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Citation for final published version:

Chesse, Daniel 2024. Hunting the watchmen the Ulster Defence Regiment and IRA strategy. *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 35 (4) , pp. 545-572. 10.1080/09592318.2024.2319671

Publishers page: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2024.2319671>

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## Small Wars and Insurgencies, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024

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### Hunting the Watchmen

#### The Ulster Defence Regiment and IRA strategy

##### Introduction

The Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) were activated in 1970 to restore security to Northern Ireland. Envisioned as a cross-community regiment to replace the sectarian “B Specials”, the UDR became *the* support unit in Northern Ireland (NI). The Specials were infamous for sectarian violence – such as in August 1969 when a panicking unit fired into a civilian crowd.<sup>1</sup> The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) made their disbandment a cornerstone of their civil rights programme, and the ensuing Hunt Report revolutionised local security and created the UDR under direct British control as their replacements.<sup>2</sup>

The UDR initially experienced a period of Catholic goodwill, but this was soon ended by punitive actions such as the Falls Road Curfew – where Catholics were subjected to raids

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment: An Instrument of Peace?* (London: Methuen London, 1991), 24-27; John Potter, *A Testimony to Courage: The Regimental History of the Ulster Defence Regiment*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper 2001), 7-9

<sup>2</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, pg. 5; Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment*, pg. 23; The Hunt Report, Chapter 10

and extensive policing.<sup>3</sup> The final straw was the dawn raids of *Operation Demetrius* (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> August 1971) where the Army raided Catholic homes, hunting IRA suspects as part of internment without trial with UDR support.<sup>4</sup> As Bennett summarised:

Three totemic events make repression the dominant perspective. When a mass curfew was imposed on the densely inhabited Falls Road area in Belfast in July 1970, people saw ordinary streets drenched in tear gas, soldiers kicking down doors and houses trashed in the search for arms. In August 1971 the army pulled hundreds of men from their beds to be interned without trial, amidst chaotic street violence and, it soon transpired, brutal interrogation ... The Bloody Sunday shootings and the state's failure to hold anyone to account tarnished the army's reputation ... they are defining moments in the conflict's history. Collectively they are seen to symbolise the British Army's bid to crush rebellion with harsh methods lifted from experiences in the empire...<sup>5</sup>

The proximity between the first UDR death on August 11<sup>th</sup> and *Demetrius* is not coincidental, though it is often overlooked – then Provisional IRA (PIRA) leader Sèan MacStiofain stated that UDR and RUC members were previously not legitimate targets.<sup>6</sup> Off-duty killings dominated UDR casualties. Given their frequency, the rationales behind such unorthodox militant actions must be examined. Similarly, the impact of off-duty killings on Catholic recruits must also be examined, given links to mass resignations in the period.

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<sup>3</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, pg. 41; Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London: Penguin Publishing, 2007), 224-225

<sup>4</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, pg. 53-54; *The Guardian* (1971) 'Internment introduced in Northern Ireland', 10<sup>th</sup> August

<sup>5</sup> Huw Bennett, *Uncivil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 6

<sup>6</sup> Russell Murray, R. 'Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981', (*Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* Vol. 7:1, 1984), 41-42

Finally, given this examination of UDR deaths, one must examine female and ex-UDR deaths given these were somewhat unique (given the UDR's local service) within the conflict.

## Literature Review

There is some literature on PIRA attacks and the UDR. Patterson produced a study of PIRA-on-UDR violence in Fermanagh and Tyrone, and concluded that whilst not genocidal, their actions were reckless enough to be perceived as such by Protestants.<sup>7</sup> White responded that PIRA policy evolved from only targeting on-duty B Specials during the 1950/60s, to learning from their mistakes and seeing even off-duty UDR as legitimate targets.<sup>8</sup>

There are some works on PIRA targeting and motivations – but none take much note of the UDR. Most texts mention this during discussions of PIRA capabilities. For example, Leahy noted that rural PIRA were second only to the Belfast brigades in numbers.<sup>9</sup> White's analysis concluded that PIRA targeted British soldiers and agents, with most civilians killed accidentally or due to what Republicans dubbed an "unconscious insensitivity" where they placed Protestants in greater danger than fellow Catholics.<sup>10</sup> Bruce rejected such notions, citing how PIRA economic attacks (designed to draw British compensation) targeted Protestant towns and housing – a clear sectarian bias.<sup>11</sup> I argue that this constitutes

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Patterson, *Sectarianism Revisited: The Provisional IRA Campaign in a Border Region of Northern Ireland*, (Terrorism and Political Violence Vol. 22:3, 2010)

<sup>8</sup> Robert White, *Provisional IRA Attacks on the UDR in Fermanagh and South Tyrone: Implications for the Study of Political Violence and Terrorism*, (Terrorism and Political Violence Vol. 23:329–349, 2011)

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Leahy, *The Intelligence War Against the IRA*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 186-188

<sup>10</sup> Robert White, *The Irish republican army: An assessment of sectarianism*, (Terrorism and Political Violence Vol. 9:1, 1997)

<sup>11</sup> Steve Bruce, *Victim selection in ethnic conflict: Motives and attitudes in Irish republicanism*, (Terrorism and Political Violence Vol. 9:1, 1997), 66

“unconscious insensitivity” – individuals will seek to inflict damage outside of their local area to distance themselves from the act and its consequences. PIRA would also avoid targeting their supporters and Sinn Fein voters post-1981 once they were permitted to stand.<sup>12</sup>

I mostly agree with Kowalski that PIRA kills were typically “identified” and pre-planned (87% versus 9.87% opportunistic and 3% collateral killings) – even sparing civilians when it was easier not to.<sup>13</sup> The 1989 killing of Thomas Hardy saw PIRA shoot the UDR man at work whilst avoiding his colleagues – including one stood just three feet away. This suggests that civilian deaths were aberrations. As Kowalski highlights, most came from explosives prematurely detonating despite PIRA issued warnings to clear the area.<sup>14</sup>

Kowalski has recently added the category of “sectarian killings” (a total of 68 deaths with implications in 18 more), though she found these to be relatively limited and isolated.<sup>15</sup>

Kowalski echoes White that PIRA occasionally demonstrated a cavalier attitude – such as using explosives to kill Mountbatten on his boat in 1979 which inevitably injured and killed civilians.<sup>16</sup> I concur and believe that this broadly applies to UDR targets as well. Kowalski’s brief examination of off-duty killings perceived them as opportunistic.<sup>17</sup> I expand upon this and limit examinations to off-duty UDR killings, but reach similar conclusions.

The Off-duty killing literature is effectively non-existent – including beyond NI. The only relevant texts are that of Southern, who documents the RUC, and Murray who

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<sup>12</sup> Leahy, *The Intelligence War Against the IRA*, pg. 153; March Mulholland, *Irish Republican Politics and Violence before the Peace Process: 1968–1994* (European Review of History Vol. 14:3, 2007), 410-411

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign, 1969–1997*, (Terrorism and Political Violence Vol. 30:4, 2018), 662-663

<sup>14</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, pg. 666-668

<sup>15</sup> Rachel Kowalski, *Micro-Patterns of Violence: Disaggregating Provisional Irish Republican Army Activity, 1969-1979*, (Oxford University), 167-168

<sup>16</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 669, 671

<sup>17</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 664

conducted a statistical analysis.<sup>18</sup> The RUC suffered a lower 28% off-duty kill rate, and 52 RUC Reservists died.<sup>19</sup> Murray hypothesised higher UDR deaths were due to the perception of the UDR as successors to the sectarian B Specials, and their increased off-duty time.<sup>20</sup> I concur whilst expanding upon his work which terminates mid-conflict. Furthermore, whereas Murray takes a statistical approach, mine incorporates views from Republican and UDR sources.

I begin by summarising PIRA “legitimacy frameworks” before examining off-duty killings. After this, I explore PIRA regionality and then finally specific categories of deaths such as female, Catholic, and ex-UDR. From this I determine that PIRA broadly adhered to a legitimacy framework, that killings were designed to “remove British pieces from the board” and that these conformed to PIRA’s concept of legitimacy. I note that unilateral vendettas actions certainly occurred, that these are unmeasurable given the context and that we must anticipate and accept all of the above both within the NI context and within all counterinsurgencies.

### **PIRA Legitimacy Frameworks**

The issue with paramilitaries is that they are unable to centralise and directly control many elements, this devolves control down to local units – making centralised command and discipline even more difficult.<sup>21</sup> Such “control” also hinged on the abilities and

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<sup>18</sup> Neil Southern, *Policing and Combating Terrorism in Northern Ireland*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018); Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*

<sup>19</sup> Southern, *Policing and Combating Terrorism in Northern Ireland*, pg. 76, 80; Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 21

<sup>20</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 21-23

<sup>21</sup> Martyn Frampton, *The Moral Parameters of Violence: The Case of the Provisional IRA*, (Journal of British Studies Vol. 61:1, 2022), 17

personalities of regional commanders.<sup>22</sup> There were even disputes between central and local leadership over off-duty killings.<sup>23</sup>

However, PIRA broadly conducted themselves in line with what I label as their “legitimacy framework” (understanding of acceptable vs unacceptable targets) and deviations tended to occur when central authority was weak or transitioning.<sup>24</sup> This is important when considering how they approached killing the UDR.

I forward that overall, PIRA consistently demonstrated a continuous concept of target legitimacy (“legitimacy frameworks”). PIRA’s internal guide from the late 1970s, the “Green Book” stressed that PIRA must hit legitimate (or at least explainable) targets given their need to maintain support.<sup>25</sup> Intentionally non-lethal incidents and clear incidents of intimidation aside, off-duty UDR deaths were a tactic to remove state forces, whilst post-service deaths range through a myriad of circumstances. Certainly, some PIRA took unilateral actions that violated frameworks (only targeting state forces and actors) – possibly as a response to perceived state transgressions.<sup>26</sup>

## **The Data**

The first UDR death occurred following Operation Demetrius in August 1971 as an escalated response to coercive British tactics. Private William Donnell (8 UDR – E. Tyrone) was shot by vehicle occupants refusing to stop at a VCP in Strabane.<sup>27</sup> However, off-duty

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<sup>22</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 672

<sup>23</sup> Patterson, *Sectarianism Revisited*, 345

<sup>24</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 671

<sup>25</sup> “The Green Book”

<sup>26</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 672

<sup>27</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, pg. 384-392; *Roll of Honour*, Ulster Defence Regiment Association

killings dominated UDR casualty lists. Southern explained PIRA’s need to diminish personal risk whilst ensuring they confirmed the target.<sup>28</sup> PIRA could ill-afford to lose volunteers – off-duty killings safeguarded against this.

<b>Total killed in service</b>	<b>197</b>
On duty	42
Off-duty	155
<b>Ex-UDR</b>	<b>60+</b>

*Table A – Summary of UDR deaths. Data from Operation Banner Report (2006, pg. 2-12)*

UDR battalions did not suffer equally, and regionality is a core element of the UDR experience. Those serving in the more affluent eastern regions of Belfast (7 UDR), were certainly not having the same experiences as 10 UDR’s less affluent subdivisions from which PIRA and Loyalists often heralded.<sup>29</sup>

<b>Battalion</b>	<b>Deaths</b>	<b>Off-duty Deaths</b>	<b>Ex-UDR</b>	<b>Total Killed</b>
1 (N. Antrim)	0	0	0	0
2 (S. Armagh)	28	21	17	45
3 (Down)	20	10	5	25
4 (Fermanagh)	20	15	4	24
5 (Derry/Londonderry)	27	24	12	39

<sup>28</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 76-77

<sup>29</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

6 (W. Tyrone)	32	23	7	39
7 (E. Belfast)	2	2	0	2
8 (E. Tyrone)	32	30	6	38
9 (S. Antrim)	5	5	0	5
10 (City of Belfast)	12	11	1	13
11 (N. Armagh)	9	5	7	16
Training Cadre	1	1	0	1
7/10 (Belfast 1985-1992)	8	6	1	9
4/6 (Border 1991-1992)	1	1	0	1

Table B – Deaths by Battalion. Data from Potter (2001, pg. 384-392); Roll of Honour, UDR Association – available at: <https://www.ulsterdefenceregimentassociation.com/roll-of-honour>

Deaths were mostly concentrated in the border regions, County Tyrone, and County Derry/Londonderry. Belfast casualties are unsurprisingly low given the UDR were barred from strong Nationalist areas like West Belfast.<sup>30</sup> Murray, the only other relevant study, noted in 1984 that counties Tyrone (25%), Armagh (20%) and by a small margin Belfast (16%) had the highest off-duty deaths.<sup>31</sup> The UDR were statistically overrepresented in the border regions and particularly the city of Derry.<sup>32</sup> Table B reveals how these mostly held throughout the conflict.

<sup>30</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, pg. 49, 54; Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment*, 244

<sup>31</sup> Russell Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, (Studies in Conflict & Terrorism Vol. 7:1, 1984), 30

<sup>32</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 30, 34

For the Regular army the Troubles were a predominantly urban struggle outside of South Armagh. In contrast the UDR's war was mostly a rural conflict against PIRA units unconstrained from the limits of urban density and civilian proximity.<sup>33</sup> PIRA here were innovative. For example, 4 UDR (Fermanagh) had to deploy via helicopter when going beyond Enniskillen due to the frequency of ambushes. Meanwhile, 6 UDR (W. Tyrone) conducted most patrols cross-country due to PIRA rigging the roads with landmines.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Killings**

79% of UDR deaths occurred off-duty.<sup>35</sup> This reflects the UDR's unorthodox nature – whereas Regulars faced dangers on patrol before retiring to the safety of barracks, UDR returned to vulnerable homes. Furthermore, Regulars would inevitably see their tour end or be restationed elsewhere. UDR soldiers were in danger for the entirety of their service, and often for long after.

Potter recalls many of these deaths. Take the June 1987 murder of John Tracey of 7/10 UDR (Belfast) whilst installing wiring in flats off the Lisburn Road in south Belfast by PIRA.<sup>36</sup> His death suggests battalion infiltration – as only an informer could have revealed Tracey's location given he had only been allocated the job that morning.<sup>37</sup> Whilst great attention is drawn to incidents of collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries, there are allegations of UDR feeding intelligence to militant Republicans.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Cpl. James Oldman of 4 UDR

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<sup>33</sup> Leahy, *The Intelligence War Against the IRA*, pg. 186-188; Richard Lebow, *The Origins Of Sectarian Assassination: The Case of Belfast*, (Journal of International Affairs Vol. 32:1, 1978), 43

<sup>34</sup> Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment*, 191

<sup>35</sup> British Army, *Operation Banner Report*, 2-12

<sup>36</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 302

<sup>37</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 302

<sup>38</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

(Fermanagh) was killed in an PIRA ambush in April 1987 after parking near his place of work.<sup>39</sup> This indicates Oldman had been under observation for some time – demonstrating PIRA’s intelligence capabilities.

In December 1972, William Bogle of 6 UDR (W. Tyrone) died in Killeter in front of his young family.<sup>40</sup> His killer is believed to have been an ex-UDR soldier who had resigned from the same battalion and was known for their Republican views.<sup>41</sup> Whether the suspect had direct PIRA ties is unknown, but the presence of a known UDR Republican sympathiser here and the likely involvement of an informant in Tracey’s death shows that it was possible for PIRA to infiltrate units. Therefore, what can be deduced from UDR deaths is that it was infiltrated by multiple factions – a severely overlooked element in popular narratives.

Targeting the UDR whilst out of uniform required intelligence gathering – especially given PIRA’s legitimacy framework required “good kills” to be police, Army or politicians closely associated with the conflict.<sup>42</sup> This intelligence requirement was highlighted by PIRA in the “Green Book”:

...we do not mount an operation without first having ensured that we have taken the necessary defensive precautions of accurate intelligence, security, that weapons are in proper working order... and of course that the operation itself enhances rather than alienates our supporters.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 302

<sup>40</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 77

<sup>41</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 77

<sup>42</sup> Frampton, *The Moral Parameters of Violence*, 18; The Green Book

<sup>43</sup> In Ilardi, *Irish Republican Army Counterintelligence*, 10

Kowalski's study highlighted that PIRA struck legitimate targets and that 87% of security force kills were pre-planned – requiring target research and observation.<sup>44</sup> I agree that PIRA “targeted the uniform” and those facilitating them. PIRA rationales for attacking off-duty security force members, particularly the UDR, have a rough consensus – it was a tactic to strike a “softer” target, and had a strategic purpose in denying the Army their passive intelligence capacity:

I would say that if the British Army had been there, it would have been British soldiers that they were attacking. As it was, as the UDR were increasingly relied upon by the British state – it increased its role in rural areas. Then obviously it was UDR that was going to be the object of [P]IRA attacks... In South Armagh, where the British Army was concentrated, you find that there by and large it was the British Army who bore the burden of the [P]IRA attacks – not the UDR, not the RUC.<sup>45</sup>

McKeown reached a similar conclusion:

It was very practical – they were available. British soldiers were going to be out of barracks. The [P]IRA would have killed off-duty British soldiers – the UDR were British soldiers. They were going to be more vulnerable. They were going to be on their own, even if they were still armed.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 662

<sup>45</sup> Danny Morrison, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>46</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Such pragmatism was echoed by other Republicans.<sup>47</sup> This is a significant development for understanding PIRA conduct and intentions throughout the conflict, as well as furthering the understanding of the UDR experience.

This is not to say that such tactics were totally impersonal. Morrison believed that off-duty attacks were rooted in the “rules of engagement” laid down by the Army:

There were no rules. The British Army never said to active Republicans - “We will only arrest you when you are on an [P]IRA operation, but when you are taking the kids to school, we won’t touch you because you are off duty. When you are at a wedding - we won’t touch you because you are off duty. Or when you are at a funeral – because you are off duty”. They raided funerals. They raided weddings. They raided wakes. They arrested people with their children going to school. So, does it only apply to one side? ... If [the UDR] were off-duty and I was on the run, and they saw me go into a neighbour’s house, because they were off duty would they not phone in and say to the RUC “I’ve just seen Morrison go into Murphy’s house”? They were never off-duty in a sense.<sup>48</sup>

The “off-duty” issue is significant. McKearney forwarded that UDR soldiers and RUC Reservists were just too dangerous:

Whether on or off duty, these men acted not only as the eyes and ears of the regular army but actively supported it logistically and militarily... Employed as school bus-drivers, postmen, refuse collectors and every other position in the workforce, they

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<sup>47</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021; Sean O’Callaghan in Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 664; Jonathan Trigg, *Death in the Fields: The IRA and East Tyrone*, (Newbridge: Merrion Press, 2023), 40

<sup>48</sup> Danny Morrison, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

had a perfect “cover” for travelling covertly through Republican districts, not only to observe but often to monitor.<sup>49</sup>

The question as to when one is “off-duty” was similarly raised by Republican 1, given that this raises several moral and ethical problems.

The question in our eyes is “well when does someone go off duty?” Operating in civilian clothing you were quite often dealing with intelligence gathering. Local people acting in the general course of their work could tell if something was out of kilter locally ... for that reason off-duty UDR were seen as big a threat as on-duty UDR.<sup>50</sup>

To both Republican 1 and Morrison, the UDR acted in a way that made them perpetually legitimate targets – thereby accommodating such killings within Republican legitimacy frameworks.

This is not to say other motives were not present. Cadwallader tied off-duty killings to perceptions of state collusion and spiralling violence within the nationalist community – as did Morrison.<sup>51</sup> Rumours and incidents of UDR collusion led to PIRA engaging in a “dirty war” – where typical rules of engagement were ignored. I would agree that such perceptions certainly would help advance a “gloves off” stance within PIRA, and conversely within Loyalist groups too.

Expanding upon this Morrison clarified the Republican view that PIRA were forced into fighting dirty in an asymmetric conflict:

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<sup>49</sup> Tommy McKearney, *The Provisional IRA: From Insurrection to Parliament*, (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 117

<sup>50</sup> Republican 1 (interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021)

<sup>51</sup> Anne Cadwallader, *Lethal Allies: British Collusion in Ireland*, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2013), 16; Danny Morrison, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

They had the law. They had the courts. They had armoured vehicles, they had helicopters, they had telecommunications. They had the best of equipment, and the [P]IRA being a small organisation made do ... To inflict damage against the British government and the British military machine – they attacked people as they could.<sup>52</sup>

PIRA could not hope to match state capabilities, especially one capable of deploying 250,000 troops over the course of the conflict.<sup>53</sup> McKearney highlighted that PIRA knew this, so the organisation was forced into a war of attrition – including off-duty killings.<sup>54</sup>

The [P]IRA needed to find a way of using its limited military capacity to move the political situation along to its advantage. This would have entailed a very pragmatic and realistic view of what was politically as well as military possible...<sup>55</sup>

In summary, PIRA had to eliminate UDR members, and the easiest way to do so was whilst off-duty. This was reinforced by PIRA's legal designation as a terrorist organisation, removing military privileges or off-duty protections. Furthermore, stories of state abuses and misconduct reinforced extremes and the ruthless pragmatism of off-duty targeting. As McKeown stressed – chivalry is rarely seen amidst the violence and chaos of war, and we should not expect to be comfortable with what transpires.<sup>56</sup> The UDR were particularly dangerous to PIRA. Their local knowledge and presence made them a potent intelligence asset that could not be ignored.<sup>57</sup> As UDR 2 summarised: 'I suppose from a military perspective, they were right in that we were constantly watching...'<sup>58</sup> Highlighting how

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<sup>52</sup> Danny Morrison, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>53</sup> British Army, *Operation Banner*, 1-2

<sup>54</sup> McKearney, *The Provisional IRA*, 111-112

<sup>55</sup> McKearney, *The Provisional IRA*, 112

<sup>56</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>57</sup> McKearney, *The Provisional IRA*, 117-118

<sup>58</sup> UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

failures to tackle similar threats had crippled earlier IRA campaigns, McKearney summarised:

The Provisional IRA would have been incredibly naïve, not to say extraordinarily stupid, had it failed to recognise the threat these forces posed. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Provisional IRA responded by proactively targeting UDR members and RUC Reservists, whether in or out of uniform.<sup>59</sup>

### **Historical Precedent**

This tactic was hardly revolutionary – it had been employed to great effect against the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921).<sup>60</sup> Such historical precedence, both positive and negative, must be acknowledged. PIRA's ability to cripple the RIC whilst implementing a similar strategy, versus its failures during the border campaigns of the 1950s-60s, was tacitly acknowledged:

The [P]IRA command certainly through the 1970s was largely made up of IRA personnel who had experience of the 1950s campaign, with their memories of the effects that the B Specials had on the campaign. At that time the IRA apparently had an order that they were not to directly engage the B Specials – which effectively gave the B Specials a free hand locally. I think that was deemed to be a tactical and strategic mistake.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> McKearney, *The Provisional IRA*, 118

<sup>60</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021; Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 36-37

<sup>61</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Morrison echoed this and included a point from his own research.

Michael Collins' [early IRA leader] IRA pursued RIC men coming out of mass, when they were eating dinner with their wives, when they were on holiday. I think it was a probably a characteristic of most small asymmetrical wars that these things happen.<sup>62</sup>

These precedents made targeting off-duty UDR members a certainty. Whilst this is not reflective of a "just" war, it does reflect asymmetric conflicts. Republican 1 additionally noted the vital role the UDR played within the strategy of Ulsterisation:<sup>63</sup>

A lot of British counterinsurgency was devised by Kitson – "always recruit local forces, they know the places" ... You become more than just a soldier. You become the real "eyes and ears" ... A British soldier from Liverpool in South Armagh won't know where he is, who is who or what's what. But someone from the UDR is more than just carrying the rifle – they know the area. They know the people.<sup>64</sup>

Republican 1 stressed this potent threat that the UDR posed in rural areas:

When you are dealing with rural areas with smaller populations, it would not be unusual for a person to know someone either personally or from their family... which would have been quite out of the range for British Regulars who quite simply would not have had that local knowledge. Local knowledge was a threat to the IRA.<sup>65</sup>

There are numerous examples. A 2 UDR (S. Armagh) patrol in 1989 noticed a suspicious vehicle driving between Moy and Armagh. The vehicle was stopped at a VCP,

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<sup>62</sup> Danny Morrison, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>63</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>64</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>65</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

where three of the four armed occupants were identified as known PIRA members – all later confessed to PIRA activities.<sup>66</sup> Later that same year, an 8 UDR (E. Tyrone) Coalisland patrol noticed two known PIRA men stood beside a parked car in an alleyway, leading to the discovery of two bombs on the backseat and the subsequent arrest of the men and an accomplice.<sup>67</sup>

### **UDR Perspectives**

Off-duty intelligence capabilities were universally acknowledged by UDR participants and advocates.<sup>68</sup> Downey noted that part-timers were the greatest intelligence threat, as they spent their day jobs moving within the community.<sup>69</sup> Kenny Donaldson of Innocent Victims United also tied intelligence gathering capabilities to off-duty deaths:

It stands to sense that if you are a member of an army, and you see something that is going on when you are off duty, are you going pretend that you are not seeing it? That is laughable. That you only clock in from 8pm to 5am, and then you are deemed not to be a legitimate target after that?<sup>70</sup>

As previously stated, some UDR acknowledged the tactical value behind off-duty killings:

I can see that rationale... There is an argument to be made that even off-duty [UDR] represented a clear and present danger. Does not make it right – but I can see it.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 322

<sup>67</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 322

<sup>68</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021; Noel Downey, interview with author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021; UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021; Kenny Donaldson, interview with author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021; Richard Edgar, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022

<sup>69</sup> Noel Downey, interview with author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

<sup>70</sup> Kenny Donaldson, interview with author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

<sup>71</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

However, this does not mean such rationales are perceived as honourable or even remotely moral by former UDR and their advocates. ‘How can they rationalise murder? Cold-blooded murder? Walking behind some guy opening the front door and shooting them in the back of the head? That is cold-blooded murder, not soldiering.’<sup>72</sup>

To those staying within legal limits, these tactics are violations. Both Downey and UDR 2 grant PIRA a level of respect, but only when facing the security forces in open combat:<sup>73</sup>

Dedicated - you cannot take that away. To a certain extent, they had to have courage to do what they did. What they did was cowardly a lot of the time ... But the odd time that they did put their head above the parapet and stand toe-to-toe? Well.<sup>74</sup>

UDR 2 however was firm in his rejection of off-duty killings – ‘In their mind it is always: *justifying the unjustifiable*.’<sup>75</sup> To many ex-UDR, no rationale could justify such tactics. This is understandable. These were forced to live erratic lives to avoid habits or patterns that would have led to their deaths.<sup>76</sup> The pain and suffering from such tactics was felt by every member and their families – birthday’s, school events, and numerous family moments had to be skipped. Donaldson advocated that off-duty killings rationales were part of a broader PIRA strategy of framing actions as “legitimate”: ‘Republicans are going to say that. ...but if you opposed [PIRA] – then you were a legitimate target’.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Noel Downey, interview author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

<sup>73</sup> Noel Downey, interview author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021; UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

<sup>74</sup> UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

<sup>75</sup> UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

<sup>76</sup> Noel Downey, interview author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021; Kenny Donaldson, interview with author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021; David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021; UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021; Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 26-27

<sup>77</sup> Kenny Donaldson, interview with author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

## Review

It would be logical for any organisation dependent on public support to retroactively legitimise its actions. It is impossible to know what was pre-approved and what was retroactively legitimised. Kowalski noted PIRA would phase out tactics deemed as illegitimate by the public.<sup>78</sup> The use of unwilling suicide proxies was only in 1990 and quickly abandoned following the controversial incident when kidnapped army canteen worker Patsie Gillespie drove an 1000lb bomb to a checkpoint before it remotely detonated – killing Gillespie and 5 soldiers.<sup>79</sup> Even Off-duty UDR killings were briefly paused following backlash at a Catholic UDR man’s death in late 1972 – though this was so brief it became mostly rumour.<sup>80</sup> However, the propagation of such tactics indicates not only their widespread acceptance by PIRA, but also by their supporters.

Efforts were made to remain within legitimacy frameworks – as evidenced by PIRA command standing down West Fermanagh in 1989 following civilian killings including the “Remembrance Day Bombing”.<sup>81</sup> Kowalski believed this included phasing out off-duty killings.<sup>82</sup> However, this fails to explain how off-duty UDR deaths continued until November 1991 – less than 8 months before the 1992 merger.

Year	Off-duty killings
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<sup>78</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 664

<sup>79</sup> Leahy, *The Intelligence War Against the IRA*, 162

<sup>80</sup> Patterson, *Sectarianism Revisited*, 345

<sup>81</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 316

<sup>82</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 665

1971	3
1972	22
1973	7
1974	2
1975	6
1976	13
1977	14
1978	6
1979	9
1980	6
1981	11
1982	7
1983	6
1984	8
1985	3
1986	7
1987	8
1988	10

1989	2
1990	3
1991	2
1992	0

Table C – UDR off-duty killings by year. Data from Roll of Honour, Ulster Defence Regiment Association – available at: <https://www.ulsterdefenceregimentassociation.com/roll-of-honour>

Any “phasing out” could only have occurred from 1989 at the earliest – 18 years after its introduction. I deduce that no such phasing-out occurred. Outside of isolated spikes, off-duty killings remained consistent until 1989 – indicating a lack of legitimacy concerns. The only blip was in 1974 when PIRA suspended the practice in return for Loyalists suspending their sectarian killings, but this broke down in less than two months.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, off-duty killings appear not to have been affected by accusations of a British “shoot-to-kill” policy from 1982.<sup>84</sup> This again alludes to the complex range of motivations behind these killings.<sup>85</sup>

A far more influential and motivating factor was the poor perception of the security forces – particularly the UDR. Kowalski drew connections between incidents of PIRA “sectarian violence” and allegations against the security forces.<sup>86</sup> It is plausible that provocative incidents were more likely to be excused by Republicans if taken against security forces perceived to be committing excesses of their own – including the UDR. In conclusion, whilst we cannot know whether activities were retroactively legitimised, PIRA

<sup>83</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 45

<sup>84</sup> Mark Urban, *Big Boys Rules*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 152

<sup>85</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>86</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 664, 672

remained focused on maintaining its legitimacy and would not persist in tactics that undermined this. However, as previously noted – PIRA regionality complicates any study.

### **PIRA Regionality**

PIRA were not homogenous and were as defined by regionality as the UDR. Kowalski reached similar conclusions, highlighting that PIRA guerrilla warfare empowered local units to act independently of central command – including responding to transgressions.<sup>87</sup>

PIRA leadership, or individual rank-and-file members may also have acted in response to provocative security force policy. Complaints that the security forces were following a “Shoot to Kill” policy, using excessive levels of force or even brutality, ambushing and shooting suspected PIRA members ... and even colluding with the Loyalist paramilitaries, could have fuelled tensions, and inspired retaliation...<sup>88</sup>

Kowalski noted that periods of instability in the 1970s during changes in PIRA leadership correlate to more violent local PIRA actions.<sup>89</sup> This explains the regionality of ex-UDR killings and how individuals such as Republican 1 do not accept these tactics as part of broader PIRA strategy.<sup>90</sup>

The British Army’s *Operation Banner* Report highlighted that most of Northern Ireland was relatively peaceful, whilst violence was concentrated in West Belfast, parts of the city of Derry, East Tyrone, Fermanagh, and South Armagh.<sup>91</sup> Fermanagh, East Tyrone

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<sup>87</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 671-672

<sup>88</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 672

<sup>89</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 671-672

<sup>90</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022

<sup>91</sup> British Army, *Operation Banner*, 1-2

and the regions bordering other flashpoints were dominated by the UDR – and one can see some correlation in Table A. Local PIRA behaved differently according to terrain, local culture, and personalities. As one Army saying went: ‘In Belfast the Provos are trying to make the 6 o’clock news, in east Tyrone they’re trying to kill you’.<sup>92</sup> Conversely, Patterson argued that this stemmed more from a reckless disregard for Protestant perceptions or suffering.<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, by 1978 more soldiers were killed inside 2 UDR’s (S. Armagh) area than outside of it.<sup>94</sup> South Armagh PIRA were particularly well organised and skilled, able to mount significant operations such as the Forensic Science Laboratory bombing on the outskirts of Belfast in November 1992 using an estimated 3,000lbs of explosives – making it one of the largest devices detonated during the conflict and damaging hundreds of homes within a mile radius.<sup>95</sup> As Leahy summarised: ‘The South Armagh Brigade was the IRA’s most formidable unit and was leading the organisation’s campaign by the 1990s’.<sup>96</sup> This led to 2 UDR constantly being reinforced by other battalion rotations who respected them for facing such tough opposition.<sup>97</sup> Contrast this experience with that of 1 UDR (N. Antrim) – who never suffered a single fatality.<sup>98</sup> Accounting for this regionality, we cannot expect to have one single answer but should anticipate a plethora of interpretations of a general centralised legitimacy framework. This reflects the general adherence to a legitimacy

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<sup>92</sup> Trigg, *Deaths in the Fields: The IRA and East Tyrone*, XII

<sup>93</sup> Patterson, *Sectarianism Revisited*, 353

<sup>94</sup> Lebow, *The Origins Of Sectarian Assassination: The Case of Belfast*, 43

<sup>95</sup> Conor O’Neill, *Terrorism, insurgency and the military response from South Armagh to Falluja*, (The RUSI Journal Vol. 149:5, 2004), 22-23; Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021; BBC News, *IRA Belvoir Park science labs bomb targeted NI justice* (2017); The Independent, *IRA blast damages over 1,000 homes* (1992)

<sup>96</sup> Leahy, *The Intelligence War Against the IRA*, 165

<sup>97</sup> Stephen Herron, *The role and effect of violence on the Ulster Defence Regiment in South Armagh*, (Unpublished thesis: Queen’s University Belfast, 2014), 32-33

<sup>98</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 384-392

framework and accommodates deviations from this. However, there remains the question as to whether elements of the UDR were particularly targeted either due to or in spite of the framework.

### **Were Catholics specifically targeted or intimidated?**

In the same period as the UDR's first casualty, we witness a rise in "intimidation". This supports my hypothesis that such incidents were to "remove pieces from the board", but also reveals more about PIRA targeting and motivations. Although this intimidation was used against both Protestant and Catholic soldiers, Catholics were particularly targeted.<sup>99</sup> In the 14-months post-Demetrius, Catholics accounted for 28% of UDR casualties but just 7% of its members – leading Potter to declare it is difficult to believe PIRA claims that they were not actively intimidating Catholics.<sup>100</sup> This is plausible – the use of Mass Cards (a particularly Catholic religious tradition) to communicate a threat seems particularly targeted and designed to compromise a cultural, safe space.<sup>101</sup>

Methods ranged from letters or bullets posted through doors, to harassment and warning partners that their spouse was a potential target – as happened to one wife who was pulled aside whilst shopping in 1971.<sup>102</sup> That individuals were given the option to leave before being targeted indicates that this was not a genocidal campaign but aimed to reduce security force recruitment and retention – further reinforcing my previous conclusion. However, there were violent incidents – in 1971 in Newry one soldier was burnt

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<sup>99</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 58; Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment*, 46-47

<sup>100</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 60; Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 23, 25

<sup>101</sup> DEFE 24/835 – '44<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the UDR Advisory Council', 4<sup>th</sup> October 1973; DEFE 24/836 – '51<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the UDR Advisory Council', 17<sup>th</sup> October 1974

<sup>102</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 58-59

out of his home, and in Fermanagh another was dragged from his home by his neighbours, then beaten and scoured with a scrubbing brush.<sup>103</sup>

This final individual was Catholic, and this may have motivated a more violent approach. Some of these described incidents however, including this violent episode, were perpetrated by community members. Therefore, one must be cautious in stating the extent to which PIRA members were intimidating UDR members, compared to “vigilante” Catholics with PIRA support. Ex-PIRA volunteer Sean O’Callaghan recalled Catholic security force members were seen as traitors, and that more satisfaction was taken in their deaths.<sup>104</sup> Catholics accounted for 10 of the 47 soldiers who left due to ‘intimidation or living in a hostile area’ in a UDR report from June 1973.<sup>105</sup> This indicates that a campaign did exist, however I forward that it was compromised of PIRA and community-led actions (as well as contemporary loyalist violence against the community), and that it will sometimes be impossible to distinguish between these.

Catholic UDR faced heightened threats. Republican interviewees forwarded that PIRA could not tolerate any organisation gathering intelligence from within the community.<sup>106</sup> By driving “Crown Forces” from these areas through intimidation it ended such fears.<sup>107</sup> However, it is worth noting that Republican 1 believed that British military transgressions (such as the Falls Road Curfew) effectively achieved this for PIRA, and ended the need for such a campaign – ‘...with the British targeting the Catholic community, you

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<sup>103</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 58-59

<sup>104</sup> O’Callaghan in Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 662

<sup>105</sup> DEFE 24/835 – ‘Statistical Analysis of UDR Wastage and Recruitment’ [6<sup>th</sup> June 1973]

<sup>106</sup> McKearney, *The Provisional IRA*, 117-118; Danny Morrison, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021; Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>107</sup> Gaetano Ilardi, *Irish Republican Army Counterintelligence*, (International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence Vol. 23:1-26, 2010), 3

didn't need to intimidate people – the British drove them out [of security forces] for you'.<sup>108</sup>

McKeown echoed this in his interview:

In the past pre-1969 many Catholics joined the British forces... it would not have been thought of as political or absurd ... then the lines were drawn, and you had to pick a side. Living in the Catholic community, it would have been known that they were in the UDR, and they would have been much easier to target, intimidate and harass...<sup>109</sup>

Ó Faoleán noticed patterns of opportunism and pragmatic targeting by PIRA.<sup>110</sup>

Several infamous killings including that of Sean Russell occurred in heavily Republican areas – providing greater access and intelligence on the target, and better avenues of escape.

Some Protestants victims were also clearly “soft targets”.<sup>111</sup> To Ó Faoleán, this indicates less a pattern of intimidation, but of hitting vulnerable targets. Murray's data supports this – despite accounting for only a third of NI, Catholic wards in Northern Ireland accounted for two-thirds of UDR and police deaths.<sup>112</sup> Murray also noted that the lack of Senior RUC deaths was likely the result of less intelligence and access.<sup>113</sup>

UDR sources believed that both off-duty and Catholic deaths were connected to intelligence. As UDR 2 summarised:

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<sup>108</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022

<sup>109</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022

<sup>110</sup> Gearóid Ó Faoleán, *The Ulster Defence Regiment and the Question of Catholic Recruitment: 1970–1972*, (Terrorism and Political Violence Vol. 27:5, 2015), 847-849

<sup>111</sup> Ó Faoleán, *The Ulster Defence Regiment and the Question of Catholic Recruitment*, 848

<sup>112</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 36-37

<sup>113</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 23

[PIRA] do not want any of the Crown Forces living in their communities. It was strategic. It was not “let’s go out and kill a UDR man.” These people were selected above all others because [PIRA] cannot accept Catholics in the Crown Forces.<sup>114</sup>

UDR 1 echoed such views:

If there were policemen or UDR men living in an area, they would pick up information and pass things on. [Targeting Catholic UDR] was classic paramilitary strategy – you need to ensure that information is not being passed to the other side.<sup>115</sup>

This explains the comparatively high rate of Catholic UDR casualties – PIRA wished to establish areas where they could operate relatively freely and remove state those who could hamper their operations or identify their homes and meetings. As Ó Faoleán summarised: ‘There is no doubt that the Provisional IRA’s shooting of Catholic UDR members in working class areas, from whence the IRA derived their principal support, impacted upon the regiment’s recruitment and membership levels’.<sup>116</sup> As already established PIRA were aware of the UDR’s latent intelligence capabilities and the threat that this could pose – leading Murray to connect this to off-duty killings.<sup>117</sup>

Catholics were therefore disproportionately targeted for strategic purposes and opportunism – not sectarianism. Intimidation was to remove “pieces from the board”. This was a factor in the rapid decline of Catholic UDR membership – Ryder forwarded that it was in combination with British and UDR transgressions, whilst Patterson noted it was combined

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<sup>114</sup> UDR 2, interview with author 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

<sup>115</sup> UDR 1, interview with author 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022

<sup>116</sup> Ó Faoleán, *The Ulster Defence Regiment and the Question of Catholic Recruitment*, 851

<sup>117</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*

with recruiting B Specials and casual UDR harassment of Catholics that achieved this result.<sup>118</sup> Butler meanwhile forwarded that Catholic antipathy had set in – partly reinforced by the policy of internment.<sup>119</sup> I concur that it was a mix. In 1970, 28% of the UDR were Catholics, but by 1975 it was around 3% and by 1980 the figure stood at a mere 2%.<sup>120</sup> The regiment going forward was almost homogenously Protestant despite its best efforts.<sup>121</sup>

### **Killing Greenfinches**

The UDR were the first British regiment to incorporate female soldiers (“Greenfinches”), and they proved invaluable.<sup>122</sup> Whilst barred from combat, they conducted searches on females, thereby freeing up other soldiers and eliminating PIRA from smuggling items via women at checkpoints. They made excellent signallers and manned UDR operations rooms.<sup>123</sup> However, despite this Greenfinches were not actively targeted. This may have been due to their non-combat role, but PIRA were known to kill individuals for providing physical support or services to security forces – such as former 5 UDR (Derry) private Hubert Gilmore in 1990.<sup>124</sup> Meanwhile INLA assassinated Conservative Northern Ireland spokesman Airey Neave and PIRA murdered Conservative MP Ian Gow for their political roles.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment*, 47, 60-61; Patterson, *Sectarianism Revisited*, 344

<sup>119</sup> William Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition in the British Army: 1854–1992* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016) 106

<sup>120</sup> DEFE 68/916 – *Catholic Membership of the UDR (as a percentage)*; Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition*, 106

<sup>121</sup> Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition*, 106-108

<sup>122</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 115

<sup>123</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 115, 117

<sup>124</sup> Ulster Defence Regiment Association, Roll of Honour – available at: <https://www.ulsterdefenceregimentassociation.com/roll-of-honour>

<sup>125</sup> The Guardian, *Car bomb kills MP Airey Neave* (1979); Ben Lowry, *The IRA murder of Ian Gow MP really was futile, and vindictive*, (News Letter, 2020)

However, only four Greenfinches were killed – and only one was the intended target. The first was Private Eva Martin of 6 UDR (W. Tyrone) in 1974 killed by shrapnel from incoming mortar and rocket fire during the attack on Clogher’s UDR base.<sup>126</sup> O’Callaghan was part of this attack and noted the celebrations upon hearing of her death.<sup>127</sup> The next was L/Cpl. Gillian Leggett of 2 UDR (S. Armagh) in 1976 when heavy fire struck her ambushed convoy.<sup>128</sup> The only Greenfinch to be an active target was Private Margaret Hearst of 2 UDR (S. Armagh) in 1977, killed by a gunman who pursued her into her caravan and shot her as she covered on the bed near her infant daughter.<sup>129</sup> That same weekend, her desk was forced open at her UDR base and her diary stolen.<sup>130</sup> While the fourth and last Greenfinch to die was L/Cpl. Heather Kerrigan of 6 UDR (W. Tyrone) in 1984, killed on patrol by a remotely detonated IED.<sup>131</sup>

Attacks were not incredibly rare – in 1980 there were fifteen off-duty attacks, including two Greenfinches.<sup>132</sup> However, their significantly lower death rate indicates they were not considered valuable targets. McKeown forwarded that this may have been due to traditional gender concepts – that targeting a woman, and one abstaining from combat, would have been seen as dishonourable or controversial.<sup>133</sup> This follows Kowalski’s point regarding PIRA PR awareness.<sup>134</sup> McKeown also drew connections to conversations in the Maze prison during the Hunger Strike era, where some raised issues with allowing female

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<sup>126</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 127; Trigg, *Deaths in the Fields: The IRA and East Tyrone*, 46-48

<sup>127</sup> Trigg, *Deaths in the Fields: The IRA and East Tyrone*, 48

<sup>128</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 170; Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment*, 91

<sup>129</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 196; Ryder, *The Ulster Defence Regiment*, 99-100

<sup>130</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 197

<sup>131</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 261

<sup>132</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 226-227

<sup>133</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>134</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 664-665

Republican detainees to endanger themselves by hunger striking.<sup>135</sup> This suggests that PIRA possessed traditional gender views and considerations. However, we know of east Tyrone's celebration following the Clogher attack – however they may have simply been celebrating a “confirmed kill”. Such reservations did not exist for female informers – but as Frampton noted in the context of the clandestine killing of the alleged informer Jean McConville in 1972, PIRA were mostly influenced and constrained by what the community would accept – and this bled over to the legitimacy framework.<sup>136</sup>

### **Killing ex-UDR**

The killings of ex-UDR have been so overlooked that as Donaldson and Crabbe highlighted, they have less reliable data.<sup>137</sup> Potter placed the figure at 63 soldiers, including 14 who transferred to the RUC and a further 5 who died serving in the RIR.<sup>138</sup> The UDR Regimental Association's “Role of Honour” places the tally at 62 deaths.<sup>139</sup> Crabbe as Chairman of the UDR Memorial Trust meanwhile placed the figure as at least 60 members depending on definition but stated that it could be ‘...*considerably higher*’.<sup>140</sup>

Ex-UDR killings varied in timescale – with some victims dying years after resigning. The longest period between resignation and assassination was that of Private Desmond Caldwell formerly of 6 UDR (W. Tyrone) who died in 1986 (having resigned in 1970) in a case

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<sup>135</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>136</sup> Frampton, *The Moral Parameters of Violence*, 23-24

<sup>137</sup> Kenny Donaldson, interview with author 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021; David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

<sup>138</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 383

<sup>139</sup> Ulster Defence Regiment Association, Roll of Honour – available at <https://www.ulsterdefenceregimentassociation.com/roll-of-honour>

<sup>140</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

of mistaken identity.<sup>141</sup> The longest period for a confirmed target was Private William Boyd's, formerly of 8 UDR (E. Tyrone) in 1991 having resigned 12 years earlier in 1979.<sup>142</sup> Captain Marcus McCausland, formerly of 5 UDR (Derry) in was killed in February 1972 having resigned 13 months prior. He was abducted by the Official IRA near the border, interrogated for 4 hours, then killed and dumped in the snow. McCausland was accused of working for British intelligence – a claim dismissed by the Army.<sup>143</sup> This does however explain his killing, but others lacked such clear motivations. Republican participants universally stated such killings were not part of PIRA strategy.<sup>144</sup> Republican 1 advanced three scenarios:<sup>145</sup>

1. PIRA lacked direct intelligence due to the difficulty in infiltration, and therefore was limited to local intelligence. These reports could be outdated by the time they were acted on.
2. Incidents where former members became linked with Loyalist paramilitaries. Therefore, the victim would be listed as UDR – but was targeted for being a Loyalist.
3. It cannot be ruled out that some PIRA were taking matters into their own hands – possibly for personal reasons.

Republican 1 was particularly keen to stress that this was not a form of intimidation – 'The point is to intimidate someone out of the organisation, [not] leaving someone feeling

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<sup>141</sup> Ulster Defence Regiment Association, Roll of Honour – available at <https://www.ulsterdefenceregimentassociation.com/roll-of-honour>

<sup>142</sup> Ulster Defence Regiment Association, Roll of Honour – available at <https://www.ulsterdefenceregimentassociation.com/roll-of-honour>

<sup>143</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 72

<sup>144</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021; Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021; Danny Morrison, interview with author 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>145</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

safer within it.’<sup>146</sup> There are flaws with this. Most PIRA attacks on security force members were pre-planned (87%) and preceded by extensive surveillance.<sup>147</sup> These incidents indicate that PIRA either possessed a very limited intelligence capability, or that “rogue members” were more frequent than suggested.

As Crabbe acknowledged, there were marginal cases where individuals had recently resigned – but this only accounts for a fraction.<sup>148</sup> As you can see from the table below, a significant element died years later.

<b>Timespan</b>	<b>Ex-UDR</b>	<b>Subsequent security force association</b>
Same calendar year	11	1
Next calendar year	14	2
2 years	6	2
3-5 years	15	7
6-10 years	9	3
11+ years	7	1

*Table D – Deaths of ex-UDR based on calendar year. Data taken from Roll of Honour, UDR Association – available at: <https://www.ulsterdefenceregimentassociation.com/roll-of-honour>*

The data is somewhat limited by lacking specific dates of resignation but shows a clear trend that the UDR were most likely to be killed shortly after their resignation. This complies with the rationale that most were the result of stale intelligence and the fog of war. Of course, other Republican organisations and some Loyalist paramilitary groups did

<sup>146</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>147</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 662

<sup>148</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

attack and kill serving and former UDR members.<sup>149</sup> These organisations, particularly Loyalist paramilitaries, could have less stringent legitimacy frameworks.<sup>150</sup>

The significant number of ex-UDR deaths beyond 3 years possibly indicates limited PIRA intelligence capabilities that rendered them unable (or unwilling) to expend resources confirming the target's status. As McKeown stated, 'I have no doubt that there were occasions in which [PIRA's] intelligence system was flawed.'<sup>151</sup> PIRA could never match state intelligence. However, Republican 1's statements regarding the difficulty of inserting agents into security forces is unsatisfying.<sup>152</sup> As Crabbe alleged, 10 UDR (City of Belfast) was possibly successfully infiltrated by Republican informants – as indicated by John Tracey's death in June 1987.<sup>153</sup> PIRA intelligence networks were more sophisticated than Republican 1 claimed, but still limited.

The darkest scenario, and one more probable in the latter categories, is that some were killed in vendetta attacks. McKeown highlighted that it is impossible to rule out such incidents.<sup>154</sup> Murray believed that PIRA engaged in retaliatory attacks, not least the Kingsmill Massacre in which workmen were taken off their bus before Protestants were specifically targeted and executed, and cited a PIRA spokesman's summary of the incident – 'Why not? It stopped the sectarian killings in the area, didn't it?'.<sup>155</sup> The retaliation was in response to the killing of five south Armagh Catholics.<sup>156</sup> It is highly unlikely that PIRA or other Republican groups would ever confess to members engaging in such tactics, not least

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<sup>149</sup> Potter, *A Testimony to Courage*, 191

<sup>150</sup> Kowalski, *The role of sectarianism in the Provisional IRA campaign*, 660, 662

<sup>151</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>152</sup> Republican 1, interview with author 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<sup>153</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

<sup>154</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>155</sup> Murray, *Killings of local security forces in Northern Ireland 1969–1981*, 40

<sup>156</sup> Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London: Penguin, 2007), 709

as it would reveal the limits of internal discipline – even for the Kingsmill Massacre, PIRA used a cover name.<sup>157</sup>

Kalyvas forwarded that weaker target discrimination indicates a fundamental weakness in the aggressor given they are unable to muster the necessary resources for accurate targeting.<sup>158</sup> PIRA statements after the deaths of Private Norman Hanna of 11 (N. Armagh) UDR in 1982, or of Cpl. Samuel Lundy of 2 (S. Armagh) UDR in 1980, calling for ex-UDR to inform PIRA of their resignations corroborate this theory. Ilardi noted PIRA's need to feign greater capabilities for support, and I forward that ex-UDR deaths reveal that this feign also applies to their intelligence.<sup>159</sup> I agree with McKeown's statement that overall – it was a mixture of flawed intelligence, errors and even vendetta-style killings.<sup>160</sup> As Kalyvas notes can be: 'both politically and privately driven'.<sup>161</sup> However, I also advance that greater permissibility existed following rumours and incidents of UDR collusion.

However, this is not how it was perceived by the UDR. As Crabbe stated – 'I do not accept that. There were some who were "marginal" ...but their intelligence was not that bad'.<sup>162</sup> To ex-UDR, the killing of individuals withdrawn from the conflict appeared to be malevolent – and as I have noted, this cannot be ruled out. Incidents of PIRA brutality did occur:

The Enniskillen Bombing is a very good example - where they openly knew they were going to murder innocent civilians. To the day they die, they will never say that it was

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<sup>157</sup> Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 709

<sup>158</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 170-171

<sup>159</sup> Ilardi, *Irish Republican Army Counterintelligence*, 2

<sup>160</sup> Dr Laurence McKeown, interview with author 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

<sup>161</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, "'The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars", (*Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 1:3, 2023), 475

<sup>162</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

their intention. But they knew... That bomb was placed exactly where they knew 50-100 civilians stand in front of it. The civilians were between there and where we would have been on parade... That takes away again their justification. They knew those civilians were going to be taken out.<sup>163</sup>

UDR 2 was present that day in November 1987.<sup>164</sup> However, UDR 2 may be noting PIRA regionality – specifically that local PIRA were not as adherent to centralised legitimacy frameworks. As previously noted, the ASU responsible was stood down following a spree of civilian deaths.

<b>Battalion</b>	<b>Ex – UDR Deaths</b>
1 (N. Antrim)	0
2 (S. Armagh)	17
3 (Down)	5
4 (Fermanagh)	4
5 (Derry/Londonderry)	12
6 (W. Tyrone)	7
7 (E. Belfast)	0
8 (E. Tyrone)	6
9 (S. Antrim)	0
10 (City of Belfast)	1
11 (N. Armagh)	7
Training Cadre	0

<sup>163</sup> UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

<sup>164</sup> UDR 2, interview with author 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

7/10 ( <i>Belfast 1985-1992</i> )	1
4/6 ( <i>Border 1991-1992</i> )	0

*Table E – Deaths of former UDR members by battalion, data taken from Potter (2001, pg. 384-392)*

Those areas with the most ex-member deaths also mirror areas of higher UDR casualties (see Table B) – it therefore cannot be ruled out that these areas had more violent PIRA units. When discussing PIRA, much like the UDR, one must always consider regionality, and that UDR deaths will always be higher in rural areas where they were the main military response. Of all the types of UDR deaths, this author finds this type the most inconclusive – leading me to hypothesise that a plethora of motivations must have been at play largely based on PIRA regionality.

## **Conclusion**

There are several points to be gained from studying UDR deaths. Firstly, regionality and its effects on PIRA, and how this adds to our understanding of the organisation and the conflict. Secondly, that PIRA generally adhered to a legitimacy framework but that deviations reveal the limits of PIRA discipline and intelligence. This furthers our understanding of the organisation’s behaviour. Thirdly, that intimidation was a desirable by-product of removing “Crown Forces” from certain areas, and that the Catholic statistical overrepresentation reflects opportunism – not malice. Finally, that targeting women was generally barred due to fears of upsetting PIRA support. Much of this has been overlooked despite its revelations about PIRA and the UDR, and it will warrant further examination as additional archival material is released. However, the revelations regarding PIRA culture and support cannot be understated.

One of the key legacy issues is that PIRA and UDR can and do understand each other's actions – but will never legitimise. A shared understanding of motives appears to have emerged and both offer broadly fair assessments but can neither condone nor truly accept each other's actions. As Crabbe declared: 'They claim they fought for civil rights ... Martin Luther King, the greatest civil rights leader in history – and he didn't use violence.'<sup>165</sup> This gulf will likely never be bridged, and any future legacy work must accept this.

I also highlight several intrinsic issues within modern asymmetrical warfare and COIN operations. As already acknowledged, necessity and ruthless pragmatism underpinned PIRA targeting. Such ruthless tactics resembled night attacks against local Home Guard units during the Mau Mau Uprising, and off-duty attacks occurred against the Afghan National Army during the Taliban insurgency.<sup>166</sup> Similarly, EOKA assassinated members of the local police during the Cyprus Emergency, as did the Zionist insurgency during the emergency in Mandatory Palestine.<sup>167</sup>

As one US military advisor during the Iraq Insurgency noted 'What the Iraqi army can't do is protect soldiers when they go home, or protect their families...'<sup>168</sup> Clearly such tactics are implemented across insurgencies, and hostile non-state forces will use irregular tactics that target state forces when they are weakest. Internal conflicts have an intrinsic proximity between combatants, as both sides live within the same areas. In an

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<sup>165</sup> David Crabbe, interview with author 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023

<sup>166</sup> David Anderson, *Making the Loyalist Bargain: Surrender, Amnesty and Impunity in Kenya's Decolonization 1952–63*, (The International History Review Vol. 39:1, 2017), pg. 52; Xinhua, *Two off-duty soldiers killed in Taliban attack in Afghanistan's Kabul*, (2020); Pahjwok Afghan News, *Taliban kill 3 off-duty soldiers in Wardak*, (2020)

<sup>167</sup> Andrew Novo, *Friend or foe? The Cyprus Police Force and the EOKA insurgency*, (Small Wars & Insurgencies Vol. 23:3, 2012), 420-421, 428; David Charters, *Eyes of the underground: Jewish insurgent intelligence in Palestine: 1945–47*, (Intelligence and National Security Vol. 13:4, 1998), 170

<sup>168</sup> Jeremy Sharp, *The Iraqi Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences*, (CRS Report for Congress, 2007), 5

unconventional theatre, there are unconventional threats – including off-duty killings. States must take steps to safeguard off-duty soldiers, particularly those serving in LDF's who often live outside of secure barracks.

Asymmetrical warfare has dominated recent decades. Insurgents will seek to eliminate their opponents as part of attrition through ruthless pragmatism – regardless of the individuals' status at that time. I believe that given the sparsity of literature my work may be among the first in the field – despite the need for detailed examination and study. Until such discourse emerges, we will continue to fail to meet such challenges, and local forces will continue to die whilst off-duty.

#### **Disclosure Statement**

The author confirms there are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report.