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Mr John Allman
c/o 01754 767833

Dear Mr Allman,

Thank you for your further letter of 27 March about which we spoke at length this afternoon. Unfortunately the connection broke and I have been busy on other matters since then.

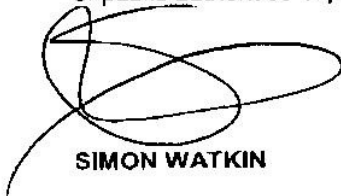
You asked two questions in your letter. I admit, as I have in previous correspondence, that technology exists that enables influencing of thought. The most obvious, and well-known example, is the use of loud music or other sounds to disturb the sleeping pattern of a hostage-taker. Our previous correspondence has also acknowledged reports in the national press about experiments in monitoring of thought. So I admit I am aware of that.

Your second question asked about the use by "the British government" of "such technology". The answer is, in part, the same. Influencing of thought, in particular influencing thoughts about sleeping, has been used by the police here in hostage situations. That deployment was necessary to protect life at risk. I recall no public concern expressed about technique.

I suspect you are really asking me about use of technologies which people who write to me describe as "mind controlling" and generally involve voices in their heads which they believe to come from the police or the security service. In answer to that point I reiterate what I written to you before:

"I cannot comment on the capability of law enforcement agencies and the intelligence services to undertake surveillance activities or the extent to which any capabilities are, or might be, considered to be thought influencing. I do not think you would expect me to do that. What I am able to say is that their use is regulated in accordance with the law and subject to independent oversight by the Office of the Surveillance Commissioners and the Intelligence Services Commissioner respectively."

If, like a number of people whose correspondence comes to me, you believe that public authorities in the UK are engaged in the sort of activity that you seem to imply then I am open to persuasion that this is a matter of genuine public interest. However in my experience, and I have experience of working with the security agencies on one hand and civil liberties bodies on the other, I am not yet persuaded my correspondents and your informants are the victims of public authorities experimentation.



SIMON WATKIN