traditional territorially based roles of Special Branch, MPSB also carries a unique range of national responsibilities. Most of these functions are carried out by dedicated units some of which are resourced entirely by the MPSB while others are staffed and funded on a shared basis or under the Dedicated Security Post (DSP) funding scheme in which Home Office funds are specifically allocated to the posts. MPSB's national responsibilities are covered in detail later.

Operational Capability

- 2.26 Each Special Branch undertakes work relating to national security, particularly on behalf of the Security Service, as well as seeking to meet the requirements of its own force. Special Branch officers possess local knowledge, community awareness and maintain invaluable contacts, especially in their own force areas. These need to be supported, developed and sustained. This also applies to small Special Branches where officers perform several roles yet are able to maintain vital links to local communities, which can generate valuable intelligence in support of national security. Special Branch officers are either the local 'eyes and ears' themselves or can reasonably be expected to know people who are. The importance of the local coverage of Special Branch was stressed by many of those interviewed by HMIC. It is widely recognised that the local knowledge and coverage of Special Branch and Ports officers is vital to national security and must be retained at all costs.



- 2.27 Among the key factors which determine the ability of a Special Branch to meet the requirements placed on it are its size and the extent of those requirements; the one does not necessarily determine the other. The ability to prioritise is therefore essential but in the smallest Special Branches this may be of limited value. For example, each Special Branch receives exactly the same number of operational messages from the ACPO (TAM) Advisory Group, many of which require action, while the Security Service requirements cannot simply be determined by the size of the Special Branch concerned. The larger Special Branches are able to take on the most pressing tasks, leaving the others until later, whereas the smaller Special Branches may be continuously inundated by high priority tasks, leaving little capacity for the proactive and routine activities which are essential to the long term work of the Branch.

- 2.28 It was also clear to HMIC that in addition to proactive and routine work, Special Branches below a certain size are unable to undertake operational work such as surveillance or to maintain a range of source operations without the risk of over-exposing officers or their contacts. This invites the use of the term 'critical mass' to describe the size below which a Special Branch becomes less than fully functional. The precise number of officers required to achieve critical mass will vary between Branches and the concept is therefore perhaps best defined in terms of capability rather than numbers. However, this should take account of desk and intelligence processing functions in addition to maintaining adequate surveillance and source handling capability and the ability to meet ports, protection and advisory responsibilities. HMIC believes that if small forces were required to take on the full range of operational activities, many would have significant difficulty in sustaining that commitment. During the Inspection, staff in some smaller Special Branches expressed frustration that they were effectively trapped in their offices by the paperwork and were unable to get out and 'do the job'.
- 2.29 Larger Special Branches are more self-sufficient and are able to deal with a greater range of operational contingencies than are their smaller counterparts; they should therefore prove more effective overall. The largest, such as MPSB, are able to operate with a high degree of resource autonomy and are generally able to meet the full range of local, national security and other requirements.
- 2.30 The critical mass factor and the consequent limitations on the operational capabilities of small Special Branches is a matter of concern. National security is a national issue; terrorists and those engaged in organised crime are not constrained by boundaries, local or national. Yet the size of Special Branches is determined more by geography and history as by levels of threat. So indeed are police forces, but the threat to national security is of a high order and ever present. Even the smallest force could suddenly be faced with a major incident or investigation requiring resources that it does not have at its disposal, whilst a neighbouring force quite possibly might. HMIC identified a pressing need to rationalise Special Branch resources on a basis that provides greater evenness within each region and perhaps also nationally, than is possible under current arrangements.

Special Branch Ports Policing

- 2.31 The 1994 Guidelines state that 'the presence of Special Branch officers at ports and airports is an integral part of their counter-terrorist role'. The Guidelines also acknowledge the wider role of ports units in contributing to general policing work including the prevention of child abduction and in working closely with other agencies at the ports. It was also evident to HMIC during visits to ports and in discussion with other agencies that the Special Branch Ports Units play a valuable role in other aspects of national security work including counter espionage and counter proliferation.



- 2.32 The larger air and seaports in England and Wales, including the nine major airports which are 'designated' under the Policing of Airports Act 1974, have a dedicated Special Branch presence provided by the local force but funded centrally by the Home Office under the 'Dedicated Security Posts' (DSP) scheme. Special Branch staff at these ports form the nucleus of the 'Ports Units'. The extent of Special Branch coverage of ports and airports which do not attract DSP funding and which range from minor regional freight and passenger facilities to small recreational harbours and airstrips, will depend both on intelligence as to their use and the volume of traffic and freight passing through them. The officers involved will be usually be found from the local Branch.
- 2.33 The Special Branch Ports Units, in conjunction with the Customs and Immigration services, are the UK's national gatekeepers, a key task in the national defences against terrorism. Yet Special Branch's role at ports extends far beyond the defensive and officers at ports are frequently involved in proactive operations, some of which illustrate an important aspect of the Special Branch's relationship with the Security Service. Typically a request from the Security Service will be urgent, will require detailed knowledge of the port and its procedures and will additionally call on the powers of police officers. Often it will not be possible for a member of the Security Service to reach the port in time. Such work can be demanding and requires officers of high calibre who are well supported in terms of information and resources. HMIC was therefore disappointed to learn that officers at ports are often perceived as the poor relations in Special Branch and that this may be reflected in aspects such as working conditions and resources. Some forces such as Hampshire, however, recognising this perception have introduced measures such as good accommodation for the Ports Unit and involvement of ports officers in wider operational initiatives. These changes have clearly had a positive impact on the morale, standing and effectiveness of this Unit.
- 2.34 At some ports Joint Intelligence Cells (JICs) have been established comprising officers from Special Branch, HM Customs and Excise and HM Immigration Service. While in principle enhanced liaison between the three agencies should result in considerable benefits, in practice much depends on the extent of their commitment to the project. It must also be recognised that the agencies have different roles, which are not necessarily complementary, as well as widely different working practices (e.g. Customs tend not to maintain a permanent presence at every port, relying instead on targeted and intelligence led activity). In several cases HMIC found that Special Branch enjoyed excellent relations with one or other of the organisations but less often with both; relationships were noticeably stronger when the relevant agencies were co-located. There is clearly a range of issues to be resolved to enable JICs to become the accepted and effective norm; among these is the question as to whether they should be force or port based or whether JICs would fare better on a regional basis. The regional issue is considered in the wider structural context later in this report. While HMIC regards joint working between the



border agencies as an important goal, it suggests that as a short term priority, emphasis should be laid on establishing agreed objectives and procedures, good communications and co-ordination between the three agencies and also the Security Service. In the longer term, the JIC concept should have an important place in any restructuring of Special Branch.

- 2.35 In visiting several Ports Units, HMIC noted that officers are often required to operate in extremely difficult conditions and with totally inadequate facilities and equipment. Poor accommodation was a common source of complaint by ports units reflecting a somewhat confusing situation under which operators of certain air and sea ports are required to provide unspecified premises for the use of Ports Units. As a result, units at these ports are provided with accommodation of widely varying suitability. At other ports and airports the units are reliant on the goodwill of the operators or the extent to which the force budget can be stretched to cover space in a very high value environment. In practice there is a marked reluctance among most ports operators to provide adequate office and interview accommodation due to the conflicting commercial need for retail space close to the points of entry and departure which is precisely where the Ports Units need to be. The question of ports accommodation must be addressed urgently, whether through voluntary agreement, although goodwill is sadly lacking in some areas, or by rationalising legislation. Accommodation is required at a far wider range of ports and airports and if necessary specifications may have to be agreed. In HMIC's view, efforts to resolve this issue should be intensified.
- 2.36 A further problem common to almost all Ports Units visited by HMIC was the inadequacy of the IT support available to officers at the points of entry and departure. This is a facet of the wider issue of IT support for Special Branch nationally which is covered elsewhere in this report.
- 2.37 Although HMIC found that morale among ports officers is surprisingly good, many officers expressed understandable frustration and clearly felt isolated, ignored and undervalued to the possible detriment of their effectiveness. HMIC sees this as an area requiring urgent review and action, particularly relating to terms of service, working conditions, accommodation and IT support. Forces are also urged to consider the adequacy of the overall support accorded to their Special Branch officers on ports duty.

Information Technology and Records

- 2.38 Information Technology is vital to the management and use of data within individual Special Branches in enabling them to respond effectively to the current level of requirements and threat. It was therefore surprising to note not only the absence of any national IT network available to them but also the low priority accorded by several forces to IT in this area. HMIC also observed the apparent weakness of national or even regional co-ordination of IT, the wide variety of hardware used by Special Branches and



the diversity of software. The lack of a coherent IT policy has already resulted in forces purchasing both hard and software which may not only be inappropriate to Special Branch needs but may also be incompatible with that used by other Special Branches. There was also a wide variation in the availability of IT to individual Branches, some being well supplied with hardware while others had so little that they were forced back to paper systems. Another feature was the scarcity of networking between Special Branch headquarters and outposts and ports. These shortcomings are severely limiting the effectiveness of Special Branches and should be addressed urgently.

- 2.39 HMIC identified a high priority requirement for a national Special Branch IT programme with commensurate IT development leading to the establishment of a national Special Branch IT network with sufficient terminals in all SB offices and major ports. HMIC is aware and fully supportive of current development work on the second generation National Special Branch Intelligence System (NSBIS2) but also concerned that running costs are likely to inhibit the establishment of a national Special Branch network. ACPO (TAM) has, through the National Special Branch Technology Unit (NSBTU), been developing a National Special Branch Information Management Strategy and seeks to support the current and future needs through the application of technology. However the inadequacy of current arrangements cannot be overstated and the development of a national IT strategy for Special Branch and Ports Policing is long overdue. ACPO (TAM) is actively developing IT systems to provide this national network and HMIC encourages all forces to work closely with them in aligning their long term procurement program.
- 2.40 The disparity in the progress of Special Branches in adopting IT is mirrored in the extent to which their paper records are being managed in accordance with current legislation and guidelines. While some forces had completed the document review process, others were clearly at an early stage; this is a compliance issue and chief officers need to review their position.

Staffing and Training

- 2.41 There is considerable variation between the staffing policies of Special Branches. Many follow their force's generic personnel policies whereas others, in recognition of the unusual requirements of the job, are able to recruit on their own terms. Similarly, there are differences between Special Branches on the issue of tenure and career development within the Branch; some require new officers to 'cut their teeth' at ports whereas others accept them directly into their central or HQ units. While force considerations usually determine the policy in individual Special Branches, HMIC noted that in some forces there is a need to dispel the negative perception of ports units which are often considered to be an unpopular posting. Ports are important and need to attract good officers. Secondly, any tenure policy should recognise the time taken to



develop a Special Branch officer and once developed, the need to retain the officer for long-term casework. A minimum tenure of five years is a common and effective solution with further extensions negotiable based on the expectation of continued satisfactory performance.

- 2.42 HMIC noted the increasing role played by civilian personnel in Special Branch, both as analysts and in other key roles. Employment of support staff both releases officers for operational work and establishes a long-term core of knowledge and expertise. HMIC believes it is important for support staff to be accorded due recognition, are included as members of the Branch and are afforded the same opportunities to network with their counterparts in other forces, as are their police colleagues.
- 2.43 A high standard of training is essential to the maintenance and development of the effectiveness of Special Branch. Most specialist training for Special Branch officers is undertaken on a national basis by the Security Service and MPSB with a strong developmental aspect provided in-force. Training is focused on the individual officer, each of whom progresses through a two-stage formal competency-based training framework. HMIC found general agreement that the training courses provided by the MPSB and Security Service are of a high standard and meet the requirements. There were, however, apparent inconsistencies in the allocation of courses particularly between ports officers and those in other areas of Special Branch. HMIC is concerned that not only does this appear to marginalise the ports officers but it may give rise to missed operational opportunities at ports. HMIC was encouraged to note that Special Branch training is kept under constant review by a senior inter-service working group chaired by a senior officer from MPSB.

Security

- 2.44 Despite the policies of openness and transparency which are now widely adopted throughout the police service, the work of Special Branch continues to involve information, techniques and equipment that are classified, sensitive and in need of protection. To some this might suggest an inherent conflict between openness and security, particularly when combined with the need for Special Branches to engage more widely within their forces and with outside agencies. HMIC sees no such contradiction; while Special Branches and their forces stand to benefit from a greater degree of openness this must not be achieved at the expense of protecting whatever needs to be safeguarded. The intelligence and security community as a whole has already

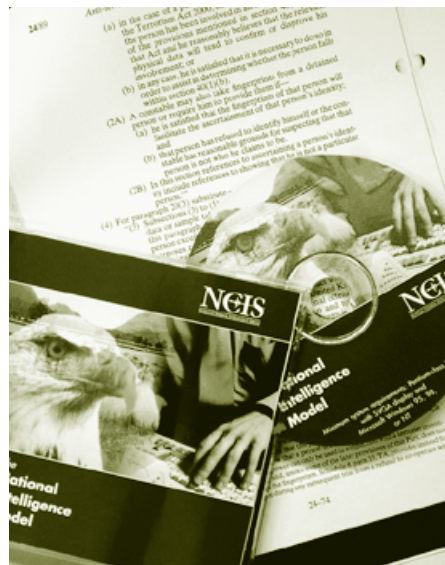


embarked successfully on this course. It should be possible for a Special Branch to be more open and accessible while maintaining good standards of security. This would not only help to dispel the negative image of the Branch which is sometimes perceived as obsessively secretive but would ensure that Special Branch is well placed to advise other areas of the force on security issues. It could also take the lead on matters such as advising on the need for protectively marked documents. The combination of IT and increasing criminal sophistication poses a major threat to security in its widest sense throughout the police service and Special Branch can act as expert advisers, assist in drawing up force security policies and contribute to security education. It is important that senior officers are seen to endorse sound security practice by Special Branch and throughout their force, particularly as they themselves are ultimately accountable for the standards.

- 2.45 Special Branches can only attain the necessary level of security by operating a comprehensive regime covering all potential threats in this particular environment and one which also meets the required national standards. This should include sound physical security procedures, a policy for the vetting of staff and an IT and information policy which takes account of the security constraints imposed by the systems and networks concerned. In view of the relationship between Special Branch and front line policing, the regime should also take account of the passage of information and material outside the immediate Special Branch environment and the way in which sensitive information is handled and acted upon in non-secure circumstances. It is important that everyone in or associated with Special Branch is aware of the security policy and of their responsibility to implement it. To be effective the policy itself must be under constant review to take account of new threats and vulnerabilities. Although security standards in the Special Branches visited were generally high, HMIC was able to offer advice to a number of forces on specific issues.
- 2.46 An aspect of security which may be overlooked is that relating to operations. In Special Branch this is most likely to concern the running of CHIS and agents but surveillance and technical operations and techniques are also vulnerable. While everyone trained in operational work should be fully conversant with the security issues and practices, the reality is that those involved may either become lax or fail to identify potential risks until it is too late. Similarly, uncritical acceptance of procedures may result in serious breakdowns of security. HMIC encountered a few examples where either resource constraints or acceptance of poor IT practices might have led to operational compromise. All were potentially serious, all were avoidable yet had not been identified by those concerned, perhaps because they were too close to the action. A possible solution to this lies in the system adopted by the Intelligence and Security Services where operational security is continuously and independently scrutinised by highly experienced Operational Security Officers (OPSYs) whose function is advisory rather than executive. HMIC considers this system worthy of trial, certainly by the larger forces.

The National Intelligence Model (NIM)

2.47 As previously mentioned NIM is approved by ACPO as the model for intelligence management for the police service and is a central element of the current Police Reform Programme. Whilst providing a common language, the system also creates a formalised process for the tasking and co-ordinating of activities through Tasking and Co-ordinating Groups (TCG) and the allocation of resources. NIM is to be implemented throughout the police service by 2004 under the auspices of the ACPO National Implementation Project; currently some forces are more advanced in the implementation of NIM than are others. What is already clear, however, is that although NIM presents benefits for Special Branch in areas such as the linkage between terrorism and other areas of criminality, there are inherent difficulties in its wider application to the work of Special Branch.



2.48 These problems are most apparent in small forces where bids for operational resources are made in open forum or where Special Branch has been largely integrated with other force resources such as Force Intelligence. In both cases, Special Branch might be required to bid openly on the basis of highly sensitive intelligence for resources which are equally required for criminal casework. For NIM to operate correctly, the respective cases, priorities and options should be considered alongside each other.

2.49 The choices facing Special Branch are to withdraw the bid, negotiate the requirement with cleared senior management outside the NIM process or risk compromise of the intelligence. Several forces acknowledged this difficulty to HMIC, most preferring to negotiate the issue outside NIM; the Security Service also expressed concern over the protection of its material under NIM. In the largest Special Branches, which are essentially self sufficient for resources, the issue does not arise as Special Branch is able to operate NIM internally between cleared staff. Several forces now appear to accept that Special Branch should remain peripheral to the mainstream NIM process, contributing where appropriate but otherwise taking a watching brief. In the words of one force, 'we take NIM to Special Branch, not Special Branch to NIM'. HMIC understands these perspectives and suggests that considerable flexibility should be exercised in the application of NIM to Special Branch. He is mindful that NIM has not yet been fully implemented nationally, and issues of this nature are still being considered. No doubt ACPO will consider this matter as the process continues.

Performance Measurement

2.50 The measurement and management of performance presents considerable challenges throughout the police service, not least in respect of Special Branch and Ports Policing. HMIC acknowledges that there are difficulties in this area, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of intelligence coverage in support of national security.

2.51 The performance of most of the Special Branches visited by HMIC is largely assessed on a quantitative basis relying on measurement of output such as the number of highly graded

intelligence reports produced, the number of passengers interviewed at airports or the number of operational activities undertaken. In addition, Best Value Performance Indicators such as sickness monitoring, diversity profiles and complaints data are also taken into account. The result

undoubtedly presents a picture of the level of activity of Special Branch and perhaps gives some insight into the quality of its management but in HMIC's view it does not answer the question "How good is this Special Branch?" in the sense of its contribution to national security, prevention of terrorism and maintenance of public order. The view was expressed by many of HMIC's interlocutors, within and outside the police service, that rather than try to squeeze statistics to fit the requirement, Special Branch performance should be principally assessed on a qualitative basis. HMIC agrees.



- 2.52 A primary requirement in assessing a Special Branch is for the role and objectives of that Branch to be clearly defined. As much of the work of Special Branch is undertaken to meet national objectives, there must be a clear statement of the role of Special Branch as a national resource. The Guidelines should provide this, and it is important that they are current and reflect the prevailing circumstances; their value would also be greatly enhanced if they were to receive clear and unequivocal endorsement. The current Guidelines are nine years old, no longer reflect the full range of current issues in respect of national security and are in urgent need of revision.
- 2.53 In addition to the Guidelines, each Special Branch requires a clear and current statement of objectives or requirements covering all aspects of its work. The national security aspect of its work is now covered by the the newly introduced Security Service annual Statement of Joint Working Objectives, individually tailored to each Special Branch and agreed between the Branch and the Security Service. This Statement provides both general and specifically local objectives and requirements on which the Security Service will provide detailed qualitative feedback at the end of each financial year. Similar requirements covering Public Order could be provided by both the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) and at force level, while partner agencies may also agree objectives and provide feedback. The combination of the national Guidelines, and the specific joint objectives should provide officers with a real opportunity to assess their own performance and a yardstick against which the effectiveness of individual Special Branches can be evaluated. HMIC envisages that qualitative assessment under this model could be achieved through routine monitoring and evaluation within the Special Branch chain of command, supplemented by periodic assessments by the partner agencies with which the objectives were agreed. These assessments, in outline at least, would provide a basis for a Best Value assessment of Special Branch.
- 2.54 HMIC believes that there should be scope for the monitoring and assessment of the processes and procedures by which a Special Branch achieves its coverage. This might include aspects such as staffing, tradecraft, training and security as well as data and financial management and could include assessment of management and accountability. Such monitoring would need to be carried out within or close to Special Branch taking care to avoid an increase in bureaucracy. Careful consideration needs to be given as to whether the means justify the end.

Funding

- 2.55 Special Branch and Ports Policing are both provided from the police authority budget. That budget is funded mainly by police grant and local authority grant (Revenue Support Grant and National Non Domestic Rates), with the local police authority precept on council tax. Central grants are determined by a complex funding formula which provides for the whole range of local policing. The formula takes into account additional security requirements for particular police authorities, where these requirements add significantly to local need for policing. The overall grant is unhypothecated, and may be used by the police authority and force as best suits their local policing needs. The funding of each force includes provision for a Special Branch that is required to meet the force's obligations as set out in the 1994 Guidelines. These include the requirement that the Special Branch will provide assistance for the Security Service and undertake other tasks, which might not be of immediate interest to the force. Therefore, although Special Branch officers are members of, and usually funded by, their home force much of their work may not have a direct bearing on policing in their force area.
- 2.56 The additional component in the funding formula acknowledges that the costs of policing ports in England and Wales and Royalty and VIP protection are not common to all forces. An assessment is made by the Home Office of the number of 'dedicated security posts' in each force. The posts are then used as a proxy for additional policing need and act as an allocative mechanism for 2% of the total sum distributed through the funding formula. The additional posts are simply a mechanism for allocating grant broadly in line with additional relative needs for security work. It is then for police authorities and forces to decide how to use the grant as part of their wider allocation. There is some confusion in forces about the mechanism. Because the distribution of funds is based on numbers of posts, there is a mistaken belief that the funds should match the costs of maintaining that number of posts and that somehow the provision should be matched by expenditure or even the establishment of actual posts on the ground. This is not the case. The position should be clarified.

FORCE LEVEL - Conclusions

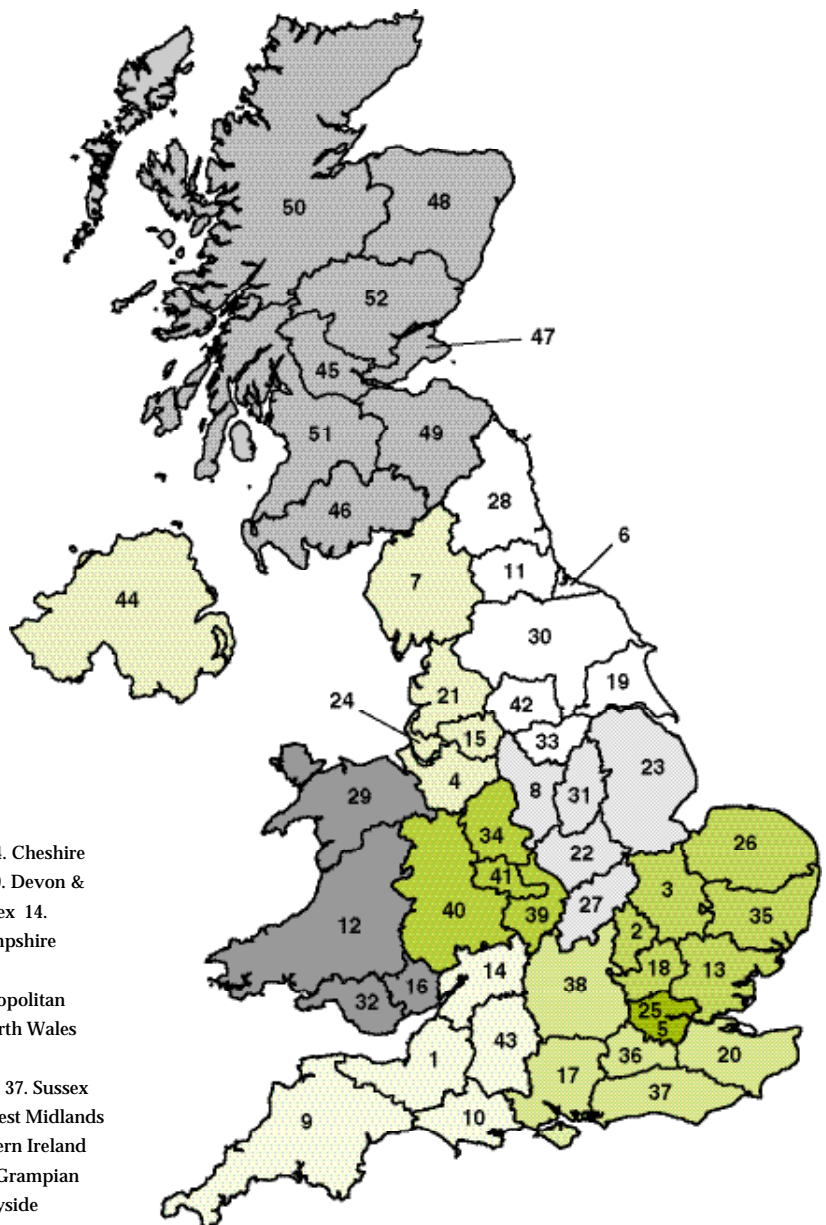
- 2.57 In HMIC's view, there are significant weaknesses in the current structure of Special Branch as a national resource throughout England and Wales to the detriment of the Branch's ability to respond consistently to the current level of terrorist threat facing this country. It should also be recognised that the nature of that threat is changing and that the threatened use of chemical, biological, radioactive or nuclear devices by terrorists is now a reality requiring a concerted response to which many smaller Special Branches would find it difficult to contribute. Major structural change may be necessary if Special Branch is to fulfil its key role in the national security structure of the UK; this must not, however, be achieved at the cost of the 'golden thread' of local coverage and contact which Special Branch uniquely provides.

Map of Police Forces in the United Kingdom

ACPO Regional Structure

-  North East
-  North West
-  East Midlands
-  West Midlands
-  South West
-  London
-  South East
-  Eastern
-  Wales
-  Scotland (ACPOS)

1. Avon and Somerset 2. Bedfordshire 3. Cambridgeshire 4. Cheshire
 5. City of London 6. Cleveland 7. Cumbria 8. Derbyshire 9. Devon & Cornwall 10. Dorset 11. Durham 12. Dyfed-Powys 13. Essex 14. Gloucestershire 15. Greater Manchester 16. Gwent 17. Hampshire 18. Hertfordshire 19. Humberside 20. Kent 21. Lancashire 22. Leicestershire 23. Lincolnshire 24. Merseyside 25. Metropolitan 26. Norfolk 27. Northamptonshire 28. Northumbria 29. North Wales 30. North Yorkshire 31. Nottinghamshire 32. South Wales 33. South Yorkshire 34. Staffordshire 35. Suffolk 36. Surrey 37. Sussex 38. Thames Valley 39. Warwickshire 40. West Mercia 41. West Midlands 42. West Yorkshire 43. Wiltshire 44. Police Service of Northern Ireland 45. Central Scotland 46. Dumfries & Galloway 47. Fife 48. Grampian 49. Lothians & Borders 50. Northern 51. Strathclyde 52. Tayside



CURRENT POSITION - The Regional Scene

2.58 Currently, Special Branches are loosely grouped on a regional basis with the HSBs holding regular quarterly meetings chaired by a designated member of ACPO, usually the ACC (Operations) of one of the forces involved who is the ACPO (TAM) regional representative. The effectiveness of these arrangements varies; in some regions they serve as a forum for informal networking between HSB's and a briefing platform for the Security Service but otherwise add little in terms of practical tasking, co-ordination or allocation of resources. In other regions however, the arrangements provide a basis for more formal exchanges of intelligence and cross-boundary activity, mutual aid between Special Branches and joint initiatives. This form of regional grouping highlights the disparity between Special Branches with those in major metropolitan forces often dominating the proceedings.

- 2.59 There are also variations between regions in the extent to which neighbouring Special Branches share intelligence. HMIC was concerned that, in some instances, bilateral relationships between individual Special Branches and the Security Service are stronger than those with neighbouring forces. This can result in limited passage of information between adjacent Special Branches and over reliance on the Security Service to act as a national information distribution centre. In this respect, HMIC detected uncertainty in some Branches as to how to interact with neighbouring forces without prejudice to their relationship with the Security Service. Indeed the Security Service itself has experience of the problems of balancing the ownership of intelligence with that of the competing needs of forces and other agencies.
- 2.60 In addition to the Security Service, Special Branch has a range of relationships with other national agencies and departments including HM Customs and Excise and HM Immigration Service. In most cases these relationships operate at local (i.e. force or port) level, although the agencies themselves may be structured on a very different geographical basis to Special Branch. While the business may be of a local nature, it was made clear to HMIC that the structural differences can give rise to difficulties including the identification of consistent points of contact in Special Branch, and the need to negotiate cumbersome Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or protocols with individual forces or ports units. In HMIC's view, consideration should be given to operating these relationships at a regional level to achieve both simplicity and consistency. The same argument may be applied to Joint Intelligence Cells (JICs) which generally comprise Customs, Immigration and Special Branch with other agencies as the situation demands. So far, the track record of JICs is mixed but the establishment of regular JICs on a regional basis might provide the reach and stability which currently appears to be lacking.
- 2.61 HMIC recognises the benefits of the current regional arrangements for Special Branch which can at least provide a framework for co-operation within regional boundaries. In a time of fast developing international threats, however, rapid advances in communications and information technology, available to friend and foe alike and increasingly sophisticated financial backing for terrorism, means that there is a need for Special Branches to be better co-ordinated if they are to counter the threat. To be really effective, such co-ordination should encompass the full role of Special Branch and include operations, policy, training and resource issues.
- 2.62 The need for stronger regional co-ordination of Special Branch accords with other moves in the same direction. Notably, the realisation that the traditional model for control of terrorist incidents is based largely on post-incident static hostage, hijack or stronghold scenarios and does not readily adapt to fast-moving intelligence-led operations such as have occurred recently. These incidents might involve the tracking and control of multiple terrorist targets moving across the country at high speed. Here, the incident might cross force areas within minutes, leaving no time to assemble the necessary operational, control and intelligence resources. Consideration is now being given to more flexible arrangements under which an operation could be run from one of several permanent regional police main base stations (PMBS) with good communication links within and between the regions, as well as to national agencies and departments. It was suggested to HMIC that these permanent PMBS might have small full time staff including a Special Branch component which could form the nucleus of a Special Branch structure in each region. Such a model would have the added advantage of greater integration of operational and intelligence resources, perhaps involving also the regional satellite structure of SO13, the Anti Terrorist Branch.

CURRENT POSITION - The National Scene

- 2.63 Currently each of the forty-three Special Branches in England and Wales is part of both its own force structure and of a nation-wide network of Branches which is closely tied to other agencies including the Security Service; this network also has links to ACPO and to relevant government departments. In practice, however, most of the contacts between an individual Branch and the national level organisations are bilateral, covering the full range of issues including requirements, policy, training, funding and operational procedures. The resulting web of relationships is complex and difficult to manage, particularly as there is no comprehensive central point of co-ordination for Special Branch at national level.
- 2.64 The relationship between Special Branch and the Security Service is the key to the Branch's national role. The core of this relationship lies in the extensive range of operations undertaken by Special Branch jointly with the Security Service or on its behalf. In essence, Special Branch provides local operational support for the Security Service throughout the country for which local knowledge and access are vital. The Service maintains this relationship through frequent case-related contacts, routine visits by specialist counter terrorism officers and regular briefings and conferences for officers from HSB to ACPO level. Additionally the Service, in conjunction with MPSB provides much of the national training for Branch officers while the senior management of the Service maintains close contact with chief officers.
- 2.65 Evidence of the strength of this relationship lies in the acknowledgement on both sides that in the unpredictable operational environment there will always be rubbing points; currently one such is the issue of ownership of joint agent operations. In practice, resolution is achieved through a co-operative and pragmatic approach. HMIC also noted other recent developments which illustrate the nature of the relationship; one was the training of a number of Special Branch officers across the country to provide local support for Security Service operational teams. A second is the establishment in all forces of trained Special Branch Counter Terrorism Security Advisors whose role is to advise the local industrial management and the Service's protective security experts of potential vulnerabilities in installations which, if subjected to terrorist attack, might cause serious collateral damage. A recent and welcome arrival on the scene is the Police International Counter-terrorism Unit (PICTU) which is based with the Security Service and acts as an advisory and interpretative conduit between the Security Service and police forces on matters relating to international terrorism.
- 2.66 MPSB, by virtue of its size and positioning, carries a unique range of national responsibilities in addition to the usual territorially based role of a Special Branch; some of these functions are resourced entirely by MPSB while others are carried out by units staffed and funded on a shared basis or through Dedicated Security Post (DSP) funding. These units include:
- the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) which co-ordinates the national collection, analysis, exploitation and dissemination of intelligence on the extremist threat to public order;
 - the National Terrorist Financial Investigation Unit (NTFIU) formerly FISAC which

investigates the financial support underpinning threats to national security (e.g. terrorist funding);

- the National Joint Unit which offers round-the-clock advice to forces on terrorist legislation and co-ordinates particular national operations;
- the National Special Branch Technology Unit through a management strategy seeks to support the current and future needs of SB through the application of technology;
- the Communications Intelligence Unit is the official representative of the Special Branches in England and Wales in all matters relating to warranted interception of communications. It is also the central reference point for guidance and assistance on hi-tech issues including the forensic recovery of computer disc data to an evidential standard;
- the National Ports Office which provides a national point of advice and co-ordination for Special Branch on National Security and policing issues including child abduction;
- the MPSB Training Unit who, with the Security Service, manage the National Training Framework for all Special Branch officers;
- European Liaison Section, which offers a conduit to Europol and European police agencies on behalf of the UK Police Service;
- MPSB additionally also maintains the 'police national perspective' on Irish Republican terrorism in mainland Britain, a role which is primarily advisory and interpretative but also involves providing practical support and assistance to other forces;
- it also retains the national remit for Ministerial and VIP close protection.

2.67 The formulation of Special Branch policy at the national level is largely the responsibility of the ACPO Terrorism and Allied Matters business area (ACPO (TAM)) the remit of which is detailed in the glossary at the back of this report. ACPO (TAM) acts as a fulcrum in this respect, advising ministers on the one hand, and fellow chief officers of police on the other. The predominance of counter terrorism on the Special Branch agenda effectively brings all aspects of Branch work within ACPO (TAM)'s remit. In recognition of the relationship between Special Branch and the Security Service, the latter has co-opted status at senior level on ACPO (TAM); this effectively enables the Security Service's viewpoint to be taken into account at an early stage of policy development.

2.68 Co-ordination of the police counter terrorism operational effort nation-wide is the responsibility of the ACPO (TAM) Advisory Group which is chaired by the Assistant Commissioner Specialist Operations (ACSO) of the Metropolitan Police, with the Chairman of ACPO (TAM) as a member. This Group acts in an advisory capacity to chief officers, the National Co-ordinator Anti-Terrorist Branch and effectively to Special Branch, with the primary role of ensuring that the overall police response to terrorism is properly co-ordinated and dovetailed into the national response and is maintained at maximum

effectiveness. The Advisory Group has close links to the Security Service and may provide a police dimension to the Service's reports. It also controls a budget for disbursement on national counter-terrorist initiatives. Following the events of September 11th this role enabled members of this group to make significant contributions in co-ordinating the UK response. HMIC acknowledges the commendable efforts of a number of individuals in meeting the demands imposed by the current situation and notes that each active member has heavy responsibilities elsewhere. Whilst the level of commitment is admirable there must be some concern as to its sustainability in major incidents without further support. There is an obvious need for some full time resourcing.



- 2.69 Ports policing is one of the few areas of Special Branch operations which is routinely subject to co-ordination at the national level; this task is exercised by the National Co-ordinator of Ports Policing (NCPP) based at the Home Office. The role of the NCPP is largely advisory (the post is currently at ACC level), but in recent years the incumbent has focused on developing regional and local initiatives a number of which have proved highly successful. With one permanent deputy and two other loaned staff, much depends on the energy and enthusiasm of the individuals operating in this small team. The NCPP also represents Special Branch on the Border Agencies Working Group (BAWG) that includes Her Majesty's Immigration and Customs Services, commonly known as the 'control authorities', the Security Service, NCIS, the Home Office and Transec, from the Department of Transport. HMIC views the role of NCPP as central to the development of ports policing on a national basis. Although currently limited by a lack of influence and resources, it is important that to maintain and improve the status of port policing, the incumbent should have access of right to ACPO and should therefore be of ACPO rank. Within the past few years this post has demonstrated the benefits of a collaborative and cohesive national approach to ports policing in which the regional grouping of ports has played a significant part.
- 2.70 Also based in London are the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) and the National Crime Squad (NCS). In practice Special Branch currently has limited dealings with NCIS, mainly on interception matters, financial issues and as a conduit to Europol and Interpol both of whose UK national units are housed at NCIS. NCIS maintains databases for CHIS and surveillance compromises as well as a 'flagging' system for agencies to ensure any intelligence relating to relevant subjects is passed to the investigating agency. Special Branches should consider the benefits of greater use of these and other facilities available to NCIS.
- 2.71 Special Branch has fewer dealings with NCS, perhaps a reflection of the fact that most interaction on criminal issues occurs at force level. However, more recently, NCS hosted an operation related to public order issues in conjunction with a number of force Special Branches who supplied personnel. This operation proved the value of co-ordinated activity, exploiting intelligence opportunities against well-organised criminality, utilising resources available to an organisation with a national remit. It also highlights the difficulties, particularly for smaller forces, of devoting sufficient resources to targets operating beyond force boundaries or even abroad.

SUMMARY

- 2.72 The picture to emerge during the HMIC inspection is of an extensive and complex Special Branch network in which the component Branches share a set of core objectives but answer primarily to their own force chains of command. This structure, which has evolved over a period of more than a century, has served its purpose admirably in providing the vital and direct link between the high-level demands of national security and the local knowledge and access afforded through policing at the local level. As mentioned earlier in this report however, the nature of the threat to national security is changing fast, as is the professional, legal, social and technical environment in which Special Branch operates. These changes present major challenges to the Branch which needs to develop and adapt continuously if the threat is to be contained and countered. At an early stage of this inspection it became apparent to HMIC that a main focus should be to assess whether the current structure within which Special Branch operates will permit this process of adaptation and if not, what the alternatives might be.
- 2.73 HMIC identified the main strengths of Special Branch collectively as the calibre, experience, motivation and skills of its staff, its functional web of relationships at national and local level, including within each force and the depth of local knowledge and influence which each Branch can deploy on its own behalf or for others. Beyond that, there is significantly less consistency between individual Branches in aspects such as size, management structure, resources, operational capability and intelligence management. This is not to decry the performance of Special Branch which, under often difficult circumstances, makes a major and largely unrecognised contribution to national security as well as to local policing. In the view of HMIC however, there is both a need and scope for extensive change which can only be achieved through radical restructuring of Special Branch across the country.
- 2.74 HMIC identified five main areas requiring urgent attention if Special Branch is to continue to play its part in meeting the developing threat to national security; these are:
- The role and responsibilities of Special Branch are becoming increasingly unclear and in some Branches tension is caused by the need to balance national security requirements against local needs. The current Guidelines do not reflect the many changes that have occurred since 1994 when they were last revised.
 - The structure of Special Branch in England and Wales is a complex but disjointed network which lacks the formalised national co-ordination and consistency necessary to meet the demands of the future. This is reflected in the wide disparities in the size, capabilities, management and collaborative arrangements of individual Special Branches, and in the relative isolation of satellite units, particularly at ports.
 - The funding of Special Branch is complex, arbitrary and in many respects confusing to the extent that there is a marked lack of confidence in the current arrangements. This applies especially to the identification and funding of Dedicated Security Posts, a process which is seen as inequitable and opaque.

- Some Special Branches have insufficient resources which restricts their operational capability and their ability to meet increasing demands, particularly in the national security area. Staffing levels are also under pressure which may be exacerbated through abstraction of officers to other duties.
- Special Branch lacks adequate, dedicated IT to meet the growing requirement to store, compare and process intelligence. At force level many Branches have insufficient hardware, software that is not fully suited to the task and no local networking to outlying units such as ports. Nationally there is no Special Branch IT network despite widespread acknowledgement that this would greatly enhance the overall capability of the Branch, though such a system is actively being developed by ACPO (TAM).

2.75 Having identified these areas as strategically significant HMIC considered a variety of options for the future of Special Branch and Ports policing that range effectively from maintaining the status quo on the one hand to a complete overhaul on the other. These are discussed in detail in the following section.

THE FUTURE – Considerations and options for change

2.76 In suggesting pointers as to how these and other issues might be addressed, HMIC recognises the dangers of appearing over-prescriptive; the considerations and proposals outlined below are distilled from many interviews and are intended as markers in the debate regarding the future of Special Branch rather than as immovable views. HMIC hopes that the outcome of this inspection will be changes which are realistic, acceptable and workable and which enable the Branch to evolve in the response to rapid developments in the threat and environment.

Role and Guidelines

- 2.77 Special Branch is subject to potentially conflicting requirements set within and outside the force. It is therefore important that its role and priorities should be clear to all concerned and that, in view of its national security responsibilities, this role should have the highest level of endorsement. The 1994 Guidelines succinctly set out the role of the Branch in terms which were appropriate in the light of circumstances applying at that time. However, the fluctuations in both the nature and level of threat and in the working environment of the Branch, have required reassessment and reinterpretation of the Guidelines resulting in a blurring of some of the salient points.
- 2.78 A major step forward is the proposal to incorporate counter-terrorism in to the National Policing Plan and the associated Special Branch guidelines should therefore also reflect the significance of national security issues. Revision of the Guidelines should also take into account factors such as any proposed changes in the role and structure of Special Branch, the development of relationships with the Security Service and other partner agencies as well as changes in the regulatory environment.

Structure

- 2.79 In assessing the structural issues surrounding Special Branch, HMIC considered a wide range of options some of which have significant implications for the wider aspects of policing, including the role of the chief constable. The two extremes of the restructuring spectrum were examined first:

Status Quo

- 2.80 It was clear that many of the problems identified during the course of the inspection are directly linked to the current structure of the Branch. These problems included the lack of consistency; the critical mass factor; excessive numbers of bilateral relationships; patchy operational coverage and disparate regional and national co-ordination; each of these factors impact significantly on the effectiveness of the Branch. The main point in favour of the current structure is that it facilitates the maintenance of local contacts but it was felt that this is outweighed by the disadvantages and should anyway be achievable under other structures. It was therefore concluded that some form of restructuring is necessary.

National Special Branch

- 2.81 At the opposite end of the structural spectrum to maintaining the status quo sits the concept of a National Special Branch, in which a national head or director would exercise full executive authority over a national Branch, probably based on regional offices and with some local presence. Staffing would be on a fully seconded basis, and chief constables would have no direct executive control over Branch activities in their force areas. Such a structure would provide the strongest co-ordination nation-wide, total consistency coupled with excellent speed of response and a common staffing policy throughout the country; it would also greatly simplify the complex network of relationships within which agencies such as the Security Service currently need to operate. There should also be significant benefits in terms of funding and resources.
- 2.82 The principal argument against a national Special Branch was identified as the strong risk of diminishing or losing local coverage ('the golden thread') which is the most essential asset which Special Branch offers to national security and without which much of the value of the Branch is lost. There were also strong doubts as to whether the transition from the current to a national structure was realistically achievable without severe disruption to the Branch during what promises to be a period of prolonged threat. Any problems over implementation could leave the country seriously exposed. There are also doubts as to whether the police service is ready for such a radical change which, unlike the NCS and NCIS, would result in the total removal of a core function from force jurisdiction. In addition the constitutional status of a National Special Branch would need careful consideration, particularly with regard to its relationship with other agencies, especially the Security Service. HMIC considers the risks too high at present.

- 2.83 HMIC was not in favour of either of these two options and therefore considered a range of regional alternatives which are outlined below.
- 2.84 HMIC considered three models in which Special Branch would be organised on the basis of the current ACPO Regions but with varying degrees of executive control by the forces in the Region. Additionally, consideration was given to the strengthening of national co-ordination, an essentially non-executive function which might apply in at least two of the three cases.

Regional Model A.

- 2.85 This model is the closest of the three to current arrangements; forces would retain their Special Branches as at present. However, regional co-ordination would be strengthened to include formal tasking and co-ordination on a regional basis; cross-border co-operation and mutual assistance would also be strengthened, and resources such as Special Branch surveillance would be more readily deployed in support of regional requirements. The regional lead would continue to be provided by the ACPO (TAM) representative. There would effectively be little structural change in the command structure of individual Branches.

Regional Model B.

- 2.86 This would involve the establishment of regional Special Branches under regional directors who would answer to the chief constables in their region. Forces would, however, retain their existing Special Branches under force control but operating to regionally agreed requirements. The regional Branch would have a small cadre of permanent staff providing operational, technical and analytical capability for the region; staff would be drawn mainly from force Branches, the size of which would be reduced correspondingly. Tasking and Co-ordination of all Special Branches in the region would be undertaken centrally under the regional director; this would need to take account of force requirements for public order coverage. It is envisaged that the regional Branch would take on additional tasks such as the maintenance and provision of a permanent cadre for a regional Police Main Base station which would operate in support of counter-terrorist operations in the region. These staff would also include the SO 13 Satellite capability, which should cater for current difficulties relating to the abstraction of SB officers to satellite units. The size of the regional Special Branch would depend on the extent to which forces are prepared to commit their Branch resources. Force Special Branches would continue to run operations at the local level and to maintain the local contact.

Regional Model C.

- 2.87 This again involves the establishment of regional Special Branches under regional directors but, under this model, the functional aspects of all force Branches would be fully subsumed into the regional structure to form a unified chain of command to the regional director rather than to individual forces. This structure would comprise a rather larger regional Branch headquarters than is required in Model B which would exercise executive control over all Branch activities in the region. It is envisaged that all Special Branch officers would

continue to be members of, and administered by, their own forces, although other options may need to be considered. In practice, most Branch staff would probably remain within their force areas but their chain of command would have swung away from their force to the new regional Branch structure.

- 2.88 The function of the regional headquarters would include the running of the regional SB, the establishment of intelligence and operational priorities and the tasking and co-ordination of Special Branch throughout the region; it would also exercise direct control over the consolidated regional operational resources including surveillance, technical and source handling units and a strong analytical element which would service the requirements of the whole region. Regional headquarters would be the primary point of contact for law enforcement agencies which should greatly reduce the liaison effort required on all sides. Security Service requirements would be passed directly to the region by the Service, as would force requirements for Branch support on aspects such as public order. The units and officers deployed within force areas would have the primary roles of day to day liaison with their host forces and of maintaining local coverage and operational capability in their areas. It is acknowledged that a move to a more formal regional structure would have constitutional implications both for the police authority and the chief constable. Having considered various possibilities, HMIC concluded that executive management of each regional Special Branch should be exercised by the regional chief constables management committee, in consultation with Police Authorities as appropriate. This model can be compared to the arrangements that were in place for the Regional Crime Squads and those which presently apply to some motorway units.

Discussion

- 2.89 HMIC readily acknowledges that none of the regional models outlined above would provide the full answer in any region, actual or potential, nor could each region be identically organised. However, if a regional structure offers the best way forward, the new organisation should at least be based on one of these models, accepting that compromise and flexibility will be necessary. Similarly, each of these models requires a readjustment of the relationship between chief constables and the Special Branches serving their forces. Model C requires that chief constables be prepared to relinquish some of the executive control which they currently exercise but each of the models seeks to suggest a means of achieving balance between the local and national aspects of the role of Special Branch. Whichever structure is adopted, the principle that Special Branch is rooted in local policing, and thence to the local community, should not be lost.
- 2.90 In considering the options, it was evident that the Regional Model A would not address many of the major difficulties inherent in the current structure of the Branch. These problem areas include the duality of role, the inconsistencies in size, capability and status, the prolific number of relationships which need to be maintained within the Branch network and by outside agencies. There must also be doubt as to the effectiveness of even a strengthened regional co-ordination structure, participation in which would still be largely optional. This model was assessed to be the weakest contender and not considered further.

- 2.91 Although Models B and C have much in common at the regional headquarters level, there are significant differences at force level, primarily in the extent to which forces retain executive control over their own Special Branch officers. Under Model B, forces retain slightly reduced Special Branches within the force chain of command while also accepting direction from regional headquarters. The issue of duality of role therefore continues to apply, as does the disparity in the size of Special Branches. There is also the danger that the regional level of Special Branch, which would include the major operational resources for the region, would effectively become an additional tier in the Special Branch structure, complicating rather than simplifying the national network. Certainly from the point of view of agencies such as the Security Service, close contacts with the regions would not fully replace direct relations with individual Branches; the net effect would be to increase rather than reduce the web of relationships which would need to be maintained. In the Model B's favour would be greater consistency of capability throughout each region and between regions. The regional Special Branches would also provide prioritisation of intelligence and operational requirements and would be in a position to apply formal tasking and co-ordination of the operational units under their control; this would also apply, depending on force requirements, to the individual Special Branches in the region. This model also provides for the establishment of regional PMBS with a dedicated nucleus of permanent staff including the SO13 Satellite capability. There seems much to recommend this model but the positive points also feature in Model C.
- 2.92 Model C, which fully integrates force Special Branches into regional Branches, addresses all the major current areas of concern. Specifically it creates a single requirement channel for Special Branch and a consolidated structure for the executive control, tasking and co-ordination throughout each region. It also creates a structure which allows for the efficient maintenance of relationships within the overall Branch structure as well as relationships between the key levels of the Branch and the national agencies. The issue of uneven operational coverage should be resolved within each region and nationally to the extent that the resources available within each region are broadly similar. The 'golden thread' of local coverage should be maintained through the force-based elements of the Branch. Finally, the executive command structure under which each Branch answers to the committee of chief constables, and through them to local police authorities, should provide the force input and control which are necessary to safeguard the interests of each force and local communities, and Special Branch officers who, under this model, remain members of their force.
- 2.93 In the opinion of HMIC, Model C has, in purely operational and structural terms, distinct advantages over Model B but it is recognised that it also presents organisational and administrative difficulties. Overcoming these would require goodwill and determination if Model C is to work satisfactorily in the interests of the police service, the Special Branch and particularly of the staff. These aspects have already been the subject of much discussion and it is only right that they should be exposed to wider consideration:
- Chief constables would need to relinquish direct operational control over Special Branch activities within their force areas, although they would have ultimate authority through the regional chief constables committee;
 - Force requirements for Special Branch support would be subject to regional prioritisation, tasking and co-ordination rather than direct tasking of the force's own Special Branch officers;

- Officers in the Branch would come under regional command for operational matters but remain under force arrangements for administrative purposes;
- Forces would need to accept that their own staff, working within the force area, would be subject to direction from the regional level and not from the force itself;
- Suitable arrangements would need to be agreed at chief officer level for authorising relevant operational activities.

2.94 In HMIC's view, none of these should present insurmountable difficulties and restructuring on the lines of Model C is therefore the preferred option for the future of Special Branch.

Ports Policing

2.95 In HMIC's view, there would be advantage in placing ports policing on a fully regional basis but with strong national co-ordination. This would be possible under all the models considered, although would be best suited to Regional models B and C, or to a national structure. There would also be operational and resource benefits in strengthening the ties between ports units and their parent regional structures; this should also serve to enhance the status of ports officers and confirm their role as full members of Special Branch. The NCPP post has already demonstrated that the three elements of the current national ports policing structure i.e.: national co-ordination, regionalisation of ports and local control of ports units, are mutually compatible. This suggests that a transfer to the full regional model, with continuing national co-ordination, should be feasible. There might however, need to be some readjustment of the regions into which ports are currently grouped which do not conform to the current ACPO regions.



National Co-ordination

2.96 The restructuring of Special Branch on a regional basis might help to resolve many of the current issues within and between Special Branches in each region but it would not necessarily strengthen co-ordination between regions, nor improve consistency and compatibility in aspects such as policy, resourcing, staffing and methodology across the Branch nationally. HMIC concluded that this could best be achieved through the introduction of co-ordination at a national level through the formal establishment of a national Co-ordinator of Special Branch. This post, which would probably be at Deputy Chief Constable rank, would be of value under any of the structural models discussed above

– with the exception of a National Special Branch – and in the view of HMIC should be introduced irrespective of any structural changes made at regional or force level. The co-ordinator would work in close collaboration with ACPO (TAM), the Home Office and the Security Service and be responsible for co-ordinating and promulgating all aspects of national Special Branch policy. This would include guidelines, codes of practice and manuals, advice on legislation as well as sponsorship of the national training programme for the Branch. In all these respects the function would be non-executive.

- 2.97 HMIC also sees merit in drawing together under the new structure, the office of the National Co-ordinator of Ports policing and the various national level units and functions; most of which are housed by MPSB. These could include NPOIU, NTFIU, PICTU, NJU and NPO. The inclusion of the Ports portfolio suggests that current post of National Co-ordinator of Ports Policing could be transferred to that of Deputy to the National co-ordinator, probably at the existing level of ACC. This should enhance the standing and influence of the NCPP and enable ports policing to become more closely aligned with other Special Branch activity. It has been suggested to the Inspection team that the NJU and NPO should be brought into the NCPP's office; HMIC agrees, and sees particular benefits under the proposed co-ordination arrangements. In addition to NCCP there would be a requirement to establish a second Deputy to the National Special Branch Co-ordinator with responsibility for all non-ports business.



Funding, Staff and Resources

- 2.98 Funding will be a crucial factor in the restructuring of Special Branch and it is important that a clear distinction is drawn between the funding required to bring Special Branch resourcing to an acceptable level under the current structure (including provision for IT) and the start-up costs that would be incurred in any restructuring programme. Consideration must also be given to meeting the ongoing costs of running the restructured Special Branch and whether this should continue to be through force budgets, whether directly or top-sliced, through DSP, or by continuing the current system. Given the clear distinction between the national and regional tiers of this proposal, it might also be desirable and possible to separate the funding issues relating to the two levels.

- 2.99 At regional level, the three options outlined above would mainly involve redistribution of resources and changes in lines of executive control with relatively few additional resources required to form the regional control structure. Start up costs should therefore be comparatively modest. Some rough estimates are given at Appendix I but all will depend on the precise details of the option selected. Once restructuring is complete, running costs should combine those of Special Branch as it now stands, the costs of both the new regional arrangements and the additional resources required irrespective of restructuring.
- 2.100 As mentioned above, the arrangements for funding Special Branch at regional and force level will need to be reviewed, particularly if Special Branch officers are to remain members of their force and force premises and resources are to be used by Special Branch. Already, as HMIC was made aware, there is considerable confusion and concern over the way in which Special Branch is currently funded. The proposed move to a regional model would be likely to complicate the picture even further unless a radical approach to funding is adopted from the outset. The DSP system attracted particular criticism for various reasons which included arbitrariness in its award, opacity in its calculation and uncertainty as to its duration with respect to any particular post. For example, there may be merit in funding the whole of Special Branch on a system based on the current DSP arrangements; this would, however, require a revision of the way in which DSP is applied. HMIC concluded that there is a need to review not only the arrangements for the funding of the Branch but also the principles on which the funding is based. Any forthcoming consideration of restructuring of the Branch would need to take full account of funding issues and would therefore provide a good opportunity for such a review to take place.
- 2.101 The proposed national co-ordination structure for Special Branch would be an additional tier which would incorporate the existing office of NCCP and various units currently funded either directly by the Home Office, by MPSB or through force contributions. While funding of the national components might be separable from that at regional level, HMIC considers that the basis and arrangements for all funding of Special Branch should be reviewed in conjunction with the structural considerations raised in this report. The two cannot be properly reviewed independently of each other.
- 2.102 Issues of staffing levels, training, career development and abstraction became a familiar theme of this inspection, as were concerns over inadequate resources, accommodation and facilities. Some of these problems were impacting on the effectiveness of the Branch.
- 2.103 In HMIC's view, many of these problems reflect the broader issues already identified elsewhere in this report such as uncertainty as to the Branch's role, the disparate structure of the Branch and the tension between national security and local policing resource priorities. HMIC believes that the adoption of the recommended regional structure and national co-ordination should, as a matter of course, clarify and resolve many of the staffing and resource issues provided that adequate funding is made available and that forces are prepared to shoulder their share of the staffing burden. For the present, there can be no single or immediate solution, but improvements are possible at force level even before any structural changes are made.

IT

- 2.104 A major shortcoming in Special Branch capability and effectiveness was identified by HMIC, particularly post 11th September, as the inadequate provision of IT systems and the absence of any Special Branch national network or database for intelligence management. HMIC is aware that much work is now being undertaken by ACPO (TAM) to meet this need and fully supports this initiative; though a number of key issues, including funding, remain to be resolved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One

- 2.105 Role – HMIC recommends that the Home Office review and update the current Guidelines in order to clarify the role of Special Branch thereby formalising its remit and priorities within the national security arena.

Recommendation Two

- 2.106 Structure – In order to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency, HMIC recommends that ACPO and chief officers consider the following structural changes:
- The creation of regional Special Branch units based on the current ACPO regions and under the executive control of regional directors answerable to the relevant regional chief constables management committees.
 - The appointment at Deputy Chief Constable level of a National Co-ordinator of Special Branch, a non-executive position with overall responsibility for ports policing, policy, training and issues common to Special Branch nationally.
 - The transfer of executive control of ports units to their respective regions, with national ports co-ordination provided by the NCPP who would be one of two deputies at Assistant Chief Constable level to the National Co-ordinator. The position of other units with national responsibilities including the NJU and NPO should be considered at this time.

Recommendation Three

- 2.107 In conjunction with structural change HMIC recommends the Home Office reviews the funding arrangements for Special Branches; this should include Dedicated Security Post arrangements.

Recommendation Four

- 2.108 HMIC recommends that, irrespective of any funding review, Police authorities and chief constables should ensure Special Branches and Special Branch Ports Units are appropriately staffed and adequately resourced to meet the continued and developing threats to national security.

Recommendation Five

- 2.109 HMIC recommends that, as a result of the findings of this inspection and the concerns already raised through ACPO (TAM), as a matter of priority the Home Office enables identified national Special Branch IT requirements to be implemented and most importantly funded, through a clear, robust, time-tabled strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION

- 2.110 HMIC sees a need for the restructuring and proper resourcing of Special Branch to be undertaken as a matter of urgency in view of the current level and continuing terrorist threat to this country. The complexity of the issues involved are fully recognised but the security of the nation should take priority. On the other hand, the changes needed are far reaching, radical and likely to have significant implications for the police service as a whole.
- 2.111 If the structural recommendations of this report are to be implemented, HMIC suggests that a phased approach under the stewardship of ACPO (TAM) would be appropriate, the dates of which might be as follows:

Phase 1: by mid 2003

- Agreement of regional structural model and of National co-ordination role
- Complete reviews of Special Branch funding and resources
- Complete review of Special Branch IT requirements

Phase 2: by end 2003

- Pilot scheme to introduce regional structure in one ACPO Region.
- Appoint National Co-ordinator and deputies;
- Set up national co-ordination structure.
- Pilot scheme for introduction of IT into one force/region

Phase 3: by end 2005

- Special Branch regional structure fully implemented
- Special Branch IT network fully implemented.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Introduction

- 3.1 Part 2 of this report provided a strategic overview of Special Branch and Ports Policing in England and Wales based on HMIC's thematic inspection carried out between February and August 2002. Several recommendations were made, mainly of a strategic nature, regarding the future of Special Branch.
- 3.2 This section of the report describes the more detailed inspection findings, which HMIC believes to be of general relevance to practitioners particularly those responsible for the management of Special Branches throughout the country. It includes observations and considerations raised during the inspection which it is hoped will provide food for thought and assist in the effective and efficient management of Special Branch resources. Structured around the EFQM model, the inspection included visits to eight of the 43 forces in England and Wales; over eight hundred interviews were conducted with individuals, focus groups and external stakeholders. Where appropriate, examples and evidence are given; feedback has been provided to the individual forces who kindly agreed to take part.

Leadership



- 3.3 **Accountability** – Accountability arrangements varied significantly between forces. In some there were clear chains of command and line management responsibilities which were well documented and understood; in others there was some confusion and misunderstanding as to who actually retained ownership of SB activities. HMIC felt confident that in forces where there was clarity of role and responsibility, together with an active interest in all aspects of Special Branch work (particularly at ACPO level), the level of scrutiny was sufficient to ensure the integrity of performance, systems and procedures. A number of the forces visited had excellent arrangements linking senior managers, chief officers and their respective police authorities which created greater openness and understanding whilst at the same time protecting the more discreet and sensitive areas of business.

- 3.4 The developing legislative environment in which Special Branch operates, which includes the need for a wide range of Special Branch activities to be authorised formally under RIPA 2000, reinforces the need for effective accountability procedures in each force and Special Branch. HMIC was not surprised to note that those forces with the most effective management and accountability culture were also those which operated RIPA most effectively. One effect of RIPA is to raise the level of routine accountability for Special Branch to the most senior levels of the force. This further underlines the need for a strong and continuous chain of management and accountability from Special Branch to chief officer level.
- 3.5 **HSB** – The disparity in rank of HSBs across the country not only resulted in inconsistencies in the external relationships maintained by Special Branches but also impacted on the authority of HSBs to take executive action and their influence within their force. Some BCU commanders spoke highly of the visibility of their HSBs and of the briefings they received from them, particularly with regard to local single-issue protests. Others were less impressed, expressing concern that they had been kept largely in the dark by Special Branch over developing situations that impacted directly on the general policing of their area. Conversely some lower ranking HSBs felt pressured by senior officers to undertake work outside Special Branch's normal remit to the detriment of their unit's operational focus.
- 3.6 Generally, HSBs were readily accessible to their own staff as well as to senior and chief officers. There were, however, examples where staff within Special Branch, particularly at ports or in satellite offices, felt that they had little access to their line manager and were consequently marginalised or even isolated from the normal communication process. In some forces this could be partly attributed to the high turnover rate of HSBs and the consequent reliance on short-term deputies holding acting ranks; some ports officers, however, commented on the lack of visits by their HSB, implying that they would feel better supported were HSB to adopt a higher profile. These officers felt that visits by their HSB to ports would also enable other outstanding concerns to be addressed, such as agreeing performance objectives, discussing career development and acknowledging good work.
- 3.7 In several forces the HSB was also responsible for other units; in some cases these included Force Intelligence, covert operations, fraud and surveillance teams. Although the officers concerned were very capable, competent and sufficiently dedicated to cope with the additional responsibilities, HMIC was concerned that, particularly since 11th September, the workload may be too much for one person and detrimental to the effective command of Special Branch.
- 3.8 HMIC was impressed by the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm shown by all the HSBs involved in the inspection whatever their rank. There is, however, a need for senior managers to monitor the welfare of these officers, whose motivation and good will can lead to their taking on unacceptable working practices, such as being continually on call without any respite through alternative cover arrangements.

Policy and Strategy

- 3.9 HMIC found that all the forces visited had, to a greater or lesser extent, developed policies, strategies, business plans, objectives and targets for their Special Branches in order to meet the perceived requirements at both local and national levels. The MPSB have developed their own Strategic Intelligence Requirement (SIR) which, while mirroring the three levels defined by NIM, adds an additional tier covering long-term coverage of areas of national security interest. This is an interesting concept which may be applicable to other Special Branches; the SIR informs business planning, customer needs, performance data and timetables reviews. The benefits of a clearly defined strategy outlining roles and responsibilities are discussed in Part 2, however all forces visited endorsed the need for greater clarity in order to prioritise their resources more effectively. This would also help to elucidate individual roles and responsibilities which in some areas are confused.

People

- 3.10 Recruitment – There is considerable diversity between forces in the selection of officers for Special Branch or port duties. Criteria and prerequisites varied widely; in some forces officers are required to have qualified as detective officers on an accredited CID course; in others, notably MPSB, they are not. Some forces had clear, unambiguous recruitment policies that were documented, widely promulgated and backed up by comprehensive job descriptions for every post. In other forces, matters were less clear and staff were confused about recruitment opportunities; this sometimes gives rise to scepticism over equality of career opportunities within the Special Branch environment. The greatest disparity proved to be between the recruitment criteria for HQ Special Branch officers and for those required to work at ports. HMIC noted that despite the variations in rationale behind the different recruitment policies, where forces had documented ‘skills profiles’ they showed marked similarities.



- 3.11 Whilst the work of ports officers is often perceived to be of a lower status than that of their HQ counterparts, they are the people most likely to engage with the public on a regular and routine basis. HMIC was therefore surprised that ports officers appeared to have less access to courses for source recruitment and handling than do other officers. In view of the apparent restriction on courses and the disparity in the recruitment policies for ports officers (despite the similarities in skills profiles), it would seem appropriate for the staffing of ports units to be considered at a national level to achieve much needed consistency.
- 3.12 Career Opportunities – The majority of Special Branches are relatively small and managed by a Detective Sergeant or Detective Inspector; opportunities to progress internally are therefore very limited. Some of these smaller units have a high proportion of officers who are nearing the end of their service and remain in Special Branch until they retire. These officers possess a wealth of invaluable knowledge and experience but an over-reliance on

such officers can also create staff planning problems. Firstly, their predominance can deter officers from applying for a transfer to Special Branch because it appears that vacancies rarely occur; secondly, it can mean that a high proportion of Special Branch may become eligible to retire within a short period. A balanced recruitment policy and succession planning are therefore important for Special Branches particularly in the smaller units. HMIC noted potential problems due to retirement in at least two of the Special Branches visited, and advised urgent succession planning. Conversely, large Special Branches can, and in some cases do, offer career structures for officers wishing to progress within this highly specialised field. In recent years the knowledge base required within Special Branch has become so extensive that larger Branches now have narrowly focussed units staffed by specialist officers and support workers; smaller Special Branches continue to rely on staff acting in a broad multi-disciplined capacity.

- 3.13 In any force staffing policy, striking a balance between the interests of the force, the unit and the individual is a challenge for senior managers; it is never possible to please 'all of the people all of the time'. HMIC believes, however, that in a specialist area such as Special Branch, recognition needs to be given to the benefits of knowledge, experience and continuity and that a return should be expected on investments in training and experience. Concerns were expressed in some Special Branches that officers were barely given time to become competent in their respective roles before force staffing policy required them to move on. Not only does this not represent value for money for the force, it also deprives Special Branch of trained and experienced specialist officers but also frustrates the officers themselves. Many forces, recognising this problem, now operate a policy under which Special Branch tenure is set at a minimum of five years, which can be extended by mutual agreement and in the expectation of continued good performance. This system accords with the regime adopted by other specialist organisations such as NCIS and NCS where requirements for professional accreditation and expertise demand heavy investment in both time and money; to lose these skills through routine and unnecessary staff movement would reduce both effectiveness and efficiency. HMIC suggests such a policy might be more widely adopted in Special Branch.
- 3.14 The subject of staff appraisal appears to be of widespread concern in Special Branch. Inevitably systems vary between forces but few regimes had the confidence of the staff and in some forces the system appeared on the verge of collapse. HMIC noted considerable concern regarding the suitability of the force appraisal systems to the needs of Special Branch. A major issue was the tendency to try to assess officers' individual performance in terms of over-arching force objectives that were difficult to link with specialised areas such as intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism. Other sources of disquiet were that in some Special Branches, personal objectives were dictated rather than negotiated and that some appraisal systems (ineffective as they were) were neither linked to career planning nor, where they existed, to postings policies. The consequence of this was general scepticism as to the value of the appraisal process, which was widely considered to have fallen in to disrepute. HMIC believes this is an issue which needs to be addressed but recognises that to rejuvenate and restore credibility to the system will require a clear confirmation of the aims and objectives of Special Branch.

- 3.15 Training - This topic was covered in some detail in Part 2; Special Branches generally considered the national training programme to be of a high standard although there was some disparity regarding access to courses. At the local level, HMIC observed a number of initiatives designed to enhance the knowledge and ability of personnel carrying out their duties. Lancashire provides training for all officers (including SB) on new legislation and additionally also holds briefings for HQ SB officers on current ports issues. The SO13 trained officer also provides briefings to staff concerning the powers contained within relevant enactments.
- 3.16 Several forces stressed to HMIC the increased importance of community relations and the role which Special Branch must play in maintaining links into the local communities. While personal contacts and experience are clearly essential in this respect, it was suggested that knowledge of the appropriate languages would be invaluable to the officers concerned. Language training would therefore appear to be a requirement; it is, however, a long term and potentially costly commitment for the force and one that might shape the careers of language trained officers if full value is to be gained from this investment. This should not, however, commit a language-trained officer to a full career in Special Branch; many other posts, including appropriate command appointments, would benefit from language-trained officers. HMIC therefore suggests that forces which do not already do so and which have a need, should consider providing language training for officers either in, or close to joining, Special Branch.
- 3.17 Amongst other areas in which HMIC consider that specialist training for Special Branch officers would be of value were two relating to IT. The first of these is for specialist IT user training; HMIC was surprised to note that in some smaller Branches much reliance was placed on individuals whose IT knowledge had been gained informally through personal interest. In some cases their part-time remit included construction and maintenance of the Intranet website. While the results were greatly to their credit, relevant training should prove of considerable benefit to the individuals and to the Special Branch. The second area was that of Internet researcher; some Special Branches are now making extensive use of the internet as a means of research, either as a reference source or to gain intelligence from material placed on the internet, for example by, animal rights extremists. Internet use by terrorists is now well established and is a potentially valuable source of intelligence to those with appropriate language and technical skills.

Communication and Interaction with partners

3.18 Despite its relatively isolated position within the police service and the confidential nature of much of its work, Special Branch rarely works alone. Each Special Branch is an active component of a national network which encompasses law-enforcement, government, intelligence and security agencies, and which also has strong international links. HMIC noted that within this network, Special Branch has three main functions; as a provider of intelligence, or facilitating others working in their force area or as an operational partner in joint operations.



3.19 The 1994 Guidelines establish two key relationships common to all Special Branches; within their own forces and with the Security Service. Regarding their own forces, many Special Branches face the twin dilemmas that firstly, little is known about them or their work and secondly, that much of their work relates to objectives which might not constitute force priorities. This raises the issues of whether national security is a force priority and whether Special Branch does enough to market itself in-force; these factors are important to the status of the Branch within the force. Also of importance are the position occupied by Special Branch in the force structure, the rank and personal influence of the HSB and the value which senior officers are perceived to attach to the Branch and its activities. Inevitably, the standing of Special Branch is an important factor in its ability to attract resources, which ultimately impacts on its effectiveness.

3.20 The relationship between Special Branches and their force senior management varies greatly. Some senior officers, notably those with a Special Branch background, take a keen interest in the Branch and its activities; others prefer to delegate this to middle management. Whatever the personal views of those concerned, the issue of accountability is unavoidable and the chain of command needs to be clear and resilient. This has been brought into focus by the authorisation process required under RIPA which, in creating an additional area of direct legal accountability, has placed Special Branch operations firmly on the agenda of senior officers.

3.21 Through its intelligence-gathering role, Special Branch has, in theory at least, the practical support of every officer in the force, both front line and support. The potential for coverage, whether in response to a general brief or to specific tasking is extensive; but it was with some disappointment that HMIC found that in several of the forces visited, few outside Special Branch knew about the Branch, its role or officers. Nor in most cases were officers aware of the Branch's priorities, let alone briefed



or tasked to support them. In several of the forces visited by HMIC, there was an evident need to develop strategies for marketing Special Branch, providing everyone in the force with a clear picture as to the role and objectives of the Branch and how they could contribute towards them.

- 3.22 Projects run by some Special Branches include involvement in probationer and other training, use of the force Intranet and routine publication of bulletins outlining issues of interest to the Branch. Several forces commented that the pressure on course content is such that opportunities for Special Branch input are diminishing. While some initiatives appeared to be making an impact, the use of force Intranets, where they exist, was proving to be a two edged sword; maintenance of the Branch sites was proving time consuming and entries needed to be topical and interesting if they were to attract their target readership. Nevertheless, some Branches, such as Gwent and Lancashire, appeared to have found ways to keep themselves in the Intranet headlines. A further point about the Intranet, brought out by front-line focus groups, is that keeping abreast with an Intranet site requires positive commitment or determined curiosity, particularly if it is one of many tasks to be carried out at the beginning or end of a shift. Terminals may also be in short supply and Intranets are not interactive, so the feedback system needs to be as simple as possible.
- 3.23 In some forces with Intranets, patrol officers seemed well briefed on Special Branch issues whereas in others many of the patrol officers interviewed had virtually no idea what Special Branch does and, consequently, were unable to contribute to their requirements. HMIC believes that the reason for the discrepancy lies mainly in the extent to which the respective forces have adopted the Intranet as a means of self-briefing for all officers and also the availability of terminals to which patrol officers might have only limited access. Understandably use of the Intranet gives rise to concerns relating to the sensitivity of information and operations. Nevertheless, HMIC sees distinct advantages for intelligence development when front line personnel have even a basic awareness and understanding of the issues and potential opportunities they may encounter in their day to day role; more detailed or sensitive information can always be passed through personal briefings. The concept of community intelligence or information has been well developed in some forces and contributes significantly to the understanding of local issues and concerns. For example Merseyside Police produce regular community intelligence profiles that are supported through data held on the force intelligence system. Others, for example MPSB, dedicate Area Liaison Officers to engage directly with patrol officers – a highly successful project welcomed on all sides.
- 3.24 The relationship between Special Branch and the Security Service is long-standing, close and productive but, as might be expected, there are occasional frustrations on both sides. In keeping with the Guidelines, Special Branch provides assistance for the Service across much of its remit, responding to intelligence requirements, providing operational support, access and mounting joint operations. For its part, the Security Service seeks to engage closely with each Special Branch, with its chain of command and with ACPO and chief officers; to this list is now added the RIPA authorising officers. The Security Service recognises that while collective briefings and discussions will meet some requirements, much business needs to be handled bilaterally with individual forces; servicing relationships with each of the fifty two Special Branches in the UK places considerable demands on the Security Service, not least, on its operational staff. An additional problem is caused by the differing size and status of

individual Special Branches and the varying levels of assistance which Branches are able to offer to the Service. In HMIC's view, the overall relationship would be much more manageable were there to be a small number of Special Branches offering greater consistency in their size and capability.

- 3.25 A recent development has been the formation of the Police International Counter Terrorism Unit (PICTU) comprising officers from SO13, Special Branch and the Security Service. The role of this small unit is to provide advice and interpretation to forces on the international counter-terrorist work of the Service, while advising the Service on police requirements and perspectives in this area. PICTU's role is intended to develop over time but already it has provided useful advice on the distribution of intelligence assessments to forces throughout the UK. PICTU's role is limited to international counter terrorism and it is not intended that the unit should extend its liaison role beyond its current remit, nor to act as an intermediary between the Service and the Branch on operational matters. It is, however, well placed to offer informal advice.
- 3.26 In addition to operational and intelligence liaison with Special Branch, the Security Service plays a major advisory role concerning the formulation and implementation of Special Branch policy, procedures and methodology at the national level. It also participates in the meetings and activities of the regional groupings of Special Branch and provides advice to individual forces as required. The Security Service is also a major contributor to the Special Branch National Training Programme, jointly running a series of courses with MPSB.
- 3.27 As reported above, HMIC found the underlying relationship between the Branch and the Security Service to be strong; it is also experiencing a period of change, reflecting movement in both organisations. It was evident to HMIC that there are occasional mismatches of expectations on both sides, typified by Special Branch comments about the Security Service's slowness of response on some operational issues. The Security Service in turn hoped that Special Branch would show greater selectivity and self-reliance in referring reports. The overall picture to emerge was of a sound relationship based on trust and growing mutual understanding.
- 3.28 While the Special Branches in England and Wales constitute a loose regionally based network, the Security Service provides the focus of the structure to the extent that the Service's bilateral links to individual Special Branches are in many cases as strong as the links between the Branches themselves, even within the ACPO Regions. This has given rise to Special Branch concerns as to whether intelligence should be passed laterally between Branches or to the Security Service for further distribution. This identifies an area of uncertainty regarding the relationship between the Service and the Branch and requires clarification of their respective responsibilities. The Service tends to take a pragmatic view of the issue, which it views in terms of thresholds and priorities. Again, a more consistent and rational approach would be possible were the Special Branch structure to be less fragmented.

- 3.29 MPSB effectively constitutes a Special Branch region in its own right by virtue of its size and self-sufficiency. In addition to the dual force and national security role common to all Special Branches, MPSB formally carries some additional national responsibilities on behalf of forces throughout the UK. Several of these tasks are carried out by dedicated units based within MPSB, some of which are resourced by MPSB and some from other sources including forces across the country. These units are described in Part 2.
- 3.30 In addition to its formal responsibilities, MPSB also assists smaller Special Branches when they are unable to meet urgent contingency requirements from their own resources. Typically this might entail deployment of a surveillance team or support in establishing an operations centre in response to a developing intelligence-led operation. Such a deployment is most likely to be required in a terrorist context and MPSB's wide experience in working alongside the National Counter-terrorist Co-ordinator and the MPS Anti-Terrorist Branch, SO13 can be of considerable value.
- 3.31 HMIC gained the impression that the capacity to provide urgent, ample and experienced support is generally viewed positively as a valuable national resource although, as with all such assistance, local sensitivities need to be taken into consideration. The need for MPSB to provide varying levels of assistance does however, highlight the unevenness of Special Branch coverage across the country and, in some cases, the inability to meet such requirements even on a regional basis.
- 3.32 Special Branch has close links to both HM Immigration Service and to HM Customs and Excise as described in the 'Ports' Section of this Report. Links to NCIS and NCS tend to be less strong as serious organised crime (other than terrorist related) is not a major focus for most Special Branches.

Intelligence Processes and Operations

- 3.33 As outlined in Part 2, the collection, reporting, assessment and exploitation of intelligence, whether in support of national security or more limited force objectives, is the core activity of Special Branch. The ability of individual Special Branches to discharge this responsibility was found to depend on both the size of the Branch itself and the resources available to that Branch, mainly from within the force. HMIC noted that in a majority of forces, most Special Branch operational work was directed towards counter terrorism, followed by public order, counter proliferation and counter espionage; the two main methods of targeted intelligence collection being through human sources and surveillance. Technical intelligence collection tends to be a highly specialised and costly activity for which most Branches prefer to rely on external assistance.



3.34 **Assessment and Dissemination of Intelligence.** The assessment of intelligence by Special Branch reflects the two strands of their role; i.e. assisting the Security Service and meeting force requirements. In practice, most Special Branch assessment is undertaken to:

- establish the operational potential of the intelligence;
- identify how it can be further developed;
- interpret intelligence in the light of local factors;
- identify whether and to whom it should be disseminated;
- produce threat assessments.

In each respect the local knowledge of the Branch is crucial. HMIC noted with approval that Special Branch is moving towards a more structured approach to the management and assessment of intelligence. The employment of analysts and support staff to carry out much of this specialised work is an important advance, as is the adoption of IT although in this respect, as noted elsewhere in this report, the situation in most forces and nationally, is far from satisfactory.

3.35 HMIC found few problems in the dissemination of either raw or assessed intelligence on established channels within force headquarters or externally using existing secure communications. There were, however, marked differences in the passage of intelligence between Special Branch and local command teams. Some Special Branches, particularly in smaller forces, seemed uneasy about passing intelligence to BCUs which was reflected in comments by some local commanders who felt unable to use the assessments they received. Others commented that Special Branch might be over-protective of intelligence or reluctant to commit anything to paper in a usable form. In a minority of forces there was evidently minimal contact between Special Branch and the front line officers. In HMIC's view, this relationship is critical to Special Branch's ability to maintain local contact and should where necessary be improved to ensure that both sides have full confidence in the relationship and channels of communication.

3.36 Depending on the subject and the nature of the potential threat, Special Branch may either originate threat assessments for in-force use or add the local dimension to assessments from other agencies, such as the Security Service. Assessments relating to specific individuals such as VIPs, or to particular places or installations, were generally well received. Less well regarded were Special Branch assessments relating to overall threat levels from, for example, a particular strand of terrorism; comments were made in several forces that these assessments are often too general to have any impact on local policing. HMIC would agree that assessments should have focus and relevance to the intended recipients and avoid being either bland or repetitive.

- 3.37 Human Sources – most Special Branch human source intelligence collection involves the recruitment and running of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (or CHIS), which in the national security context are usually referred to as ‘agents’ by the intelligence community. The identification or ‘targeting’ of potential CHIS, whether to meet national or force requirements, is a key role to which Special Branch is ideally suited through its local knowledge and access. In the case of national security requirements, Special Branch may recruit and subsequently be fully responsible for the running of the CHIS or may jointly run the operation in conjunction with (usually) the Security Service or NPOIU. In some cases, the Security Service might take over and run the CHIS outside the force area or overseas. The Security Service normally funds CHIS operations undertaken on its behalf, as does NPOIU; cases run to meet force requirements may be funded internally. These arrangements were found to work well; overall, Special Branch CHIS operations contribute a significant proportion of the terrorism-related intelligence collected in the UK.
- 3.38 All Special Branches have the capability to run CHIS although the caseload is limited by the availability of handlers and, particularly in smaller Branches, by the need to limit the exposure of case officers operating in small communities or geographically confined areas. Some forces overcome this problem by jointly running cases of common interest; this reduces the risk of exposure and affords both forces ready access to the intelligence product.
- 3.39 CHIS operations run by the police in England and Wales are subject to RIPA 2000 which requires that each case be specifically authorised by a designated Authorising Officer (Superintendent or above) and that officers handling the source must be appropriately trained and accredited. The Security Service, which is also subject to RIPA, may itself authorise joint cases under the Act thus providing cover for participating Special Branch officers. Both the police and the Security Service told HMIC that despite occasional difficulties the procedures for authorising CHIS are running smoothly.
- 3.40 Forces hold differing views as to whether or not the authorising officer should be within the Special Branch chain of command. The requirement that authorising officers should be superintendents or above means that in large Special Branches with one or more officers of sufficient rank, source operations may be, and usually are, authorised within Special Branch. This has the advantage that the Authorising Officer will be fully conversant with the case and its associated sensitivities and is therefore well placed to assess what constraints might be necessary; the Authorising Officer will also be well placed to track the development of the case and to make informed judgements should the case diverge from its original parameters.
- 3.41 In smaller forces where the HSB is below the rank of superintendent, the authorising officer will necessarily be outside Special Branch and may be either in Special Branch’s line management (e.g. Head of CID) or another nominated officer who may, as in Durham, have similar responsibilities for non-Branch CHIS. Some forces expressed the view that, for reasons of integrity, Special Branch cases should be authorised by an officer who is independent of the Branch, whereas others consider that the authorising officer needs to be aware of the overall intelligence picture and therefore within the Special Branch orbit. While tending to the view that authorising officers should be fully and routinely aware of the intelligence background, HMIC regards the issue as finely balanced and acknowledges that, particularly in smaller forces, practical considerations will need to be taken into account.

- 3.42 Many RIPA applications by Special Branch relate to requirements which have limited direct bearing on immediate force interests; submissions in such cases may therefore be based on intelligence cases provided by the agency with the relevant national responsibility (e.g. the Security Service or NPOIU). Some of the forces visited by HMIC commented on the need for these cases to be specific and to include sufficient detail, however sensitive, for the Authorising Officer to reach a decision. This point was endorsed by the members of the Office of the Surveillance Commissioner (OSC) which is responsible for oversight of RIPA. Resolving such difficulties before the application is made can avoid delays and save time. The OSC also stressed that the individuals undertaking the authorised activity (such as CHIS handlers) must be shown the precise terms of the authorisation.
- 3.43 Cases to be run jointly by the Branch and Security Service may be authorised by the Police or the Security Service under RIPA. The decision as to which organisation provides authorisation is largely pragmatic, depending on who is to lead. HMIC sees merit in this flexible approach which can also reasonably apply to cases where a force-authorised CHIS or agent is required to operate or be run outside the force area or even abroad. However, some authorising officers are reported to be uncomfortable in agreeing to developments in cases over which the force would have minimal control; where necessary the situation can be resolved through re-authorisation of the case by the Security Service which may then assume control.
- 3.44 Both the Security Service and Special Branches referred to uncertainties as to the ownership of joint agent operations. Examples given included a Security Service funded agent, run jointly to meet national security requirements, who was subsequently steered by the force concerned to develop access to criminal intelligence at the expense of national security coverage; whilst this might have satisfied force requirements it was clearly at odds with Security Service objectives. Such issues are also an example of the tension within Special Branch between force and national security requirements. HMIC has no simple solution under current arrangements other than to suggest that the original reason for authorisation should stand until changed by mutual agreement.
- 3.45 The RIPA requirement that CHIS handlers are properly trained and “accredited” is met through the provision of courses often delivered in partnership with universities. However, in view of acknowledged differences between the handling of criminal CHIS (the focus of police training) and national security agents, the Security Service requires Special Branch officers running cases with or on behalf of the Service to attend a specialist course run by the Service. It was suggested to HMIC that to avoid duplication, the CHIS course and Security Service courses could be amalgamated. Having discussed this with both Special Branch and the Security Service, HMIC considers that there is insufficient overlap to justify amalgamation and that to do so might actually prove less efficient and flexible than the current arrangements.
- 3.46 **Surveillance** – is a core Special Branch capability and in some cases may be the only means of acquiring or developing vital intelligence or of monitoring potentially threatening activity. It is, however an expensive and resource intensive tool and the capacity of Special Branches

to mount surveillance operations varies widely between forces and is largely related to the size of Special Branch. Where a Special Branch is unable to meet a high priority surveillance requirement, the necessary resources might be made available from elsewhere in the force or from outside on a regional or national support basis.

- 3.47 The Special Branches of the largest metropolitan forces have dedicated full-time surveillance teams and rarely need to call on force surveillance resources. This has the added advantage that the competition for surveillance resources is largely within Special Branch. As a variation on this theme, one force has recently brought all its surveillance teams, Special Branch and otherwise, into a single unit. Special Branch has first call on one team on a rotating basis and on the understanding that all of the teams should be available for any high priority operation, criminal or otherwise, when required. At the time of HMIC's visit this arrangement appeared to be working well and the benefits and economies of scale were already evident. However, HMIC felt it was too early to tell whether, in the absence of a fully dedicated surveillance team, Special Branch would retain the capacity to mount long-term coverage of national security targets.



- 3.48 Many medium and small Special Branches maintain an ad hoc surveillance capability, forming teams from trained officers as and when required. While this provides an immediate response capability for short-term requirements, it involves the diversion of officers from other work which itself might be high priority. The effectiveness of such teams can only be sustained at the cost of considerable training time and the maintenance of dedicated equipment such as secure, covert radios. Nevertheless, HMIC regards surveillance capability, however limited, as an important asset for Special Branch.
- 3.49 The smallest Special Branches have no dedicated surveillance capability and may even be too small to field an ad hoc team (the 'critical mass factor'). They are therefore largely reliant on surveillance from outside Special Branch which may therefore bring them into direct competition with force priorities such as serious crime. As a result, the priority threshold for a small Special Branch to mount surveillance operations tends to be higher than in larger Branches with their own surveillance capability. There is also concern that external surveillance team leaders might not be security cleared to the level required for a sensitive national security task.
- 3.50 Where a force is unable to meet a high priority Special Branch surveillance requirement, particularly in the counter-terrorist context, external assistance is usually available at short notice. First call may be on those forces within the same region with which the Special

Branch has mutual aid agreements. Secondly MPSB may be able to provide one or more teams and a control element in support. Finally, the Security Service may respond to a call for assistance where the operation meets the Service's threshold for deployment; the response generally includes one or more surveillance teams, a control element and perhaps additional specialist capabilities.

- 3.51 Complex surveillance operations involving several forces and agencies are often mounted at short notice and under considerable pressure. It is important, therefore, that Special Branch and Security Service surveillance teams, and their control staff, should at least be aware of each others' methods and capabilities; ideally this should extend to joint training but this is likely to be severely limited by current operational requirements for surveillance. Recognising these pressures, HMIC urges that every opportunity should be taken to enhance mutual awareness and co-ordination between the surveillance units of Special Branch and partner agencies.
- 3.52 Recent intelligence-led operations have pointed to a need for a more consistent surveillance capability and improved response times across the country. In the view of HMIC, many of the limitations are due to the fragmentary structure of Special Branch; however, improvements should be achievable through the prioritisation, tasking and co-ordination of Special Branch surveillance requirements on a regional basis. Admittedly such an approach might fit less well with structures such as that adopted by Merseyside where the nominated Special Branch surveillance team would need to be tasked regionally but any problems should be more than offset by the regional and national benefits. Indeed, the Merseyside model may provide valuable lessons and experience for strengthening the regional co-ordination of surveillance and ensuring a more consistent and self-sufficient response to Special Branch surveillance requirements.
- 3.53 **Technical Resources** – The ability of individual Special Branches to mount independent technical coverage again depends to a large extent on the size of the Branch and its resources. Other factors also have a bearing, such as the extent to which the culture of the force embraces the use of technology and the role of the Security Service in mounting sensitive high-level technical coverage of national security targets. The result is another aspect in which Special Branch capabilities are unevenly distributed throughout the country. There is always a danger that funding constraints and lack of national co-ordination in this area may encourage local initiatives, resulting in the reinvention of the wheel or, of greater concern, techniques and equipment which are at best unsuitable for the task. HMIC was pleased to note that this is now recognised as an area of concern and that measures to resolve the situation are under consideration at the national level.
- 3.54 **Counter Terrorism Contingency Planning** – As mentioned in Part 2, the emphasis in this area is now shifting from the management and resolution of set-piece hostage type incidents towards fluid and dynamic intelligence-led operations which may move rapidly between

two or more force areas. While some Special Branches were fully apprised of these developments and have already gained live operational experience of them, others have not moved beyond the set-piece scenario and may find it difficult to do so without co-ordination and support at the regional or national level. This is an area in which HMIC sees potential advantages in the regional approach, particularly in terms of co-ordination of intelligence and incident management. In view of the persisting level of terrorist threat to the UK, it is an aspect which is rightly attracting urgent attention at various levels of the police service.

- 3.55 **Protective Security Advice** – The changing nature of the terrorist threat has led to the assumption by Special Branches of responsibility for providing protective security advice to civil, industrial and commercial concerns in their force area. This is a key role for Special Branch and is reflected in the establishment in each Special Branch of a centrally (DSP) funded Counter Terrorism Security Advisor (CTSA), a post which combines the functions of the former Counter Terrorism Liaison Officer and the Industrial Security Officer. CTSA's are responsible for providing a wide range of protective security advice to a 'clientele' ranging from the management of major industrial plants, to retail outlets and places of public entertainment. They also provide feedback to, and seek advice from, the Security Service effectively forming another strand of the 'golden thread'. HMIC has noted with approval that forces are already considering the advantages of operating the CTSA function on a regional basis to balance the workload and provide better continuity and consistency.

- 3.56 The CTSA function is supported at national level by the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) which is based alongside its counterparts in the Security Service. This close linkage at the national level ensures that those whom the CTSA's advise receive evaluations and assessments based on current intelligence that is both technically sound and consistent across the country.

- 3.57 Threat assessments are a key element in the provision of protective security advice and practice, whether in respect of the threat to a government or commercial installation or an individual visitor. Production of threat assessments is a core function of Special Branch and in most cases they are based on national level assessments, most usually from the Security Service. Examples seen by HMIC relating to specific targets or events were effective and to the point and constituted a good basis for planning. By contrast, some of those intended for in-force consumption attracted mixed comments from the target readership. While some Special Branches produced well-focussed assessments, which would be of positive value in alerting the force to potential threats and areas of interest, others lacked local relevance, were perhaps too often repeated without change and bore little relevance to local policing.

Ports Policing

Air and Sea Traffic



There are 142 licensed civil aerodromes in the UK that handle 200 million passengers a year, with Heathrow and Gatwick having the largest volume.



Throughout the UK there are around 70 commercially significant sea ports that handle 53 million ferry passengers as well as 580 million tonnes of freight a year.



Also there are up to 3000 light air fields or strips.

- 3.58 The focus of this HMIC Thematic Inspection is Special Branch and specifically includes the ports aspect of Special Branch work. HMIC recognises that there are many issues relating to the general policing of ports which lie outside the immediate area of Special Branch and are not therefore covered in this report. Some of these concerns might be the cause of local tensions within ports but are more properly the business of a review of Ports Policing than of Special Branch. In this report, therefore, the term 'Ports Officer' refers only to Special Branch Ports Officers whose duties are specified in the 1994 Special Branch Guidelines.
- 3.59 The current structure of Special Branch ports policing developed from the expansion of the National Ports Scheme in the 1970s and 1980s when forces began to recruit officers from both uniform and CID, as well as additional Special Branch staff, to work as 'Port Control Officers'. These officers formed what are now recognised as 'Port Units'; although usually, (but not always) based at a major port these units remain part of their respective force Special Branches which are responsible for their supervision.
- 3.60 At the national level, ACPO (TAM) has the principal responsibility for overseeing the work of Police Port Units. Much of this remit has been exercised on behalf of ACPO (TAM) by the National Co-ordinator for Ports Policing (NCPP) since the establishment of this post in 1987.
- 3.61 The role of the NCPP includes implementation of the ports aspects of the counter terrorism policy, port security measures, new and existing legislation as well as resolution of accommodation issues and liaison with carriers and port operators. The NCPP also acts in

an advisory capacity, reporting to the Home Secretary, HMIC and Chief Officers on matters concerning Port Policing.

- 3.62 At the local level, chief constables are responsible for the policing of air and sea ports within their force areas. General policing responsibilities fall mainly to local Basic Command Units (BCUs) or other specialist departments; for example, uniformed officers provide overt armed patrols at designated airports, mount random airport security patrols and carry out general policing duties. Incidents of a more serious nature or requiring prolonged or detailed investigation will usually be allocated to CID.
- 3.63 The primary role of all Port Officers is to support Special Branch's national security remit particularly in the counter terrorism area. They also contribute to more general policing, an example being the interception of children being removed from the country in breach of the Child Abduction Act or in defiance of civil court orders. Port officers also contribute to efforts to combat serious and organised crime, assist in the arrest of wanted criminals and in the recovery of stolen property passing through the port. In one force visited by HMIC, Special Branch Ports Officers were also required to provide the initial police response capability at a large airport.
- 3.64 Throughout the inspection, HMIC was impressed by the obvious commitment, dedication and enthusiasm displayed by the staff of Ports Units, both police and support, of the forces visited during the inspection. Many acknowledged that their work is sometimes tedious and, particularly at sea ports, the working conditions can be most unpleasant; yet morale and motivation seemed high. It was therefore disappointing to learn that ports officers are widely perceived to be the poor relations in the Special Branch. This is a view expressed both by Ports Officers themselves and more widely throughout their forces.
- 3.65 HMIC found that in forces where the status of ports officers had been acknowledged as an issue, senior management was alive to the situation and endeavouring to make improvements. There does, however, seem to be scope for senior managers to give greater recognition to Ports Officers for their commitment and to ensure that they are fully and properly supported in their task. Experience has shown that these officers may be the first and only line of defence in preventing certain terrorist attacks.
- 3.66 Most Ports Units are based away from their Special Branch headquarters, and therefore require secure communications together with adequate facilities and resources to allow them to operate effectively and with a high degree of self-sufficiency. HMIC found that, while some Ports Units were relatively well provided for, all were subject to shortcomings, which could significantly undermine their effectiveness and further contribute to the perception of Ports Units as the poor relations. These aspects are considered in more detail below.
- 3.67 **Accommodation** – relates to several aspects of Ports Units functions. These include the point at which ports officers interface with travellers and perhaps take a first look at their documents, interview rooms which should ideally be nearby but private, offices in which the ports units are based and to which the public has no access and storage facilities. Under the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Aviation Security Act 1982 the operators of 'designated' sea and air ports are required to provide facilities to enable the police to fulfil their specific responsibilities for ports under these Acts. These Acts cover the majority of

national and regional ports in the UK. In all other ports and airports, provision of accommodation is a matter for negotiation between the force and the port operators.

- 3.68 The actual requirement on the operators of designated ports to provide accommodation is far from clear. Neither Act specifies what is required by way of accommodation or facilities but only that it should be sufficient for the tasks which are vaguely described; this allows scope for wide interpretation as to what the operators must provide. Inevitably this results in wide variations; at one end of the scale are excellent facilities such as those planned for Coventry Airport, where purpose built accommodation is to be provided for all three border agencies including Warwickshire Special Branch and, those at the Lancashire sea port of Heysham where the operator has provided good accommodation, including interview facilities for the ports unit. By contrast, facilities at some other ports and airports were abysmal; inappropriate siting, insufficient space and lack of security were common problems. It was apparent to HMIC that the accommodation problem stems largely from the conflict between security requirements and the pressures on ports operators to utilise fully the highly profitable retail space close to the points of passenger entry and exit; this is where the Ports Officers also need to be positioned.
- 3.69 HMIC identified a clear need for re-evaluation of accommodation requirements at ports; after 11th September 2001, operators will need no reminding of the commercial implications of perceived security lapses at ports and airports. Though HMIC is reluctant to recommend prescriptive legislation in this area, it is important that any negotiations taking place via the NCPP should result in accommodation and facilities for ports units which are operationally viable for the police and if possible, commercially acceptable for the operators. It is also suggested that, as has already happened at some of the ports visited by HMIC, port authorities should consult widely as to the requirements of the border agencies which could then be included in the planning of new buildings or refurbishment of existing ones. In particular the knowledge and skills of the local police Architectural Liaison Officer (ALO) would be invaluable. This should include all aspects of accommodation and shared facilities such as the siting of CCTV cameras, and result in the development at the national level of plans and templates for the future.
- 3.70 IT - Also of concern to HMIC was the lack of direct and secure access by Ports Units to the databases of either their own forces or more widely across Special Branch; in short, the current arrangements are wholly inadequate and seriously detrimental to the effectiveness of Ports Units. While this is but one facet of the wider problems surrounding IT in Special Branch, it is crucial. Ports Units are inevitably dealing with people in transit who are reluctant to be delayed and whom the ports authorities wish to see 'processed' as quickly as possible. Time is therefore of the essence, yet the consequences of a missed identification are potentially disastrous. The situation at several ports flies in the face of the



aspirations of intelligence led policing and urgent action is required, co-ordinated at the national level. Even those Ports Units which did have direct IT access to their headquarters Special Branch database suffered from unacceptably slow systems which few personal computer users would nowadays tolerate.

- 3.71 HMIC recognises that initiatives on Special Branch IT are underway under the auspices of ACPO (TAM) through the National Special Branch Technology Unit (NSBTU) but was nevertheless concerned that forces are still considering the purchase of systems which might be neither appropriate to Special Branch or Ports use, nor mutually compatible once national networking becomes a reality. HMIC recommends that firm measures be taken to harmonise IT development and procurement for Special Branch and Ports Units, if necessary through budgetary means.
- 3.72 Training – In some forces Ports Officers were afforded little opportunity to undertake training beyond the basic Special Branch training programme and Ports Officers course. Seemingly the rationale behind this is that headquarters Special Branch officers are presumed to require additional training for operational scenarios; yet it is Ports Officers who are far more likely to be in frequent contact with the public and are often required to develop relationships with potential contacts. HMIC would therefore suggest that the training requirements of Ports Officers are continually reviewed to ensure that they are able to develop the full range of skills necessary to their role and, where appropriate, to their deployment on wider Special Branch business.
- 3.73 Funding – The funding arrangements for Special Branch and ports policing are described in Part 2 of this report in paragraphs 2.55 and 2.56. HMIC found that at all levels there was confusion and mistaken perceptions about the funding mechanism for additional security requirements, in particular there was obvious misunderstanding over the assessment of dedicated security posts and the distribution of budgets through the funding formula. In addition it was suggested to HMIC that recent working time regulations would impact on any consideration of re-assessing the arrangements relating to dedicated security posts especially those necessitating the deployment of armed officers. A broad review of Special Branch funding is a strategic recommendation of this report.
- 3.74 Regional Arrangements and groupings – The development of regional ports groupings has made significant progress as a result of the influence and support of the NCPP. Aligned to cover the coastal approaches as well as inland air ports, these groups are already benefiting from opportunities to work more closely together, particularly when co-ordinated along common themes. The regional groups meet regularly and have proved effective in progressing business of interest to the Security Service, ports units and the other border agencies. Each region has appointed a co-ordinator while the establishment of dedicated ‘ports intelligence officers’ has proved productive. The NCPP has also supported the initiative by both Merseyside and Humberside police to provide analytical capabilities for their respective port groups, which should significantly enhance their ability to assess, evaluate and respond to intelligence. The success of the current port group arrangements is to be commended, despite the difficulties encountered through an inadequate infrastructure, there is clear evidence of the benefits of greater regional co-ordination of Special Branch and Ports policing.

- 3.75 Relationships – There has been much recent interest in the possibilities of closer co-ordination between the three ‘border agencies’ namely Customs, Immigration and the Police. All three have distinct responsibilities, aims and objectives yet can be mutually complementary in terms of protecting national security and preventing or detecting crime. In the absence of co-ordination, instances have arisen of duplication of effort as well as missed opportunities with one agency operating in ignorance of the interests of the others.
- 3.76 HMIC found that in most forces visited the relationship was often strong between the police and one of the other agencies but rarely with both at the same time. Perhaps unsurprisingly, co-location appeared to be an important factor in determining the strength of relationships between the agencies which were then able to develop systems and procedures that were mutually advantageous. In some areas these arrangements were formalised into Joint Intelligence Cells (JIC) comprising the three main agencies and perhaps other organisations on an ad hoc basis. It has to be recognised, however, that in some key respects there is a divergence between the objectives and methods of the three agencies and the JIC approach has encountered difficulties. HMIC believes that part of the problem lies in the current tendency to establish relationships at port or force level, whereas HMIS and HMCE tend to be structured on a regional basis which might suggest a more appropriate level for collaboration and co-ordination. This may be an area which needs to develop under its own momentum, at least until any possible changes to Special Branch are settled. Despite the difficulties, HMIC considers co-ordination to be the way forward and suggests that the border agencies should work towards regional co-ordination of mutual benefit to all concerned.
- 3.77 The National Picture – Unlike other Special Branch activities, ports policing has a National Co-ordinator. Whilst there are limitations on its current ability to impact due to its size and non-executive status, the office of the NCPP is well respected by Ports Units throughout the country. Apart from leading on a number of policy issues for ports policing and national security generally the office has successfully co-ordinated several national ports operations against terrorist activity. The NCPP has also been instrumental in stimulating greater liaison between forces and in enhancing co-operation with other border agencies.
- 3.78 Also at national level are the National Ports Office (NPO) which provides a 24 hour a day service regarding ‘port actions’ and advises on issues such as child abductions, and the National Joint Unit (NJU) which provides advice to Special Branches and Ports regarding terrorist legislation and requirements. Both of these units are currently based with MPSB but there is a strong argument for bringing them under the NCPP, thereby co-ordinating all ports activity at a national level whilst enhancing the resources directly available to NCPP. A further recommendation of this report is that, in the event of a National Co-ordinator of Special Branch being established, NCPP should become one of two deputies thus bringing top-level influence to the area of ports policing.

Security

- 3.79 Effective security is crucial within a department such as Special Branch; this point was driven home when, during the inspection, news of the Castlereagh break-in hit the headlines. Not surprisingly, security was a major focus for HMIC, bearing in mind particularly that security is vital to the effective performance of Special Branch and that lapses can result in loss of confidence not only in Special Branch but in the entire UK police and national security structure. The result of such a downturn is disaffection of CHIS and agents and reluctance by outside forces and services to share sensitive information.
- 3.80 HMIC found all the Special Branches visited to be fully aware that much of their work involves sensitive information, material and techniques and of the consequences of failing adequately to protect it. All were also aware of the need for a comprehensive security regime encompassing good physical, technical and information security, a proper vetting policy and sound operational security. Yet a few, mainly minor, security weaknesses were found in a number of Special Branches. Some appeared to be under pressure to relax their security regime and to adopt what amounts to an 'open door' policy. HMIC recognises that such pressures stem from the commendable trend towards greater openness in policing, however, openness and open doors are very different principles.
- 3.81 Before detailing specific aspects of security, it may be worth highlighting three considerations that apply to security that were not always evident in all the forces and Special Branches visited:
- The first is that security is a function of management and that managers at all levels bear responsibility for the security in their respective areas. Responsibility for security in Special Branch does not therefore stop at HSB;
 - Secondly, everyone in a force bears some individual responsibility for security, consequently education and training, supplemented by current security instructions, are essential;
 - Thirdly, security is a matter of applied common sense and should be frequently reviewed against prevailing circumstances.
- 3.82 Although most Special Branches had a vetting policy relating to their own staff and to others in the force associated with the Branch, in several cases the policies were unclear. This can result in staff handling material which they are not cleared to see, or members of outside agencies, mistakenly believing someone to be cleared to a certain level, discussing information of too high a level of classification. In the operational field, the effectiveness of a surveillance team can depend on the level of information available at least to the team leader who in some forces may have no vetting clearance whatsoever. In such cases the team leader must be left in ignorance or be briefed above the appropriate clearance level. A sound vetting policy should specify exactly who is to be cleared and to what level.

- 3.83 The Manual of Protective Security advises on appropriate levels of vetting needed for Special Branch officers. Most forces observe this guidance although the inspection revealed some lack of awareness and incorrect application. Various partners, notably the Security Service and the Secret Intelligence Service, have definite requirements. The Security Service currently advises that as a minimum HSB, deputy HSB and the Regional support Group Officer should receive Developed Vetting (DV), the remainder of Special Branch being Security Checked (SC). It is important that Special Branch vetting policies are consistent across the police service so that classified information can be passed in the certain knowledge that the recipient is cleared to an agreed level.
- 3.84 With the exception of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch (MPSB), the general principle is for the majority of personnel to be cleared to SC level with only more senior management receiving clearance to DV. SC clearance allows for regular access to material up to 'Secret'. MPSB have a policy of vetting the majority of staff, police and support, to DV level so that certain unique national responsibilities and operational commitments may be appropriately serviced.
- 3.85 Perhaps due to the nature of their work and their need for privacy, some Special Branches work in accommodation which is far from suitable and which, from the security standpoint, has significant vulnerabilities. In one force, Special Branch officers expressed concern that they might be allocated stand-alone, unprotected and highly vulnerable premises as their new headquarters offices. This underlines the importance of forces ensuring that prospective Special Branch accommodation meets the required security standards before it is occupied. Retrospective work may not only be more costly but can be highly disruptive, not least to security.
- 3.86 Security issues noted by HMIC tended to be of the kind that go unnoticed by those familiar with the premises or procedures; independent security surveys have an important part to play in any security regime. For example, despite effective access control to buildings and office accommodation, HMIC found potential weaknesses such as insecure windows that were accessible from adjacent buildings or other climbing routes. In one reception area that was occasionally left without staff but remained accessible to contractual maintenance personnel, there were mail baskets containing confidential documents. In other forces, accommodation, storage and work stations were inadequate and files, documents and other materials were left stacked and unprotected on top of cupboards, tables or even on the floor, clearly falling short of minimum standards.
- 3.87 IT security gave rise to some concern and should be the subject of expert scrutiny. Some forces left 'back-up' tapes for vital IT systems next to the server; in the event of a fire there would be at serious risk of losing data (not too far-fetched as one server did catch fire). Other practices included logging on to systems using a single password which facilitated access for anyone else in the office at the time. Whilst IT systems can be protected, forces should not be complacent and assume that suitable firewalls are present or, if they are, that they provide adequate protection for highly sensitive information such as that handled by Special Branch; expert advice is always available and should be sought. Document classification under the Manual of Protective Marking was inappropriately used in one case

where the rationale for assigning a higher classification than was necessary was simply to deter photocopying. The actual result was a restriction on information that should have received a wider circulation than the protective marking permitted.

- 3.88 Operational security is an area requiring great attention to detail and the application of experience in the light of new circumstances. Although HMIC did not probe specific operations, several points arose which were pointed out to the forces concerned. These included the case of one source unit, which was constrained by force fleet management policies to use the same vehicle for too long, potentially compromising both sources and handlers. In other forces, officers were using for operational purposes, mobile phones and pagers that were either registered to themselves or, perhaps worse still, the force. HMIC noted that one force had adopted the Security Service practice of employing an experienced Operational Security Officer (OPSY) to scrutinise and provide independent operational assessments of each case. Other Special Branches might find value in adopting a similar scheme.



Performance Measurement

- 3.89 Having identified the need for clarity of role, structure and function for Special Branch and Ports policing units, it is also necessary to consider how the impact of these units on specific areas of business should be measured. In all of the eight forces visited various attempts had been made to devise performance indicators or other data that would provide meaningful information about Special Branches in order to improve management and highlight their performance.
- 3.90 As with other departments, Special Branch and Ports units are already subject to standard performance measures including the monitoring of sickness, complaints and diversity profiling. However, it has proved far more difficult to provide meaningful quantitative measurements of actual performance of Special Branches undertaking their diverse and sensitive role in support of national security.

- 3.91 In every force visited concern was expressed at all levels as to the pressure to devise performance indicators which could demonstrate that Special Branches are indeed performing a valuable role and not merely existing behind a mysterious veil of secrecy. Whilst HMIC has already highlighted the need for greater transparency in order to improve the flow of intelligence, he found evidence in every unit visited of a wealth of commitment, enthusiasm and dedication by all police and support staff that in itself is an indication and measure of their worth. He also found examples of significant success that, for reasons of security, cannot be published here.
- 3.92 Part 2 discussed the need for clarity of role and a recommendation for this to receive high level support and also endorsed prioritisation through a revision of the 1994 Guidelines. HMIC considers this an essential starting point for developing performance and management information. At the time of the inspection and in line with ACPO (TAM) initiatives, forces were variously employing a number of quantitative methods for assessing:
- Number of intelligence reports submitted;
 - Number of reports to security services;
 - Number of sources identified/recruited;
 - Number of threat assessments prepared;
 - Number of persons interviewed at ports.
- 3.93 There are obvious concerns around utilising quantitative data in assessing performance. Two contrasting examples underline these concerns:
- One intelligence report may contain ten items of intelligence that could easily be separated in to ten intelligence reports, hence if these two alternatives were submitted by different officers one would appear to be far more productive than the other.
 - One officer may spend twelve months recruiting a source that provides one item of intelligence and prevents a catastrophe, a second may recruit several sources that supply numerous items of intelligence that cumulatively amount to nothing – who would appear to be the more productive in quantitative terms?
- 3.94 Apart from ensuring that performance measures are not merely 'bean counting', HMIC recognises the strong desire to minimise the actual time spent in gathering such data in the first place that in turn reduces the operational efficiency of the department. Indeed personnel in one force were all able to describe the numerous indicators collected yet none of them could actually say how they were used or even if they were used at all.
- 3.95 In addition to a more clearly defined role, HMIC believes that the introduction of a more focused strategic intelligence requirement by the Security Service will further assist in the development of methods for measuring performance. However, as has been described

earlier, Special Branch and Ports Officers in addition to protecting national security and preventing terrorism, perform other functions in support of wider policing objectives such as:

Public Order – the 1994 Guidelines describe a key responsibility for Special Branch as supporting Chief Officers in their role of maintaining the Queen's Peace by 'providing accurate assessments of the public order implications of events such as marches and demonstrations – they need to ensure:

- The physical safety of participants and the wider public;
- That the rights of participants to participate and of the members of the wider public to go about their lawful occasions are upheld; and
- That proportionate and cost-effective policing arrangements are made to deal with any likely disorder or violence.

Again HMIC found examples of attempts to quantitatively measure performance in this area through:

- Number of intelligence reports assessed relating to public disorder;
- Number of public order operations ongoing/pending/concluded.

Animal Rights – Special Branches are expected to 'gather intelligence on animal rights extremist activity and seek to prevent attacks on persons and property targeted by such extremists'

As with public order HMIC found similar measures in place to provide performance information.

Personal Protection – Many forces have now transferred this responsibility to dedicated tactical firearms units. However the MPSB retains a squad tasked with 'the provision of personal protection to Ministers of the Crown, former Ministers and other people at risk'

In support of quantitative data in terms of numbers of persons subject of protection and resources deployed the MPS senior management also routinely interview the principals in order to discuss their perceived level of service received and obtain any other first hand feedback.

- 3.96 Whilst quantitative data is of use, for example in activity measurement, it clearly does not provide a comprehensive picture of the performance of a Special Branch or a Port Unit. So how can this situation be improved to include qualitative elements of performance measurement as well? In considering the threat from terrorism in crude terms, one consideration may be whether or not anything of note has happened within a given time frame, such as an explosion. Would this represent a success attributable to the work of one

Special Branch if it could, perhaps, be demonstrated that a piece of intelligence was directly responsible for preventing such an attack? In general terms this would be far too simplistic, the acquisition of intelligence is the product of a multi-agency partnership approach, as is its assessment and exploitation; each acts according to their area of responsibility.

- 3.97 There may be occasional examples of single items of intelligence being attributable to the prevention of specific incidents. However, the vast majority of intelligence reports from whatever source contribute to the wider intelligence picture and in many instances it is difficult truly to assess their individual worth when the real objective may be achieved through the sum of all the parts.
- 3.98 So having warned against over reliance on quantitative data for performance measurement, how should the question “how good is this Special Branch” be answered? HMIC would venture the following suggestion:
- The first point, which has already been covered, is to clarify the role of Special Branch and Ports police to the extent that the component strands are distinct and clearly identifiable. It will be those strands which should form the basis for assessment and measurement;
 - Next is to agree, establish and prioritise the actual objectives which are to be met in support of that role. These should be agreed between the Special Branch and those placing the requirements. For example, the Security Service now produces and agrees with each Special Branch an annual Statement of Agreed Objectives against which at the end of the year the Security Service is to provide an assessment of performance. Other external organisations may also propose agreed objectives and should also be required to assess performance;
 - Objectives can also be agreed with the force, particularly in areas such as public order and animal rights extremism. Again the department initiating the requirement should provide qualitative evaluation of performance on each objective;
 - Qualitative assessments can also be made within Special Branch which would also enable credit to be given where credit is due. This can be given in the chain of command either within Special Branch or at senior management level – perhaps both. While acknowledging that management has a vested interest in promoting the performance of its organisation, disparities between internal evaluation and that provided externally should soon be apparent and would not reflect well on the managers concerned. Thus the pressure for objectivity;
 - Next is the means by which quantitative assessments of performance are to be reached. HMIC would suggest that these should be based on performance related activities, such as the recruitment of CHIS and agents, the mounting of surveillance operations or briefings for front line officers. They should not be seen as absolute measurements of performance to be increased year on year but evidence of well-focussed and productive activity. For example, when comparing the Special Branch that has one agent against one

of similar size which has thirty, the discrepancy may truly lie in performance but possibility in other factors such as nature of threat or pressure of other requirements. Similarly, the Special Branch that produces the intelligence gem but fails to disseminate or exploit it should be judged accordingly. The collection of this information should not become 'bean counting'; if it does it will probably mean the information is irrelevant.

- 3.99 HMIC envisages this method of performance evaluation as a continuous process requiring annual revision and revalidation but relatively limited effort in the compilation of results. If operating well, it should also provide a simple framework for the personal performance and development plans of individual officers. There would inevitably be wide variations between units in terms of objectives and measurement of processes but it is this flexibility which would allow the process to be widely applicable and yet provide results capable of comparison, both at the Special Branch and individual level.
- 3.100 Doubtless others will provide wide variations on this theme, but in HMIC's view it is important that Special Branch is judged by the quality of its work and not just on quantity.

- 3.101 The findings of this report should serve as a reminder to everyone that there is 'A Need to Know' that the risk to national security remains high. It should also provide reassurance that Special Branch and Ports personnel are working extremely hard, with their partners, to combat those individuals and groups who threaten this country through terrorist and other criminal activities. HMIC pays tribute to the professionalism, commitment and dedication of police officers and support staff engaged in this arena.
- 3.102 The terrorist attacks in the United States of America, Bali and elsewhere, reinforces the need for the UK to continue to develop its long-term strategy to enhance national security. Special Branch and Ports Units will be an integral part of that strategy and therefore the timing of this thematic inspection was welcomed across the spectrum of security agencies.
- 3.103 Despite the sensitive nature of the work of Special Branch and the obvious need to protect certain areas of business, individuals and techniques, HMIC, with the support of key partners, has been able to produce a report, the entire contents of which are in the public domain. There are no additional confidential or secret annexes.
- 3.104 Whilst highlighting the quality of people working in this environment, HMIC also discusses in Part 2, a number of issues that impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of Special Branches that could be improved. At the end of that section there are a number of strategic recommendations relating to the role, structure, funding and IT requirements of the Branch, which are designed to increase co-ordination and resilience.
- 3.105 Part 3 provides a more in depth scrutiny of Special Branch and Ports policing activities and is designed to assist practitioners and those responsible for running these units, to assess and improve their effectiveness and efficiency. In order to share some of the lessons learned and benefit from others experience, the information obtained throughout this inspection has been drawn together in a 'Practitioners guide to better practice', which can be found at Annexe 2.
- 3.106 The link between the police and local communities in the UK has been described in this report as the 'golden thread' and there is no doubt that this relationship remains the envy of many countries across the world. Public reassurance is a significant issue for policing and whilst it is important to remain vigilant in these challenging times, it is encouraging to find the significant efforts taking place, very often 'behind the scenes'.
- 3.107 For reasons of sensitivity, HMIC is unable to identify specific operations and the many associated successes resulting from the involvement of Special Branch and Ports personnel. To do so, may not only potentially compromise individual operations but may also hinder future deployments. Nevertheless, this inspection can strongly endorse the view that the UK Special Branch and Ports policing is quite rightly the envy of many law enforcement agencies throughout the world.

Appendix I

Resourcing Estimates for Proposed Changes

Office of National Co-ordinator

New Posts:

National Co-ordinator	Deputy Chief Constable
Deputy	Assistant Chief Constable
Staff Officer	Detective Inspector
Support Officers	Detective Sergeants X 2
Administration	HEO, AO x 2

Additional Resources of IT, Equipment, vehicles.

SET UP COSTS	£100,000
ONGOING YEARLY COSTS	£370,000

A typical regional office

Regional Director	Detective Superintendent
Deputy	Detective Chief Inspector
Operations Managers	Detective Inspector X 2
Supervisors	Detective Sergeants X 4
Operational Officers	Detective Constables X 22 (Desk, surveillance and source handlers)
Administration	HEO, AO X 4, Analyst, researcher.

Additional Resources of Accommodation, Furnishings, IT, vehicles, equipment (radios, technical etc.)

SET UP COSTS	£600,000
ONGOING YEARLY COSTS PER REGION	£1,300,000

Appendix II

Practitioners Guide to Better Practice

Leadership

- Chief Officers should ensure pro-active involvement with SB by senior managers and relevant ACPO lead, in order to evidence accountability and integrity.
- HSBs can enhance their effectiveness through greater visibility and accessibility particularly in their relationship with personnel deployed at satellite and port units.
- Senior managers need to be mindful of welfare issues concerning HSBs such as multi-role responsibilities and 'on-call' coverage.
- Does HSB have routine access to ACPO level?
- Is accountability clear at all levels?
- Do SB officers feel part of their force?
- How accessible is HSB?
- Does the rest of the force, and particularly senior management, regard SB as fully a part of the force?
- Do Ports staff feel part of SB?
- Is HSB adequately supported by line management in the competition for resources?
- Is HSB confident in the chain of authorisation for operations?
- Is there sufficient resilience in SB's management chain?

Policy and Strategy

- Forces may wish to consider the benefits of incorporating national security/counter-terrorism within overarching force and departmental business plans in order to clarify the role of Special Branch and enable prioritisation of operational activities.
- Similarly, developing in-force Strategic Intelligence Requirements may assist in focusing Branch commitment.
- A review of vetting policy for Special Branch by some forces may well prove cost beneficial.
- Minimum tenure arrangements can prove beneficial in balancing career aspirations with investment and return.
- Does the system for RIPA authorities provide sufficient independence to ensure scrutiny and integrity?

- Is the role of SB clear?
- Is there a clear plan for the Branch?
- Are staff aware of this plan and their part in it?
- Is there tension between force and national security requirements?

People

- Forces need to ensure recruitment, career progression and tenure arrangements are clear, consistent and promulgated.
- Succession planning needs to be considered to ensure continuity and consistency
- A review of access to courses may be required to enable equitable training opportunities (especially for Ports Officers).
- Consideration should be given as to the benefits of additional specialised training such as legislation, languages, IT skills (e.g. internet research) and working within communities.
- Support staff would benefit from the ability to network with colleagues
- Are staff given proper support in their personal development programme?
- Are courses allocated fairly (e.g. between ports and HQ staff)?
- Is abstraction from SB kept to a reasonable level?
- Is adequate use being made of support staff?
- Is there a clear tenure policy?
- How effective is the appraisal system?
- Do staff have confidence in the appraisal system?
- Is appraisal taken into account for promotions and postings?
- Are staff properly trained for all the roles they are required to undertake?

Communication and Relationships

- Forces should consider the benefits of a marketing strategy to increase awareness and enhance the flow of intelligence.
- Does the force make use of IT solutions for briefing patrol officers such as intranet or in-force websites?
- Is video conferencing available and utilised?

Appendix II

- What steps have been taken to benefit from community intelligence/information?
- Are external partners able to identify with single points of contact?
- How does SB communicate with neighbouring SBs?
- Does the Regional grouping add value?
- Are there adequate mutual aid agreements?
- How effective are relations with the Security Service?
- How well does the CTS know the 'clientele'?
- How effective are relations with other agencies?
- Do front line officers know what SB is about? Do they feel they have a role in SB's business?
- Do BCU Command teams have confidence in the service they receive from SB?
- How are SB officers kept informed of developments?
- Are their views sought and taken into account?

Ports

- Chief officers and senior managers need to ensure ports units are not marginalised.
- Is there an operational strategy for ports?
- Resourcing needs to be adequate, particularly with regard to accommodation, IT and support.
- Is the force involved in the planning and design of new buildings or refurbishment at ports? – Architectural Liaison Officers.
- Personnel need to be properly briefed regarding force policies on recruitment, retention and career opportunities.
- Are ports officers properly equipped for the type of work they undertake?
- Are Ports Officers adequately trained and equipped to undertake any other required tasks (e.g. first response)?

Security

- Are the overall security arrangements regularly reviewed?
- Has the potential for losing data through fire been considered (e.g. storage of back-up tapes)?
- Are access controls appropriate?
- Are there vulnerabilities to entry (e.g. windows, climbing opportunities)?
- Are there weaknesses in working practices (e.g. access to IT through 'shared' passwords)?
- Are the arrangements for the physical storage of sensitive materials adequate (e.g. secured away or on top of a cupboard)?
- Are the IT systems suitable for managing sensitive data (CHIS identities or protectively marked intelligence)?
- Are the procedures for the protective marking of documents in accordance with official advice and policy?
- Are the arrangements for the management of CHIS adequate (e.g. use of personal phones/pagers, same vehicles or lack of planning/coverage to prevent compromise of officers and contacts)?
- Consider the use of Operational Security Officers (OPSYs).
- Is there a vetting policy?
- If so, on what is it based?
- Is there a culture of security?
- Are there clear security instructions?
- Do SB act as force security advisers?

Performance

- Performance is easier to assess if there is clarity of role.
- Are SB's objectives agreed and clear?
- How is performance currently measured?
- Supervisors and managers can focus on individual and Branch performance linked to appraisals and career development reviews.

Appendix II

- Some quantitative measures are helpful but should be indicative and not over-relied upon.
- Results and outcomes can be tested against strategic intelligence requirements and feedback from internal and external partners.

Intelligence and Operations

- Are there adequate resources to meet operational requirements?
- Is the operational budget properly handled and monitored?
- Forces need to ensure there is confidence in the system for exchanging and disseminating intelligence both internally and externally.
- Are officers comfortable in prioritising reports to the Security Service?
- Is there sufficient IT (enough terminals) for SB to work effectively?
- Is SB able to be proactive (or are they glued to the office through paperwork)?
- Has the force considered the potential benefits of Joint Intelligence Cells (JICs)?
- Could the intelligence system benefit from a greater input from suitably vetted and trained personnel from other units such as traffic patrols?
- Does SB have surveillance capabilities or can it readily access force resources?
- Does SB have a technical capability?
- Is SB involved in NIM? If so, is HSB confident that resources can be obtained without risk of compromising sensitive intelligence?
- Are risk/threat assessments specific, focused and relevant?
- In planning VIP visits does SB utilise POLSAs?
- Has the force been involved in a recent CT operation or exercise?
- Has any thought been given by SB to CBRN issues?
- Is the document review and weeding process up to date?

Glossary of Terms

ACC

Assistant Chief Constable

ACSO

Assistant Commissioner Special Operations (Metropolitan Police)

ACPO

Association of Chief Police Officers (England & Wales)

ACPO (TAM)

ACPO group dealing with Terrorism and Allied Matters having the following remit:

- To represent the interests of chief officers of police in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on issues relating to terrorism and allied matters;
- To provide a forum enabling liaison between Home Office, government agencies and chief officers of police on issues relating to terrorism and allied matters;
- To provide a facility to advise and inform chief officers of police of all significant developments in the field of terrorism and allied matters and develop a co-ordinated and agreed response;
- To advise ministers and respond to consultation on issues of legislation and guidance.

ACPO (TAM)

Advisory Group

- To act as advisors to the National Co-ordinator Anti-Terrorist Branch on the co-ordination of the police service's counter terrorist effort;
- Where appropriate to circulate guidance and information to chief officers in pursuit of the national counter-terrorist effort;
- To receive from chief constables unresolved issues arising from the co-ordination of the police counter-terrorist effort and to pursue these to resolution with the National Co-ordinator;
- Arising from its advisory role, to stimulate initiatives through the existing ACPO mechanisms to support co-ordination of the national counter-terrorist effort;

Glossary of Terms

- To disperse the Advisory Group Special Grant in support of national counter-terrorist initiatives; and
- To issue Advisory Group messages sometimes in support of Security Service reports to advise chief officers on the co-ordination of the police national counter-terrorist effort.

ACPO(S)

Association of Chief Police Officers – Scotland

APA

Association of Police Authorities

BCU

Basic Command Unit

BVPI

Best Value Performance Indicator

CBRN

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear

CCTV

Closed Circuit Television

CHIS

Covert Human Intelligence Source

CID

Criminal Investigation Department

CTLO

Counter Terrorist Liaison Officer

CTSA

Counter Terrorist Security Advisor

DSP

Dedicated Security Post

DV

Developed vetting – vetting level

ECHR

European Convention on Human Rights

EFQM

European Foundation for Quality Management

ELS

European Liaison Section:

The remit of the European Liaison Section of the Metropolitan Police is laid out in Home Office circular 4/93. The circular nominates the ELS as the central point of contact between United Kingdom police and their counterparts in Europe on police counter terrorism matters. The role was extended to include non-sporting public order matters and racist and xenophobic offences of which there are organisational connections with neighbouring countries

FISAC	SEE NTFIU
HMCE	Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
HMIS	Her Majesty's Immigration Service
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HSB	Head of Special Branch
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRT	Irish Republican Terrorism
ISO	Industrial Security Officer
IT	Information Technology
JIC	Joint Intelligence Cell
LVF	Loyalist Volunteer Force
MI5	Historical and popular reference to the Security Service
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
MPSB	Metropolitan Police Special Branch
NaCTSO	National Counter Terrorism Security Office
NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NCPP	National Co-ordinator for Ports Policing. The post was created to provide advice and assistance to chief officers on all aspects of Special Branch ports policing in the United Kingdom. The role includes monitoring ports policing, spreading good practice, developing new ideas to improve the effectiveness of ports work, enhancing co-ordination and promoting effective liaison with other agencies
NCS	National Crime Squad

Glossary of Terms

NIM

National Intelligence Model

NJU

National Joint Unit

Based within NSY but jointly staffed by officers from around the country, this unit primarily offers advice to forces on terrorist legislation particularly when detentions under the provisions are made. It also ensures the Home Secretary is appropriately briefed on emerging events.

NPO

The National Port Office is based at Heathrow and is part of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch however it supports national intelligence functions particularly relating to the circulation of 'port actions' as well as co-ordinating activities aimed at preventing child abductions.

NPOIU

National Public Order Intelligence Unit

Based within New Scotland Yard the National Public Order Intelligence Unit performs an intelligence function in relation to politically motivated disorder (not legitimate protests) on behalf of England, Wales and Scotland.

NSBIS

National Special Branch Intelligence System

NSBTU

National Special Branch Technology Unit

NSY

New Scotland Yard – Headquarters of the Metropolitan Police

NTFIU

National Terrorist Financial Investigation Unit

OPSY

Operational Security Advisor

OSC

Office of the Surveillance Commissioner

PICTU

Police International Counter-Terrorism Unit

Recently created and housed within the Security Service the Police International Counter-Terrorist Unit seeks to co-ordinate intelligence on behalf of the police service.

PIRA

Provisional Irish Republican Army

Glossary of Terms

PMBS	Police Main Base Station
POLSA	Police Search Advisor
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000)
RSG	Regional Support Group
SB	Special Branch
SC	Security Check – vetting level
SIR	Strategic Intelligence Requirement
SO13	Metropolitan Police Anti-Terrorist Branch
TCG	Tasking and Co-ordinating Group
UK	United Kingdom
VIP	Very Important Person