

LIMERICK LEADER

ESTABLISHED 1899

MONDAY APRIL 30, 2001

INSIDE IN COLOUR

Thomond take title

LIMERICK CITY LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPT.

Revealed: Des O'Malley was target of a sniper

By MARTIN BYRNES

DESMOND O'Malley was the subject of an ongoing assassination threat in the aftermath of the Arms Crisis in the early 1970s.

On one occasion, gardai discovered a sniper's rifle in a house directly across from where the then Minister for Justice was staying in Dublin. On security advice, Mr O'Mal-

ley was moved from house to house on a weekly basis for his own safety.

And Mr O'Malley himself carried a loaded pistol for his own protection at that time sleeping every night with it under his pillow.

Every six months, he underwent additional training in its use.

These revelations came to light for the first time on Sunday

night when a controversial documentary, Des O'Malley — a public life, was screened on RTE. The programme had been re-edited at short notice to include Mr O'Malley's response to the claim that parts of a military statement, made in 1970, had been altered — a section which suggested that the then Minister for Defence Jim Gibbons had known of, and had authorised arms impor-

tation for possible use in Northern Ireland by nationalist "defence committees". He had not changed any statement, nor had he authorised anyone to do so, he said.

Mr O'Malley also told last night's programme that arms importation had never been approved by Cabinet, and that he would welcome a full enquiry into all the circumstances leading up to

the Arms Trial. In the Arms Trial five were accused: Neil Blaney, sacked Minister for Agriculture, had the charges dropped on indictment. Four others, sacked Minister for Finance, Charles Haughey, military intelligence officer Captain James Kelly, Belfast republican John Kelly and Belgian businessman Albert Luyckx, were tried and acquitted by a jury after an

abortive first trial.

Des O'Malley was elected to the Dáil in 1967 in succession to his uncle Donagh O'Malley. He was made a junior minister a year later, aged just 26, and was propelled to the most sensitive position in the State after the sackings of the Arms Crisis, when Jack Lynch removed his Justice Minister, Mayo's Michael O'Morain, on health grounds.

ELDERLY

