



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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PA - UVF
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LINKS BETWEEN LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES
AND SOUTH AFRICA
BACKGROUND NOTE

1. There are established links between the Unionist Community in Northern Ireland and sympathisers in South Africa. A substantial number of persons from the Unionist community have emigrated to South Africa and it is believed that members of the UDA and the UVF have maintained continuing contact with sections of that community. Moreover developments in the 1980's suggested a close South African interest in obtaining armaments technology from Shorts Brothers, the Belfast armaments and aviation company, which has a strongly Loyalist workforce. (Newspaper reports havenoted that a senior member of ARMSCOR is originally from Northern Ireland).

2. The following aspects are of particular importance:

(i) The Brian Nelson Affair

Brian Nelson was the UDA intelligence officer, also a British Army agent, who was charged with complicity in a range of UDA-related crimes, including murder. He is currently serving a jail sentence for conspiracy to murder. His activities, and those of his British Army handlers, raise a series of important questions which are under discussion within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Conference. The South African dimension is one source of concern: Nelson, on behalf of the UDA, made an arms purchasing trip to South Africa in the mid 1980's. Subsequently, in July 1987, the UDA and the UVF robbed a bank in Portadown to finance a large arms importation from South Africa. The UDA, and the UVF, together with a third group (Ulster Resistance), combined to import the arms in late 1987. While some of these arms were seized

by the RUC in early 1988, a substantial portion of the consignment remains unaccounted for and weapons from that consignment are believed to have been used in a number of murders by Loyalists.

(ii) The Blowpipe Missile Affair, Paris 1989.

On 21 April 1989 Noel Little, James King (both leading members of Ulster Resistance), Samuel Quinn, a senior NCO and Missile Instructor in the Territorial Army, Douglas Bernhart, an American arms dealer based in Geneva, and Daniel Storm, an official of the South African Arms corporation, ARMSCOR (and a member of the technical and administrative staff of the South African Embassy in Paris) were arrested by the French authorities after they were found in possession of a "cut away" demonstration model of a Shorts Blowpipe ground to air missile which had been stolen from a Territorial Army base in Newtownards on 12 April 1989. (It should be noted that Ulster Resistance have since claimed to have two working Blowpipe missiles and a set of plans for the more advanced "Starstreak" missile.) Storm was released on the grounds of diplomatic immunity. Little, Quinn and Bernhart were charged on 23 April 1989 with illegal dealing in weapons. (Noel Little was a former part-time member of the UDR from 1980-1986.)

On 24 April 1989 the then Tanaiste instructed that a protest be made to the South African authorities in the strongest possible terms. The protest was delivered by the Ambassador, London, to the South African Ambassador there. In delivering the protest, the Ambassador told the South African Ambassador that the Government strongly condemn the provision of weapons, or funds for the provision of weapons, to any group in Northern Ireland

and that they wished to have the assurance of the South African Government that South Africa will not supply any such weapons or funds.

The South African Ambassador indicated that the matter was being investigated by his authorities and gave an assurance that his government were not supplying weapons to any terrorist organisation. Foreign Minister Botha issued a statement on 24 April 1989 which reiterated their opposition to terrorism and gave the South African Government's assurance that "it is not supplying arms to any terrorist organisation." On 3 May 1989, the South African Minister for Defence, General Malan, told the South African Parliament that Daniel Storm was acting on behalf of the South African arms agency, ARMSCOR, but that his involvement with the loyalists did not have the approval of the South African Government.

On 28 April 1989, the French Government expelled three South African Embassy officials (including Storm) because of the affair. On 5 May 1989 the British Government announced that, because of the gravity with which they viewed this matter, they had decided that three members of the South African Embassy in London should be expelled. King, Little and Quinn were granted bail in November, 1989. A charge of transporting arms was withdrawn by the French investigating magistrate on 29 March 1991 because the disassembled blowpipe did not constitute a "working weapon". In October, 1991, they were convicted on relatively minor charges of receiving stolen goods. They were released having been sentenced to terms equivalent to the time spent in custody on remand (two and a half years approx.).

(iii) Reported Loyalist Involvement in Conspiracy to murder a South African defector

Most recently the London Independent of 15 July 1992 published a report concerning a conspiracy between South African agents and Loyalist paramilitaries in an attempt to murder former security policeman Dirk Coetzee in London last April. According to newspaper reports, the British authorities, acting on a tip-off, arrested two agents and their Loyalist contact. Three other Loyalists are reported to have been involved in the conspiracy.

The two South African agents and their Loyalist contact were detained for 3 days under the Prevention of Terrorism Act before being released - the evidence against them was, in the absence of confessions, merely circumstantial. A subsequent investigation into the affair, authorised by President de Klerk, is reported to have concluded that there was indeed a plot to kill Coetzee, but that it was the brainchild of members of the police force and was neither inspired nor authorised by the Government. A further South African investigation is continuing.

Anglo-Irish Division,
22 October, 1992