

PR/84/11/2199/ES

PS/Secretary of State (L&B)

cc: PS/Dr Boyson (L&B)

PS/Mr Scott (L&B)

PS/Mr Patten (L&B)

PS/Lord Lyell (L&B)

PS/PUS (L&B)

PS/Sir Ewart Bell ✓

Mr Bourn

Mr Brennan

Mr Doyne-Ditmas

Mr Merifield

Mr Burns

Mr Gilliland

Mr Coulson

Mr Lyon

Mr Reeve

Mr Bickham

*Leave off on 3/2 and  
done to Mr. Bloomfield  
KPB 3/12/14  
20/11*



*2 Boxes*

UDR

At a recent morning meeting in London, the Secretary of State said that he would like to arrange an in-house discussion with Ministers about the UDR. The attached paper may be useful as background to a discussion. It sets out very briefly the security and political considerations relevant to the Regiment's present functions and any radical change in them.

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2. May I ask all concerned to note that some of the material in this note is sensitive.

*P W J Buxton*

P W J BUXTON

19 November 1984

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## ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT

This note summarises the history of the UDR; describes its present role; comments on the differing attitudes towards it; and discusses its future, immediate and more distant.

### 1. Historical

The Regiment was formed in 1970, following the disbandment of the Ulster Special Constabulary (B Specials) in 1969. It was intended to support the regular forces, by undertaking guard duties at key points, by carrying out patrols and establishing checkpoints and road blocks, mostly in rural areas, it was not intended to engage in crowd control or riot duties in cities. By 1972 there were 10 battalions, and at its peak over 9,000 men. In the early days over a quarter of the men (unlike the USC) were Catholics. But murder and intimidation - together with a growing perception in the minority that the British Army, which had come to protect the nationalist community, was becoming arrayed against it - before long brought this figure down to about 2%. The perception was unfair in that the UDR were not directly involved in these anti-terrorist activities at that time; but it reflected a truth, that the bulk of its members were indeed staunchly anti-nationalist (some of them ex-B Specials). The overall strength also dropped, but only gradually since 1973, from almost 8,000 to 6,600 today. In fact, the part-time figures have continued to drop steadily throughout the period (from over 7,000 in 1973 to just under 4,000 today), but this has been balanced by a rise in the size of the permanent cadre from 800 to 2,650 over the same period. The permanent cadre, which

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at first had a purely administrative role, began to expand to undertake operational duties about 1976. As the Regular Army roulement units began to be withdrawn from that date the UDR units have progressively taken over the role of military support for the RUC.

The UDR is commanded by a Brigadier of the Regular Army, responsible to CLF and GOC, but operational command of the battalions runs through the two brigades (8 and 39). Battalion commanders are invariably officers in the Regular Army; this is not as it were by right, but because in the nature of things UDR officers do not require the necessary training and experience for command of a battalion. With the gradual reduction in size, there has been a steady process of closing down local bases, which are wasteful of manpower, needing permanent guards. More notably, in 1983 a process was begun of amalgamating battalions, which is also economical of manpower. The two County Antrim units were then amalgamated, and recently the units covering North Down and the non-Catholic parts of Belfast have been amalgamated. There were some fears in the Regiment that this was the beginning of a planned rundown, but these were quietened by sensitive handling on the part of the GOC and UDR Commanders including the Honorary Cols Baxter and Faulkner.

ii. The UDR's role today

The Regiment has a supporting role today in about 85% of the Province, the significant exceptions being the Catholic parts

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of the two cities, South Armagh and parts of Fermanagh. In some places there is direct support of the RUC, in others under command of a Regular Army unit, while sometimes the UDR itself has command of regular sub-units. The UDR's presence enables the Regular Army, in its reduced size, to concentrate on the tasks for which it is best fitted and/or the UDR is not fitted. The predominance of recruitment in the East has for some time posed a problem of mobility. HQNI have attempted to overcome this by a policy of "twinning" of units in the East with others who have a more significant operational role in the West; part-timers can only go on twinning duties at week-ends, but the permanent cadre can be usefully detached for longer periods. Conversely, there is a severe problem of the security and protection of the individual part-timers living in dangerous areas and often working to dangerously predictable patterns. The UDR has taken an increasing share of the casualty rate, as the Regular Army has been pulled out. Ex-members are also increasingly at risk:

Deaths

	1982 Jan/Sept	1983 Jan/Sept	1984 Jan/Sept
RUC & Reserve	4	10	9
Regular Army	10	3	6
UDR	3	7	10 + 3 ex-members

(The increase in RUC deaths is attributable to its greater role in operations; the part-time reserve has meanwhile been running down and fewer men have stayed living near the border than amongst the UDR).

There is no ready answer to the threat of attack on part-timers. Where possible they are encouraged to transfer to the permanent cadre, but they too are exposed to some inevitable risk.

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iii. Attitudes towards the Regiment

The UDR has become a symbol of sectarian division. To a large extent, this has nullified the advantage that was expected to accrue from disbanding the police B Specials in favour of a military force under the command of the GOC and ultimately Ministry of Defence. The Unionist attitude to the UDR is perfectly straightforward in a way that it no longer can be towards the RUC (the Chief Constable's determination to be even-handed creates an ambivalence even in the UUP's mind, and more strongly in the DUP); therefore any hint that the UDR does not have a lasting role to play will be received with horror. By contrast the Regiment is mistrusted, even hated, in much of the Catholic community, and by many Catholic politicians. Its local ties, which are its strength in Unionist eyes, are an added source of dislike and humiliation to Catholics. Their attitude has been confirmed in the past year, by the charging of several members with murder; in the case of men from 2 UDR (Armagh), allegedly committed while on duty. Southern politicians, who do not have too many good words for the RUC today, naturally abominate the UDR, and do not hesitate to say so (eg their protest at the Duke of Edinburgh's visit to the Grenadier Guards at Drumadd Barracks, also the home of 2 UDR). More significantly, the Regiment is not held in the highest regard by the RUC itself (including the Chief Constable, who has spoken publicly in the past year in terms of its ultimate demise, and immediately sought to contradict that); even amongst regular soldiers it is not universally popular (a point brought to Mr Prior's attention in a particular alleged case by Mr Molyneaux).

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iii. The Future

Future policy was appraised by NIO, MOD and HQNI early in 1981. Briefly, the conclusions, which were approved by Ministers, were that:

- a. On a military assessment, there is no long term military requirement for a force of anything like the present size. Changes have been taken to restrict knowledge of the recommended figures, and I shall maintain that discretion in this paper. 7;
- b. In the light of that, and taking into account security and political considerations, the UDR must in due course be reduced substantially in size; though it is too soon to take a view on the form the home defence force should take.
- c. Political sensitivities in and concerning the Regiment dictate that this long term view of the Regiment's future must be kept secret.

A start was made in carrying out this policy with the programme of amalgamations mentioned above. At that time (late 1983) the GOC would have liked to let the planned permanent home defence role be known as a measure of reassurance. However, we agreed with MOD to go no further than the assurance that the Regiment would have a continuing role, in particular in providing support to the RUC, and that even today it has a statutory liability to be called out as part of the defence of the UK against attack.

We gather that the MOD would like to see a further amalgamation

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of UDR units in the course of the next year. The next chosen  
part, which covers County Armagh other than the South and some  
of West County Down, would be entering a more controversial  
area, and HQNI will want to proceed cautiously. Meanwhile  
they have made far reaching proposals in a review of security  
policy, which if accepted (as we believe they should be) will  
match the UDR's role more closely to the existing security  
situation. Briefly, they consider that in large areas of the  
Province there is no longer any need for routine Army support  
to the RUC, while in some other areas it could be reduced,  
either now or progressively. In a third class of areas, the  
present level of support needs to be maintained. These shifts,  
while causing difficult problems of mobility, would concentrate  
the resources where most needed and remove the potential  
aggravation elsewhere.

These seem to us the practical avenues for progress. Other  
ideas abound. Both the Kilbrandon and Boyle/Haddon Reports  
speak broadly of very gradual run down of the part-time UDR  
as the RUC took over more security functions, with the permanent  
cadre free to be incorporated into the Regular Army if they  
wished. The latter idea does not make practical sense from the  
viewpoint either of the individuals or of the Army. If a run-  
down of the UDR in favour of the RUC means anything like a  
one-for-one increase in the RUC establishment, that is not an  
attractive proposition, since we do not want a major increase  
in the RUC establishment today; it would multiply the  
management problems of the force, impose a great strain on

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public expenditure, and put too much power in a single pair of hands. If the proposition merely means that the RUC at its present level could take over residual UDR functions as the security situation improves, that is very much what our present policy looks forward to.

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