

SECRET AND PERSONAL

1. cc Mr Bloomfield - M
Mr Brennan
Mr AW Stephens - M
Mr Chesterton
Mr Bell



PUS 244

11 OCT 1985

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2. PUS to see

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MUFAX to BELFAST
DESK IMMEDIATE

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref. A085/2621

11 October 1985

Dear Sir Clive,

Ulster Defence Regiment

During a recent session of the Anglo-Irish talks, we made use of a speaking note cleared with the Ministry of Defence by Tony Stephens of the Northern Ireland Office, which covered the increasing presence of the RUC with UDR detachments, particularly at vehicle checkpoints in sensitive areas. It also corrected the impression of the Irish about the allocation of tasks between the security forces in various specific localities, particularly in Belfast. Finally, it mentioned the new army instruction that soldiers who have not completed their basic training and six months service should not exercise the power of arrest in Northern Ireland except in an emergency.

At a session of the Anglo-Irish talks earlier this week, the Irish side welcomed the measures which we were taking with regard to the UDR. But they pressed us once again on the deployment of the Regiment. They said that, if it were possible to withdraw even a very few - they mentioned 50 to 100 - UDR men from a particularly sensitive area - especially if the area could be that part of Armagh with which Mr Seamus Mallon is associated - and substitute either regular soldiers or the RUC, that would be helpful to the prospects of a successful agreement to an extent far greater than the small numbers would suggest.

We repeated to the Irish the difficulties about redeployments of this kind, and made it clear that we could raise no hopes. We nevertheless undertook to consult the Ministry of Defence further about this point.

We all think that the Irish persistence in this matter reflects a genuine concern. They repeatedly tell us that the UDR is a focus of the minority's concern and that changes regarding it, which took effect around the time of signature,

Sir Clive Whitmore KCB CVO

/could produce

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could produce disproportionate benefits in the attitude of the minority towards the agreement. You have agreed that a number of changes should be made: none of them major but cumulatively helpful. They obviously take the view that even a miniscule shift in deployment patterns, in the right place, would (even though not announced) be noticed and regarded as an indication of good intentions.

It would be extremely helpful in the negotiations if you could find a way to meet the Irish request for a very small redeployment of the UDR. Although earlier Irish requests for change have turned out not to be as marginal as the Irish claimed, their request this time is expressed in numerical terms and is truly marginal. I should be most grateful if you and Nigel Bagnall could take a personal interest in seeing whether a small and early change in Armagh, or failing that another largely Roman Catholic area, is after all possible.

The negotiations are likely, on present expectations, to last until about the end of this month. I hope and believe that we shall not be asking you for any further change in relation to the UDR before an agreement is concluded. But the Irish will continue to press, in the new Intergovernmental Committee to be established by the agreement, for changes regarding the UDR, such as to make it more acceptable to the minority community. It might be a prudent precaution for the Ministry of Defence and the Northern Ireland Office to set in hand a fresh study of the complete relationship between the UDR and the minority and of possible future changes concerning the Regiment designed to improve that relationship. Clearly the launching of such a study should not be made public, since that would be a blow to UDR morale; but it could help to equip those concerned to deal with Irish views and proposals in the Intergovernmental Committee, once it is established.

I am sending copies of this letter to Robert Andrew and David Goodall.

Yours sincerely
Robert Andrew

(approved by Sir Robert Armstrong
and signed in his absence)