

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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CONFIDENTIAL

The Ulster Defence Regiment - Reasons for Disbandment

1.1 The establishment of the Ulster Defence Regiment in 1970 arose from the recommendations of the Hunt Committee Report in 1969. The Report recommended the disbandment of the Ulster Special Constabulary ('B' Specials) and their replacement by the new Ulster Defence Regiment which was to be mainly a part-time force, recruited from the local population but under the command of the British Army GOC. At the time, it was hoped that the UDR would attract significant numbers of Catholic recruits for it to become a widely accepted force, unlike the 'B' Specials. Disbandment of the 'B' Specials was clearly welcomed by the nationalist community and in the initial stages of the UDR's existence, several nationalist politicians were prepared to associate themselves with the idea of the new force. After a year, the Regiment had estimated that 18% of its members were Catholics. However, criticism soon came to be levelled against the UDR on the grounds that the force had absorbed too high a proportion of ex-'B' Specials (indeed, unionist politicians had actively exhorted these people to join the new force). The most recent available figures indicate that less than 3% of the force are Catholics or 200 Catholics out of a force of approx 7,000 strong.

1.2 To date, the UDR have never been able to command sufficient allegiance from the nationalist community to encourage them to join in large numbers. Thus, at no point in the last 14 years can the UDR be said to have been a force truly representative of the politico/religious mix of the Northern Ireland population. In this respect, it was almost inevitable that the opprobrium once attached to the 'B' Specials would eventually be transferred to the UDR. If the nationalist population's reluctance to join a force which was composed of many ex-'B' Specials and was part of the overall British Army structure was a reflection of their doubts about the force's capacity to act impartially, then this antipathy was considerably exacerbated by the many cases, particularly in recent

years, of serious charges, including murder, being brought against members of the force.

1.3 While the number of charges of murder against UDR members have attracted most public attention, the many examples of harassment and excessive use of force have been a persistent irritant for the nationalist population. Similarly, the links that have been established between the UVF and certain UDR members and the convictions of some members for possession of explosives and arms, have caused the already poor reputation of the force in the eyes of nationalists to deteriorate further and have raised questions (most notably in the Kilbrandon Report) about the advisability of maintaining a force that is patently unable to inspire widespread allegiance.

2 Only a partial picture of the questionable role of the UDR, however, can be drawn by focussing on the more dramatic and more highly-publicised incidents in which they have been implicated in recent years. Figures released by the UDR themselves in 1979 showed that up until that year, 5 members of the Regiment had been convicted of murder, 5 of manslaughter and several others were convicted of explosives and other serious charges. In 1975, for example, a member of the UDR was shown to have been involved in the Miami showband killings near the border. This incident, which was carried out by the UVF, also highlights the close links between that organisation and members of the UDR that have been shown to exist in subsequent cases. A further example was the arrest in Antrim on 10 January, 1984, of two part-time UDR members among a group of six people apprehended in connection with UVF activities. After this arrest, police were able to uncover an arms and ammunition cache in the area.

3.1 The incidents involving members of the UDR which have received the greatest public notoriety in recent years, were the killings of Adrian Carroll in Armagh in November, 1983 and

of Martin Malone in Armagh in July, 1983. Both shootings were adjudged by eye-witnesses to have been unprovoked as both men were unarmed. In the case of Carroll's killing, initially 8 UDR men based at Drumadd Barracks were arrested in connection with the offence and in the Malone case, one UDR member was charged. At present, a total of 7 UDR members remain confined to Drumadd facing charges of murder, including the Carroll killing. A notable feature of both cases was the length of time which elapsed between the time both incidents took place and the dates on which the respective charges were brought to court: in the Carroll case, ten months and in the Malone case, nine months. Furthermore, in the Malone case, the British Army confirmed that none of the UDR patrol involved in the incident were taken into custody pending an investigation nor were they suspended from duty.

3.2 A further factor influencing nationalists' general disaffection is their widespread belief that justice will not be done in cases involving the UDR and, in particular, that the RUC cannot be trusted to carry out impartial investigations into such incidents. This latter point is highlighted by the occasion when Fr Raymond Murray of Armagh took statements from witnesses to the Malone killing for direct transmission to the DPP and the RUC Chief Constable, such was the lack of faith in the RUC's own capacity to investigate such incidents thoroughly, speedily and impartially.

3.3 Harassment is the most common and persistent of the allegations made by nationalists against UDR patrols. For example, witnesses to the Carroll killing were reported to have stated that for several days prior to his death, Carroll was persistently followed and stopped by the force. The problem, however, is a general source of grievance and, although not as serious as some other allegations against the Regiment, nationalists see such incidents as being provocative and directed against themselves as a community. The harassment is also localised and in the view of nationalists personalised - UDR personnel who were born in a particular locality are responsible

for harassing nationalists in that locality. Nationalists are often heard to plead that "these fellows <sup>grew up</sup> ~~who work~~ with us and went to school with us, the difference now being that they have guns". The overwhelming proportion of Protestant/unionists in the force and their perception of the nationalist communities as a recalcitrant block both contribute to the many incidents of harassment of innocent nationalists, but it should be noted that this problem is not associated exclusively with the UDR.

4.1 The involvement of UDR members in illegal activities has come under strenuous attack from SDLP representatives, notably Seamus Mallon and John Hume and from Catholic Church figures such as Cardinal O Fiaich, Fr. Raymond Murray and Fr. Denis Faul. Decisions by firstly, the British Prime Minister in December, 1983 and subsequently by Prince Philip in February of this year, to visit Drumadd Barracks were roundly condemned by nationalist representatives as 'calculated insults' to nationalists, since several UDR members based at the barracks were facing charges of murdering Catholics in the Armagh area. The protest over the visit registered by the Government with the British Ambassador in Dublin also clearly reflected the fact that the deep concern over UDR activities is not isolated, but widespread among moderate, mainstream nationalists on this island.

4.2 The Kilbrandon Inquiry Report (as noted above) also indicated the level of concern among a significant and influential section of British opinion about the present role of the security forces in Northern Ireland. The majority of the Inquiry's membership identified the increasing alienation of nationalists from the security forces, particularly the UDR, as a source of major instability in the present law enforcement system. They recommended, therefore, a phasing out of the UDR, some reforms of the present RUC, the establishment of a joint security commission and a general reform of the political system by the introduction of an executive commission comprising representatives of the British and Irish Governments and the major political parties in Northern Ireland.

5. For the present, it is hard to see the UDR being able to gain a reputation among nationalists as an impartial force in a situation where even moderate nationalist opinion has been highly critical of many of its activities to date. When compared to attitudes to the RUC, the antipathy towards the UDR is based on nationalist perceptions of that Forces' personnel. They are seen as operating in effect as free-lance paramilitaries with official backing. In contrast the RUC, at least up to the time of the Downes killing in Andersonstown, were beginning to be perceived as a professional force concerned with the impartial operation of the law, even if there were a number of incidents which suggested otherwise.

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