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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

13 November 1985

The Lord Treigarne
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for the Armed Forces
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
SW1A 2HB



① ~~Mr Ward~~ MW.
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PS/MS/SCOT (L/B)
PS/PS (L/B) 19/6
1. ~~Blair~~ ~~Sheffield~~
Mr Strenson
Mr Stephens
Mr Barnes
Mr Blackwell
Mr Bell
Mr Ewman
③ > info to see

Dear David

I thought it would be useful for you to have a copy of the enclosed letter I received recently from Sir David Young, which contains some very helpful thoughts and ideas concerning UDR.

Sir David has asked that the contents of the letter be treated in confidence. I am also sending a copy to Tom King.

Handwritten signature

Malcolm Rifkind

Sir David Young.

PERSONAL-IN-CONFIDENCE

031 - 667 3747

26 Blackford Avenue,
Edinburgh. EH9 2 PH

3rd November 1985.

Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind M.P.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall, SW1.

Dear Malcolm,

Thank you for your phone call last weekend and my apologies for the delay in writing this letter. Even with semi-retired people, life can be very busy at times.

I said in my note to you that I had attended the UDR Dinner in London a fortnight ago and that inevitably there had been expression of views by some on the future of the Regiment as it was reported to be a matter for discussion in the current round of talks in Dublin and London. In the main the views were all constructive and above all, there was a strong theme of continuing loyalty to HMG and the British Army in particular as they regard themselves being part of that establishment. I believe that this is an important point to bear in mind.

The prime concern was the UDR being used as a political football for purely political purposes which would not necessarily result in a solution for the Province or the South. There seemed to be an acceptance that some adjustments might have to be made in peripheral policy areas, which in the main have been dealt with in the past through the recognised military chain of command. For example, the UDR is currently under strength in part-time personnel and it might seem a sound political move to reduce the established strength of the part-time element as part of a package in the agreement. (I pre-suppose that such an agreement is being discussed.) Such reductions have taken place before for sound military reasons which have raised no comment from any political body and there is every ^{reasonable} reason for doing so again but NOT for political purposes.

A reduction in the establishment of the UDR as part of an agreement would, in the opinion of many, lead to considerable trouble from the ordinary loyalist, even escalating to the scale of the Ulster Workers Strike in 1974. I am no judge of that from this distance but one must look back to the Hunt Report of 1970 when the regiment was formed really to defend the Province along with the RUC and the regular Army. Inevitably there would be talk of sell-out etc which could be

avoided quite simply and wisely through administrative action in the military chain of command, at a time which could not be construed as part of a deal. I should have thought that HMG would wish to avoid as much controversy as possible without "volunteering for the guardroom" as is said in army circles.

While I have dwelt on strengths to a large extent, the same must apply to any other changes. These should be gradual and seen as part of the normal change in security operations.

The thought does occur to me on reflection that the Dublin Government may not think it vital for there to be any major changes in the UDR if these are to result in a major upheaval which would prejudice the implementation of any agreement. FitzGerald, even Haughey if in power, would be happier with a consensus as a first step in my opinion but then I am not Irish and not a politician!

One other point occurs to me. I seem to remember that the GOC Northern Ireland had the authority to raise an additional 5,000 (?) for the UDR should this ever be necessary. If that provision is still there, then this should be watched with the greatest care. As a military person I consider there is every reason to retain this as it provides security to both the North and the South as it obviously would never be invoked without consultation on both sides. However the provision would be there without the need for legislation should it ever be needed.

This is fairly condensed and reflects opinions voiced to me or in my hearing; I have added a few comments of my own based on my NI experience and military judgment. I hope that they may be of some use to you and your colleagues in your deliberations. I think that above all one should bear in mind the loyalty of the UDR to the Crown and the role that it performs so well, relieving as it does the strain on the regular army. The utmost care and caution must be taken for the future.

As you know, I have been in touch with you directly as a friend and have no wish to become involved in political matters. As the UDR is going to take me on as one of their Colonel Commandants in April next, inevitably I have their interests at heart within the limits of my writ.

We must meet again whenever you have a minute which I do not imagine happens very often. In the meantime, all good wishes and many apologies for my typing which has been known to be better.

James Connolly