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PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Replying to a question in the House of Commons today, Mr Humphrey Atkins MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said:

"The United States Administration is reviewing its policy on the issue of licences for the export of arms for use by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. My noble Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has made our views on this matter unmistakably clear. I understand that the Administration has decided not to process further applications for export licences pending the outcome of the review. They have been left in no doubt of the RUC's needs. Her Majesty's Government therefore hope and expect that the review will be completed soon; and that no restraints will be placed on the export of arms by the United States manufacturers for use by a legally constituted police force in the United Kingdom."

He was replying to a question by the Rev Ian Paisley (North Antrim) who asked him to make a statement on the purchase of arms for the Royal Ulster Constabulary from the United States of America.

Replying to questions on extradition Mr Atkins said:

"I have frequently made clear - most recently in my discussions on 5 October with Ministers of the Irish Republic - the Government's concern that those who commit terrorist crimes in Northern Ireland and flee to the Republic should be brought to justice. Extradition procedures have, in practice, proved ineffective because the Irish High Court has found cause not to grant extradition for offences which are claimed to be political or to be associated with political offences.

"Evidence gathered by the RUC concerning persons who are alleged to have committed terrorist offences in Northern Ireland but who are now known to be in the Irish Republic has recently been made available to the Garda. We hope this will enable them to bring prosecutions under the extra-territorial criminal jurisdiction legislation, which allows terrorist suspects to be brought to trial in one jurisdiction for specified offences committed in the other after 1 June 1976.

"It is solely for the responsible authorities in the Republic to determine whether charges should be brought, as would be the case in this country in similar circumstances. However, I would remind hon Members that I agreed with Irish Ministers on 5 October on the importance of making fuller use of the extra-territorial legislation."

Mr William Ross (Londonderry) and Mr John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest) had put the questions.

Mr McCusker (Armagh) asked the Secretary of State how many terrorist incidents have been recorded in police divisions H, J, K, L, R, N, O and P during the first nine months of 1979 in which the terrorists involved either operated from the Republic of Ireland or sought sanctuary there after committing their crimes; and how many people died in these incidents?

Replying Mr Atkins said: "Between 1 January and 30 September 1979 the Royal Ulster Constabulary recorded 63 terrorist incidents in those police divisions which required contact with the Garda in view of possible use of the border by those responsible. In the course of these incidents, 35 people died."