



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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UDR/66

AMBASÁDO NA HÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

Asst Sec JH Virgin  
You may wish to note.

DD 21/11

17 Grosvenor Place,  
London SW1X 7HR.

AP JH Virgin  
We were told recently in the  
Secretariat that, while it would probably be possible to  
effect the merger without legislation, thought was being  
given nevertheless to a repeal of the Act which established  
the UDR. No decision had yet been taken in this regard.

21 November, 1991.

Mr. David Donoghue,  
Counsellor,  
Anglo-Irish Division,  
Department of Foreign Affairs,  
Dublin.

Mr Donoghue,  
What is the  
position on  
the UDR merger?  
SJR  
22/11

DD 26/11

Dear David,

I spent last weekend at the country home of Brigadier John Osborne, who, as you know, is the retired Army officer who looks after the British side of the Inter-Parliamentary Body. He spent several years as Defence Attache at the Embassy in Dublin where I gather he developed excellent relations with the Army. Personally, I find him heavy going and finally accepted his pressing invitation with foreboding.

In any event the social highlight of the weekend was a dinner party on the Saturday evening where the topic of the moment among the several senior army officers present was the Government's white paper on defence cuts and the proposals to cut the regiments from 55 to 38 including amalgamating the UDR and the Royal Irish Rangers. The cuts continue to cause ripples in those constituencies with a military presence. There is little doubt, for example, that it was a significant factor in the Government's defeat in the recent by-election in the Scottish marginal of Kincardine and Deeside where there is great local resentment at the amalgamation of the Gordon Highlanders with another Scottish regiment.

In relation to the UDR, David Trimble had a written PQ down for answer by the Armed Forces Minister, Archie Hamilton, on 12 November asking whether he intended to introduce legislation to give effect to the merger of the UDR with the Rangers. Hamilton's vague reply simply stated that existing legislation will be amended as necessary in due course. The previous day, in a written reply to Cyril Townsend, Hamilton provided a timetable for regimental restructuring which, as far as we can determine, makes no reference to the UDR although it does state that in 1993 the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Royal Irish Rangers will merge to form a single general service battalion.

One comment which I thought might be of passing interest to you was a reference by one of the officers present to the unease with which senior staff in the Royal Irish Rangers are said to view the prospect of amalgamation with the UDR. The feeling is that this will suck the Rangers into the sectarian politics of NI tarnishing their image and limiting the regiment's ability to recruit from among the Catholic community in NI and from the South.

The Rangers, however, are said to be determined to make the best of it and insofar as possible to try and foster good relations with the community.

I attach copies of the two PQs.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Hayes', is positioned above the typed name.

Joe Hayes  
Counsellor