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Ulster Defence Regiment

1. The current strength of the Regiment is 7,856 of whom 2,058 are full-time. An increase in the authorised full-time establishment from 1,800 to 2,500 was announced on 30 June 1977 and recruitment is being actively pushed ahead. It is understood that one quarter of the membership are former B Specials.

2. The British Ambassador was informed on 14 December that the increasing use of the UDR and especially its use in border areas, where it is understood units from east Belfast are being sent mainly for week-end duty, was one of the points to which the Taoiseach was referring when he spoke in the Dáil on that day on the need for care by the British in the disposition of the security forces.

3. Since the Regiment was formed at least 65 members or ex-members have been convicted of criminal offences. This includes the murder of 3 members of the Miami Showband near Newry in July 1975 by a gang which included two NCOs from the UDR. The following table summarises the record of convictions:

	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
Murder/Attempted Murder	-	-	-	-	3	2
Manslaughter	-	-	1	-	-	-
Illegal Possession of Weapons	-	3	5	3	8	3
Bombing Offences	-	-	3	-	3	-
Assault	1	-	1	-	-	2
Robbery	-	-	1	11	3	2
Miscellaneous	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Total:</u>	2	4	14	17	19	10

4. An RTE documentary programme on the UDR screened on 28 November 1977 further highlighted disquieting aspects of the Regiment. The then Commanding Officer of the Regiment admitted that while "inside knowledge" had been required to facilitate an arms raid on the UDR Armoury in Magherafelt in 1975 this had not resulted in a single dismissal from the regiment. A UDR major

from south Co. Derry interviewed on the programme said that he was suspicious of half of the Catholic population of the area. Also interviewed was the UDA leader Mr. Andy Tyrrie who expressed satisfaction that his members could join the Regiment and receive military training and said that the UDA encouraged its members to join the UDR. Also interviewed was a former "officer" of the UDA, Jackie McKitterick, who said that he had served in the UDR at the same time as being in the UDA for three years. He claimed that at one period he had been arrested for riotous behaviour and sentenced to four months imprisonment; he was back on duty with the UDR within two days of his release. It was revealed in the Sunday Times on 12 March, and subsequently admitted officially that the RUC Fraud Squad and the British Army Special Investigation Board are at present carrying out an examination of financial discrepancies in the accounts of the Belfast Battalion of the UDR and "related irregularities in stores and security procedures".

5. The following comments by members of the Northern Ireland Judiciary testify to the Regiment's defective vetting procedures:

- (i) At Belfast City Commission on 10 May 1977, when sentencing Richard William Long to life imprisonment on conviction of conspiracy to murder and illegal possession of firearms, Mr. Justice O'Donnell strongly criticised these procedures and reportedly said to Long "How anyone with your affiliations or associations ever came to be permitted to join [the UDR] is a mystery to me and certainly the vetting procedure which permits people like you to join this Regiment required considerable overhaul".
- (ii) In a High Court in Belfast on 26 July 1977, in refusing bail to Kenneth Young and Mervyn Faloon, who were charged with driving through a Catholic area in Portadown early on 12 July, while firing shots from a car window, Lord Justice McGonigal expressed horror at the suggestion that both men might be taken back into the UDR. (They had resigned on 13 July.) The judge said that "if that is the basis on which the UDR recruit people, that basis ought to be changed".