

Alleged high-level leaks in the mid-1980s

- 11.37 In the mid-1980s, the Security Service received intelligence that an unnamed and potentially very senior RUC officer might be assisting loyalist paramilitaries to procure arms. I should note that this arms procurement appears to have been unsuccessful and was unrelated to the separate partially successful importation of arms by loyalists in late 1987/early 1988.
- 11.38 The Security Service discussed the intelligence they had received with the then Deputy Head of Special Branch (DHSB). Security Service telegrams record the DHSB as having said that *"the possibility of a high level RUC contact was a real one"*.¹⁹
- 11.39 The DHSB privately mentioned a specific high-level RUC officer who might have been responsible for providing assistance to the loyalist paramilitaries. The reports were sufficiently serious to prompt a Security Service investigation and a series of discussions and memos between the DCI, the Director of the Counter-Terrorism FX Branch, Patrick Walker, and the then Director General, Sir John Jones.
- 11.40 The intelligence was insufficiently specific to establish the source of the leak and the investigation appears to have ultimately petered out. However, the subsequent flow and analysis of intelligence did tend to support the theory that a high-level RUC 'contact' was assisting loyalists. More than seven months after the initial intelligence, further discussions took place about the loyalist grouping that the RUC contact may have been associated with. The DHSB was recorded as continuing to believe that the reports of a high-level RUC connection were *"quite credible"*.
- 11.41 Whilst the potential link to a specific officer could not be proven, Security Service officers evidently still believed that the high-level RUC connection was of serious concern. A Service officer noted in an internal memo that:
- "... we must resist widening the circle of knowledge [over loyalist arms procurement] throughout the RUC as [the Security Service's Head of the Assessments Group] wishes to do. The story of [a very senior officer] in the RUC being involved is still so consistent that [a Security Service asset] could end up in real trouble."*²⁰
- 11.42 Whilst I acknowledge that the intelligence did not enable the individual officer concerned to be confidently identified, I consider that the documentary record as a whole does suggest that it is likely that a high-level RUC contact assisted loyalist paramilitaries to an extent in their efforts to procure arms in the mid-1980s.