

Your reference:

Our reference:

Date:

24th November, 1994



**METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE**  
Tottenham Police Station

Mr Bernie GRANT M.P.,  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

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London N17 9JA  
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Dear Mr GRANT,

**RE: Tottenham - Stop and Search Statistics**

Further to our recent correspondence you will be aware that as a result of your letter, the subject of stop/search in Tottenham was raised as an agenda item at last night's Haringey Community and Police Consultative Group Meeting. I spoke to the subject and there then followed an animated and extremely useful debate which allowed for contributions from the floor. It was finally agreed that the matter would be remitted to the next meeting of the Executive Committee by which time it was anticipated that I would have been able to send a detailed reply to you.

In essence your letter raises two separate but related issues.

- i) The seemingly excessive increase in the total number of searches conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in 1994 compared with 1993.
- ii) The possibility that this may be a function of racial bias by my officers.

The latter point is of course of fundamental importance and goes to the heart of my role as a senior police commander. It is vital that you and the community you represent have confidence in my commitment to maintain and ensure the highest standards of behaviour amongst my personnel, for without such confidence the whole concept of community policing and policing by consent is flawed.



Dealing first with the increase. I of course acknowledge that an explanation is appropriate, but would argue that when viewed against the background of National Key Objectives, Metropolitan Police strategic priorities and divisional objectives in relation to performance against crime, the increase could be argued to be valid.

Divisional objectives, which were first formulated in 1992, were framed after close consultation with all sections of the local community and set policing priorities for the five years up to 1997. In this context objectives 4 and 5 are particularly relevant. The requirement to provide high visibility policing to reassure the public and to target and prevent crimes which impact heavily on the quality of life of local people, is a function of the way in which officers are briefed and deployed.

As you acknowledge, stop/search powers are a legitimate means of preventing and detecting crime. Officers are kept up to date with all relevant information concerning the location and timing of offences and the description of suspects as provided by victims. They are encouraged to use their powers to detect offenders and indeed they have a public duty to so, for local people have a right to expect that their police are active and diligent. The sensitivity of such activity and its impact on community relations is well understood by me and my senior officers. All officers are trained to ensure that they fully understand the legislation and codes of practice. Most importantly, they are reminded that the grounds on which they can conduct a search are closely defined and that misuse of their powers would render them liable at law and under the service disciplinary code. There is a causal link between poor community relations and misuse of police powers - I am fully conscious of the need therefore to ensure that such powers are used appropriately and in the relevant circumstances. My research would tend to indicate that the increase is due to a combination of the following factors:-

1. The steady month on month increase in cases of street robbery which has led to officers being directly tasked to areas of high incidence, particularly Seven Sisters Road and Bruce Grove.
2. The displacement of crime and offenders away from burglary towards street robbery.
3. The improved quality of intelligence.
4. The use of information technology as a means of quickly assessing and evaluating changing crime patterns.
5. Recent evidence of a proven link between drugs and crime.
6. Increase in the ease of availability of dangerous drugs, particularly Heroin and Crack Cocaine.



7. Linked to 6. above, stop/search and arrest identified as a legitimate means of intervention for referral of users to helping agencies.
8. The increasing criminal use of firearms and firearms related offences on Tottenham Division, requiring an assertive response.

It may also be the case, although this can only be surmised, that there was significant under-reporting of searches last year, in that officers may have failed to submit routine reports in respect of those straight forward searches which were brief and where nothing was found. A training programme during the last 12 months has sharpened such procedures and part of the increase may have occurred as a result.

Your comment about the arrest rate is valid but I should point out that Tottenham compares well with London as a whole where the overall ratio is static at around 10%.

In so far as ethnicity is concerned, you will wish to know that in advance of directions from the Home Secretary under S.95, Criminal Justice Act 1991, the Metropolitan Police began the ethnic and gender monitoring of stop-search in September 1992. From April 1993, Her Majesties Inspector of Constabulary requested all forces in England and Wales to ethnically monitor stops as part of 49 performance indicators. It was anticipated that the statistics would be published for the financial year 1993/94 in Summer 1994, but this did not happen. I am informed by the Commissioners Central Staff that publication of the latest figures will now take place in the financial year 1995/96 (i.e. at some time after March 1995), but the form in which they will be published has yet to be determined. As an issue of strategic importance it is currently receiving attention at the highest level in the service.

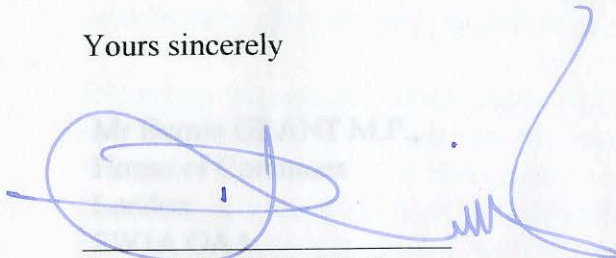
The interpretation of any statistical data requires a great deal of care and specialist knowledge. None of us should do anything that would allow ill-intentioned people any opportunity to misuse statistics to reinforce racial stereotypes.

I hope this letter goes some way towards reassuring you or that at the very least it can be used as a starting point in our discussions. I have referred your request for the regular provision of statistics, to my Assistant Commissioner and I will write again when I have his view on the subject.

The issues raised in your letter are of such importance that it would clearly be advantageous for us to meet. I will contact your office in the next week or so to make the necessary arrangements.

I have wide experience of policing areas of ethnic sensitivity and I know how vital the concept of trust is in community relations. Be assured that I see it as my principal duty to maintain that trust. I have copied this letter to the Haringey Community & Police Consultative Group and to the Haringey Racial Equality Council.

Yours sincerely



**David GILBERTSON**  
**Chief Superintendent**  
**Divisional Commander**

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