

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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UDRStrength and Role

The British Government has no plans for further reducing the regular Army presence in Northern Ireland in the foreseeable future, or for increasing the strength or role of the UDR in relation to the regular Army.

2. At its inception, the UDR was intended to be mainly a part-time force: the role of the relatively small full-time element being confined to guard and administrative duties. Subsequently the introduction of an operational role for the full-time element caused its increase to its present size, with a consequent decrease in the size of the part-time element from 8117 in 1972 to 3754 today.

3. The strengths of both the full-time and part-time elements are kept under review, to reflect changes in the requirement for military support for the RUC. But it is neither politically nor operationally possible to give advance undertakings as to when or on what scale the strengths might alter on these grounds.

Training

4. With a view to improving the professionalism and the community awareness of the Regiment, and especially of the part-time members, the following new measures are being introduced which in aggregate are expected to have a substantial effect:

(a) the initial training for part-time soldiers is to be increased from 8 to 14 days;

(b) the number of regular Army non-commissioned officers serving with the UDR is to be increased in order to strengthen the supervision of training;

(c) a new post for a regular Army Lieutenant Colonel in UDR Headquarters is being established, specifically to oversee training;

(d) eligible UDR officers of the Permanent Cadre (i.e. the full-time element) will in future attend the standard military course at Sandhurst. This is a six-month course which is attended by all regular officers and the attendance of UDR officers will help to bring the Regiment into even closer alignment with regular Army operating practice and methods;

(e) there will be increased opportunities for UDR NCOs to be attached on a voluntary basis to regular battalions in Great Britain for training;

(f) there is to be a marked increase in the involvement of the RUC in UDR training: at the UDR training centre at Ballykinler, in local training in battalion areas and with each battalion during its annual camp;

(g) when the RUC's Code of Conduct becomes available, consideration will be given to incorporating relevant aspects of it into Army (including UDR) training and standing instructions.

Deployment

5. Whilst the UDR is not debarred by law from operating in any area of Northern Ireland, in practice it does not normally operate at all in the largely nationalist areas of the cities - i.e. in West Belfast or in Londonderry West of the Foyle - and there are no plans to change this.

6. For the rest, in those areas where a degree of military support for the police remains necessary, the practice is to use regular units where the threat is greatest (because that is where their military skills are most needed) and the UDR where the threat is relatively less great. Thus the military task is undertaken wholly or mainly by regular troops in southern County Armagh and eastern Fermanagh and south-east Tyrone (as well as in the city areas mentioned above).

7. Under the doctrine of police primacy, it has for some years been the universal practice that all military operations - including those of the UDR - are undertaken at the direct request of the RUC. Furthermore, it is established policy that whenever possible there

should actually be a police presence with those military operations which are inherently likely to involve contact with the public on a significant scale: for example, vehicle checkpoints (whether permanent or temporary) and patrols in populated areas. A major effort is being made to speed up the implementation of this policy and this should become increasingly evident on the ground: as much so in Fermanagh and Tyrone as anywhere else.

8. The scope for any changes in the existing pattern of military deployments is severely circumscribed by operational and other practical factors. Nevertheless, we have been able to make some limited adjustments, and we may be able to make a few more, which should be helpful in community terms. In Belfast, Kennedy Way, including the roundabout with the M1 motorway, is the tactical responsibility of a regular battalion, with UDR operations taking place to the East of that point and excluding the roundabout. For the city centre, we are looking again at how we could dispense with the UDR guard at the Castle Street entrance to the segment area. In Armagh city, patrolling of predominantly nationalist housing estates will be conducted either by the RUC alone or, when that is not practicable, by joint RUC and UDR patrols. Every opportunity will be taken to extend the same arrangement to patrolling in mainly nationalist areas of other towns, consistent with the local security situation and with the availability of police manpower.

Arrests by soldiers

9. The increasing frequency with which there is a police presence in military operations (paragraph 7 above) will, of course, mean that the military power of arrest has to be invoked even less frequently than it has been in recent times. In these circumstances the military authorities have issued administrative instructions that, except in extreme conditions such as a physical emergency, the power of arrest is in future to be exercised only by soldiers who have completed their initial training and have more than six months' service.

Complaints

10. Action is in hand to produce a leaflet for the public which explains how complaints against the Army are dealt with and gives guidance on how they should be made.

Announcements

11. The majority of the above measures have already been decided upon. For those which are also already being put into effect, we would hope that they will come to public notice in the normal course of events. We see no reason, subject to circumstances at the time, why in the following cases they should not also be mentioned, as things that are happening, in the course of the Westminster debates on the Anglo-Irish Agreement:

- para. 3: strengths kept under review
- para. 4a: longer initial training
- para. 4f: more RUC involvement in training
- para. 5: normally no deployment in West Belfast, etc. . .
- para. 7: accompanying police presence.

But we would not wish to draw attention in the debates to the deployment modification in paragraph 8 or the curtailed use of arrest in paragraph 9.

12. We also envisage making some mention in the debates of those measures which have been decided upon but may not by then have been put fully into effect:

- para. 4b: more regular NCOs
- para. 4c: new training officer post
- para. 4d: UDR officers to Sandhurst
- para. 4e: UDR NCOs to regular battalions
- para. 10: new complaints pamphlet.