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Mr John Allman
Christians Against Mental Slavery
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Our Ref
Your Ref
Date 28 November 2003

Dear Mr. Allman,

Thank you for your letter dated 22 November. You posed 8 questions. The answers to these are set out below. In response to:

Question 1: No.

Question 2: There is ongoing research exploring how the brain responds to various external stimuli or activities (you may have seen the Guardian article that was published a couple of weeks ago, which summarises some of the work that has been done). However, this is not the same as saying that technology exists which enables human thought to be monitored or influenced covertly.

Question 3: The Home Office is not aware that such technology has been used.

Questions 4: It is true that the Investigatory Powers Tribunal has never upheld a complaint since it was formed. It is also true that most of the complainants were never the subject of any surveillance, and that all procedures were properly followed for those who were.

Question 5: The Investigatory Powers Tribunal deals with complaints about the breach of human rights by any of the intelligence agencies or law enforcement agencies. If, as you say, overt surveillance has taken place, which has intruded on an individual's privacy, this would be a breach of their human rights and would thus come under the IPT's remit. In cases of harassment, claims can also be made to the courts or, depending on the public authority thought to be responsible for such actions, a body such as the Police Complaint's Authority.

Question 6 and 7: Resolution A4-0005/1999 paragraph 27 calls for a global ban on all developments and deployments of weapons which might enable any form of manipulation human beings. This implies these weapons have not been developed yet. That being the case, it is not so puzzling that there is currently insufficient information to consult publicly and for the Government to make an informed decision about these issues.

Question 8: As you yourself have actually admitted in previous correspondence, there may be positive applications of the technology that you suggest exists. For instance, in certain hostage-taking situations, there may be benefits in determining the state of mind of the terrorist in question. Similarly it may be helpful if a person is standing on top of a building threatening suicide, to know whether the interventions by police or psychologists to persuade the individual not to jump are having an effect. However, as stated previously, the actual pros and cons can not be properly reviewed until more information is available.

I hope this letter answers your questions. I would like to say that there does not seem to be anything further to add that has not been covered in our previous correspondence to you.

Yours sincerely,



Elizabeth Fitton-Higgins
Covert Investigation Policy Team