

News and Articles

UDR/RIR Welfare plan earned through the ultimate sacrifices of many - Elliott

E-mail to a friend *April 22nd, 2008 Alex Benjamin*

Ulster Unionist MLA Tom Elliott today welcomed the visit of British Army Chief Sir Richard Dannett to Northern Ireland to launch a £2 million a year scheme for former Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish Regiment Soldiers.

The Fermanagh and South Tyrone MLA said: “The £2 million a year service for former members of the UDR and RIR is a very welcome initiative. Almost three hundred men and women paid the ultimate sacrifice to defend their country against terrorism, both at home and abroad. Many hundreds more were left injured or scarred for life. I was proud to stand among them in the past and I will always be honoured to have served with some of the finest men and women this country ever produced. It is only right that past members and their families should receive care that was earned through loyalty, bravery and sacrifice.”

The service was part of the resettlement package promised by the government following the disbandment of the three home service battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment last year. One of the offices for the project is to be situated in Enniskillen, with the main office in Palace Barracks, Holywood.

Although the official launch of the project was only this week, I understand the service had been functioning since May last year. It is vital that those entrusted with the efficient functioning of the service make sure it reaches the members and that it is properly advertised.

He went on to say: “Many former members of the UDR and RIR may be unaware that the service has been in place for some time. It needs to achieve the necessary levels of efficiency required to make it fully effective. While I welcome the service, it is vital that it reaches the past members and families who need the support it can provide, and that it is promoted so that awareness of the initiative reaches all those who may be able to benefit from it. I hope that the main development of the project will not be confined to the East of the Province but will help everyone, including those in areas like Fermanagh and Tyrone.”

“I have a sincere hope that the service can provide for those whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice, along with those of us who remain as past members and the brave men and women in the 1st Battalion RIR who continue to fight in Afghanistan today. This service was earned by the heroic acts and service of many brave men and women, who were willing to live and fight for their country surrounded by those wishing to murder them. It is fantastic news that this heroism is to be recognised, and it is vital the service receives proper promotion among the members who fought, and continue to fight, for Queen and Country.”

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