

STATES OF JERSEY



COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY: 'OPERATION BLAST'

Lodged au Greffe on 18th June 2009
by the Deputy of St. John

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) to establish a Committee of Inquiry in accordance with Standing Order 146 in order to examine a definite matter of public importance, namely ‘Operation Blast’ undertaken by the States of Jersey Police, which involved the setting up of files which contained sections on every elected member of the States of Jersey, in order to establish why the decision was taken to establish these files and who authorised the Operation; and
- (b) to request the Minister for Home Affairs to take the necessary steps in conjunction with the States of Jersey Police to ensure that any information contained in the files that is not required as evidence for disciplinary or criminal investigations should be destroyed once the Committee of Inquiry has completed its work.

DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN

REPORT

Given that the statement made by the Minister for Home Affairs on 16th June 2009 (see Appendix) covers many members of the Assembly, I will also ask that an in-committee debate take place before the main debate on my proposition so that all the facts may be aired, and for members to ask questions of the Minister for Home Affairs, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and others. The in-committee debate to be in public where possible and held in the autumn of 2009, so that each member will have time to have a meeting with the Acting Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police, the Data Protection Commissioner and the Law Officers, if required, and others, so that they be fully informed of the subject matter before the debate takes place.

Financial and manpower implications

The costs will depend upon the level of officer support required. A Committee of Inquiry normally requires the appointment or secondment of an officer on a part-time basis, and I estimate that the total cost should not exceed £20,000. The Minister for Treasury and Resources is required, under Standing Order 150(c), to give directions on how the above expenses should be funded.

APPENDIX

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS IN RELATION TO OPERATION BLAST MADE ON 16th JUNE 2009

It is my duty to inform this Assembly that on 2nd June 2009 I received a formal written report from the Acting Chief Officer of Police which confirmed to me the details of Operation Blast. I was first informed of the general details in relation to Operation Blast by a letter from the Solicitor General dated 30th April, 2009, and requested further information prior to making any decision in relation thereto. I am able to reveal the following information –

- (1) In February 2006 the States of Jersey Police set up files under the name of Operation Blast which contained sections on every elected member of the States of Jersey, that is on every Senator, Connétable and Deputy. These files do not appear to relate to any actual police investigation.
- (2) Each section on an individual member contained a photograph and other generally available information on the member. It also contained a full criminal record search on each member. Some of the sections contained other information on a member from a variety of different sources including local police intelligence and national police intelligence and sheets detailing the checks that had been carried out in respect of each individual. The existence and general contents of the files have been independently confirmed to me by the Solicitor General acting upon my request.
- (3) The files were kept securely within the Special Branch office. Between February 2006 and November 2008 the files were updated from time to time. The files were not retained under standard arrangements for the retention of intelligence data. Indeed, there are papers within the files which would suggest that efforts have been made to ensure that this information was maintained outside the normal protocols for the management of information. Various members of the Police Senior Management were aware of the existence of the files and directed certain information to be retained therein. The existence of the files was known only to a very small number of officers and does not appear to have been disseminated further.
- (4) I am not aware of the motivation for the setting up and retention of these files but am very seriously concerned about their existence.
- (5) No new sections were set up after the October/November 2008 elections and no information was added to the files after November 2008.

Existing or former members of the States who are concerned by the contents of this statement may wish to contact the Acting Chief Officer of Police, Mr. David Warcup, who has agreed to meet individually with them, should they so wish, in order to discuss the contents of their section of the files. However, I must inform members that Mr. Warcup will not be able to reveal to them any items which cannot be properly disclosed outside of the Police intelligence community.

I will of course answer questions which members may have, but the answers which I can give will be limited because of possible police disciplinary issues which may arise from this discovery.