

[REDACTED]

E.R.

cc [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ST JAMES'S SQUARE DEBRIEF

- .. I attach the bundle of replies to [REDACTED] letter of 7 August asking for contributions to the debrief. The purpose of this note is to record some comments of my own as a contribution to the further work which now needs to go ahead.
2. I should be grateful if we could have a word within the next day or so about the next steps: several of the letters understandably complain that a debrief so long after the event is much less useful as memories fade. The [REDACTED] report, though apparently the subject of a meeting before my arrival here, has similarly taken some time to prepare. I know there have been other preoccupations, but following any future incident I am sure there is no alternative but to take immediate steps to earmark a date for a debrief meeting within no more than two or three weeks of the incident ending. I have certainly learned my lesson from this occasion but I should be grateful if you would make sure that the point is recorded on any appropriate papers where it would serve as a reminder to future generations.
3. The comments below are on the letters referred to:-
- a) [REDACTED] minute of 3 September: almost any terrorist incident will involve several Departments, and I agree entirely with [REDACTED] suggestion that, just as COBR concentrates all Government decision taking at a particular place in relation to the incident, so press handling should so far as possible be concentrated at a single place and should be tightly coordinated to prevent "wedge driving".
- b) Again on [REDACTED] note, I should like to see any previous papers on the consideration we have given to handling the press and in particular reaching any understandings with them, like those which apply in kidnap cases, on the activities that they would engage in which could raise the temperature in the stronghold. I am particularly concerned about this aspect in respect of [REDACTED] and the press would be buzzing round in helicopters. I do not myself believe that any "gentlemen's agreement" is a practical possibility - and it certainly would not bind foreign journalists in the event of, for example, [REDACTED]. But an agreement for syndicated facilities such as [REDACTED] reached to cover the exit can be very useful. There may be merit in identifying in advance the key elements of a syndicated arrangement for an on-shore incident. [REDACTED]
- c) Ministry of Defence - [REDACTED] letter of 19 September: in the particular circumstances of this incident, police representation in COBR was useful but it was only possible because of the geographical proximity of the [REDACTED]