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T E L E X

27 April 1989

TO HQ FROM BELFAST

FOR D. O'DONOVAN FROM N. RYAN

Robin Masefield has given me a note on the Ulster Resistance organisation, on their arms procurement efforts and on their links with the DUP. The note is intended as unofficial background briefing material and I pass it on for what it is worth but it strikes me as containing nothing essentially new that could not have been obtained from relevant newspaper clippings and recent reports.

"Ulster Resistance as an organisation

Ulster Resistance was founded in 1986 at the instigation of DUP leaders and members of the Ulster Clubs, including Noel Little. It was to be an organisation with paramilitary trappings which would be a focal point for mass protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement: its purpose was to intimidate HMG into abandoning the Agreement.

2. After initial rallies, which attracted turn-outs of thousands, DUP interest in the organisation quickly faded: and by mid-1987 it has become a shadowy, essentially covert, organisation with Noel Little very much its leading personality. Its main preoccupation became arms procurement, the object being to stockpile weapons against the possibility that they would be required in a "doomsday" scenario. Ulster Resistance, together with the UDA and UVF, received weaponry from a major loyalist arms deal arranged late in 1987: and the arms finds in North Armagh in November 1988 and in February 1989 accounted for a portion of the Ulster Resistance share of that consignment.

3. We have no information to suggest that Ulster Resistance, as an organisation, has been responsible for any terrorist attacks.

4. Once the initial publicity surrounding the organisation's launch had died away and in particular when the DUP began losing interest in it, we believe that membership declined rapidly. We cannot be precise but we would estimate current membership as at no more than the lower hundreds: and most of those would be essentially passive members, only likely to become active if called upon or if they perceived there to be a real and immediate threat to their position within Northern Ireland. With little out of circulation, it is quite possible that we could be left with a collection of individuals, albeit some of whom would have access to some weapons, rather than a cohesive organisation.

Ulster Resistance and Arms Procurement

5. We believe that Little, in his arms procurement activities, was acting as an individual (in concert with a small number of trusted associates) rather than as part of an "Ulster Resistance operation". Ulster Resistance, along with other loyalist paramilitary organisations, would have been customers for the arms which Little acquired.

Ulster Resistance and Loyalist Politicians

6. We have no reason to disbelieve the DUP's contention that neither it as a political party nor its leaders have been involved with Ulster Resistance activity in recent times. However, it would not be altogether surprising if one or two minor figures in the unionist parties might be associated with the organisation in some way (as individuals rather than as representatives of their parties).

Links between loyalist paramilitary organisations and secure establishments in Northern Ireland

7. We are of course conscious of the threat posed by individuals with paramilitary (loyalist and republican) connections seeking employment in or access to such establishments."