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THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MAU MAU INSURGENTS IN KENYA

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8 March 1971

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USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MAU MAU INSURGENTS IN KENYA

AN IAS-INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT REPORT

by

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8 March 1971

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A TRACT

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This report supports the Army Roles, Missions and Doctrine in Low Intensity Conflict (ARMLIC) Study. It examines the tactics and organization of the Mau Mau terrorists (1952-60) as well as the countermeasures adopted by the security forces, with emphasis on British military contributions. Data were gathered by a literature search from sources available to the USAWC library. British military successes were due less to purely military means than to an effective integration of all available means. Initially there were too few police to provide the required security and it became necessary for military forces to perform static type duty, a poor use of the military. The initiative quickly changed when offensive operations were undertaken. The British troops were well trained but lacked the command/control systems, combat intelligence, and special tactics needed to defeat the Mau Mau in his forest environment. British training methods had to be revised. Psychological operations and intelligence were closely related. British populace and resource control were strikingly successful. Sweep type operations in the forest and bombing proved futile. Area domination and population sweeps proved more useful. British victory ultimately came about because of good use of effective intelligence, use of Mau Mau converts to fight Mau Mau, and isolation of the Mau Mau from the population.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Officially it started on 21 October 1952 when the newly arrived Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring, in a broadcast to the colony proclaimed a State of Emergency....but it began sometime before that.... It could be said to have begun when the first European settlers came to the country and in good faith tried to impose their own ways and their own ideas of civilization, on a group of primitive peoples still living in something akin to the Stone Age.[1]

With these words from the Prologue to his book State of Emergency, Fred Majdalany gives some insight into the rebellion that was to officially last for eight years and claim the lives of more than 12,000 persons.

This individual research report conducted under the aegis of the US Army Combat Developments Command Institute of Advanced Studies (USACDCIAS), will examine the military aspects of that rebellion, the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, during the period 21 October 1952-15 January 1960. The study is an effort to document some of the lessons learned by the British in Kenya and will support previous research efforts in support of the USACDCIAS Study entitled Army Roles, Missions and Doctrine in Low Intensity Conflict (ARMLIC).

BACKGROUND

Unlike the Malayan Emergency which was an insurgency against the government by Communist forces, the uprising in Kenya was the

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[1]Fred Majdalany, State of Emergency (1963), p. xv.

violent manifestation of a limited nationalistic revolutionary movement confined almost entirely to the Kikuyu tribe.[2] It was no sudden uprising; rather it was the culmination of a long period of political unrest among the Kikuyu people of Kenya. It was the product of economic and social problems coupled with a deep resentment against the while settlers for occupying the best land in the colony.[3] Although intelligence reports noted a rise in anti-European sentiment as early as 1946 with the return of the Kikuyu leader Jomo Kenyatta, from a prolonged stay in England, the term Mau Mau was first mentioned in a 1949 intelligence report. From the British view, the insurrection was the result of Jomo Kenyatta's desire to end British rule, drive out the Europeans, seize their land, and establish an independent Kenya under Kikuyu leadership. The Kikuyu tribe of some 1,250,000 members accounted for only one-fifth of the population, one-sixteenth of the land area, and was an unpopular minority.

Kenyatta joined the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) in 1925 and three years later became Secretary General. In 1929 Kenyatta, representing the KCA, visited England and presented a list of Kikuyu grievances to the Colonial Secretary. Claims for land, interference with tribal customs, and demands for African representation in the Kenya Parliament were included. He returned to

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[2]F. D. Corfield, Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau (1960), p. 7.

[3]Walter A. Dumas, LTC, A Study of the Campaign Against the Mau Mau Insurgents in British Kenya, Case Study (3 March 1967), p. 1.

England in 1931 and stayed for 15 years studying, lecturing, and pressing for reforms in Kenya. During Kenyatta's absence, the KCA was proscribed by the government because of its subversive activities. In 1946 the Kenya Africa Union (KAU), a front organization for the barred KCA, was formed. Kenyatta became active in the KAU upon his return from England and became president in 1947. Kenyatta's first task when he returned was uniting the Kikuyu. Politics alone, however, would not bring about unification of the tribe. Mau Mau was the vehicle used for unification and since the Kikuyu are a religious people, he used religion as one of his main weapons. The religion called Mau Mau was a travesty of both their own lost faiths and Christianity itself.[4] They were spiritually vulnerable and easy victims for the witch doctor. What made the Mau Mau movement work is the Kikuyu's natural talent for secrecy.

Mau Mau grew rapidly under Kenyatta's leadership. A Mau Mau oath was the primary method of indoctrinating the masses and the first oaths were negative in their conditions. The oath did not require that the initiate do anything; it demanded his silence and sympathy. Early in 1952, however, an ominous development came to notice. As Mau Mau spread and became increasingly violent, a positive undertaking to act became a feature of the oath for the first time. The negative path of secrecy thus became a positive call for action, a killing oath. Oaths were skillfully graduated

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[4]Majdalany, p. 71

in their demands for violence and fanaticism.[5]

As the list of incidents involving Mau Mau increased, the government took measures to counter the growing threat. Witch doctors were sent to the Kikuyu Reserve and the White Highlands to conduct "cleansing" ceremonies for those Africans wishing to rid themselves of the obligations of the Mau Mau oath. Anti-Mau Mau films were shown using mobile projectors. Throughout this period, however, the government was slow to recognize the real threat of Mau Mau. In the latter part of 1951 the Governor wrote that the problems of Kenya and East Africa were agrarian and social rather than nationalistic.

The power of the government to arrest was limited until the law had been broken and specific evidence produced. Informants were difficult to recruit, witnesses disappeared before trials, and the laws governing testimony in the British court systems made prosecution almost impossible. The rigidity of the law precluded the government from taking effective action to prevent a breakdown in order and security until a declaration of emergency had been officially declared.[6]

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[5]L. S. B. Leakey, Defeating Mau Mau (1954), pp. 81-82. Examples used by Leakey:

First Stage

I will not give away the secrets of the Society.
I will not help the Government apprehend members of this Society.
I will, if called upon to do so, render any help to members of the Society that I am asked to do.

Second Stage

If I am called upon to do so, with four others I will kill a European.
If I am called upon to do do, I will kill a Kikuyu who is against Mau Mau, even if it be my mother, father, sister, wife or child.
I will never disobey the orders of the leaders of this society.

[6]Corfield, p. 280

A Mau Mau campaign of intimidation against African officials began in early 1952. Arson was the chosen method. Kenyatta's prophecy that freedom could only be won by bloodshed was coming true.[7] The list of violence attributable to Mau Mau grew rapidly from mid 1952. Oathing ceremonies were held en masse. Reports were received of groups of 800 being oathed at one time. British appointed tribal chiefs were assassinated, European farms were attacked and there was open defiance of the government ban of the Mau Mau movement issued in August 1950.

Kenya's Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, retired and departed Kenya in June 1952. In March he had indicated that the general political feeling in Kenya was better than he had known it for many years.[8] On 17 August 1952, the Acting Governor provided the Colonial Office with its first indication of the seriousness of the situation in Kenya.

In October 1952, the newly arrived Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, realized that the situation was rapidly getting out of control. He requested permission from the Colonial Office to declare a State of Emergency and permission was quickly granted.[9] The battle against the Mau Mau was finally underway.

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[7]Majdalany, p. 59.

[8]Ibid., p. 87.

[9]Corfield, p. 159. The outgoing Governor (Sir Philip Mitchell) retired in June but was given three months retirement leave with pay, in accordance with the existing law. Austerity measures precluded paying the salaries of two Governors simultaneously, so the new Governor (Sir Evelyn Baring) was not posted to Kenya until 1 October. During the period July-September 1952 the Chief Secretary was the Acting Governor.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

What are the lessons learned from British use of the military to assist quelling the rebellion in Kenya (1952-60)?

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

The data in this research project have been drawn from open sources available in the USAWC library. Extensive use was made of USACDCIAS Preconflict Case Study 5 and its bibliography. All references addressing the period 1952-60 were examined to include intelligence estimates, State Department dispatches, newspapers, books, and magazines. There is a paucity of detailed information describing the various tactics used by the British in their military operations as well as information from which to prepare an accurate order of battle. A attempt has been made to piece together information from all available sources in order to present as complete a picture of military operations as possible.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

Subsequent chapters will examine chronologically the military operations conducted in support of Government efforts to quell the Mau Mau rebellion. Where lessons learned in Malaya were in turn successfully used in Kenya, the fact will be highlighted. The East African Training Center established by the British in the Rift Valley to assist newly arrived troops in acclimatization to Africa will be examined when discussing training methods and jungle tactics. The close relationship between the police and the military,

both members of the security force, will be stressed throughout, as well as the division of responsibility that evolved.

CHAPTER II

LEADERSHIP RETURNS TO KENYA

It had taken the newly arrived Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, just ten days to appreciate the gravity of the situation in Kenya. His predecessor, Sir Philip Mitchell, who departed in June, denied that there was anything new in the trouble between the government and the Kikuyu.[1] The Chief Secretary in his capacity as Acting Governor had six weeks prior to the arrival of Baring categorically denied that there was a state of emergency. Sir Evelyn Baring's letter to the Secretary of State amplifying his reasons for declaring a State of Emergency paints a somewhat different picture:

> I have just returned from a tour and the position is very serious....There is a clear determination by the Mau Mau leaders to destroy all sources of authority other than that of Mau Mau....It is now abundantly clear that we are facing a planned revolutionary movement. If the movement cannot be stopped there will be an administrative breakdown followed by bloodshed amounting to civil war.... We are faced with a formidable organization of violence and if we wait the trouble will become much worse....[2]

Had Sir Philip Mitchell, a recognized authority on Africa and an enlightened civil servant, not cocooned himself against the warnings that were constantly pouring in from the field, corrective action might have begun many months before the arrival of Sir Evelyn Baring. The Corfield Report documents a mid July report by the Commissioner of Police which called attention to the seriousness

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[1]Majdalany, p.. 96-97.
[2]Corfield, pp. 159-160

of the situation and urged immediate action.[3] This and subsequent reports were to fall on deaf ears.

COMMAND AND CONTROL PROBLEMS

As military troops began arriving in Kenya, it became obvious that command control problems existed. The so-called security forces in Kenya consisted of the Kenya police, the military, the Kenya Police Reserve, and the Tribal Police. The Attorney General in his capacity as Member for Law and Order on the Executive Council directed operations of the Kenya Police. The Governor, as Commander-in-Chief, controlled the military forces which initially were used in support of the police. It was the general policy of the British in emergencies to use Army units in support of the police whenever possible. Internally, no plan existed for efficient utilization of the diverse elements making up the security force.

The external control of the military units was exercised by the Middle East Command headquartered in the Suez Canal Zone. This headquarters under Sir Brian Robertson was initially organized to handle the evacuation of the Suez Canal Zone base and was strictly an administrative headquarters. It was geared to run the whole of East Africa on a peacetime basis but was not structured to run a war. Thus no headquarters existed for execution of vital command and logistical functions.

Control and coordination of operations in the early stages of

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[3] Ibid., p. 141

the emergency were poor. Regular police could not get along with the reservist police. Friction developed between soldiers and policemen, each trying to do the other's job. Settlers frequently hunted Mau Mau on their own, with no direction or coordination. Patrols and raiding parties often included army officers, police officers, the local district officer, and a local settler. There was a need for coordination of all security force actions in order to insure effective operations.

INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION

During the course of the years which preceded the declaration of the State of Emergency, countless intelligence reports covering all aspects of the subversion reached the central government in Nairobi. The basic intelligence pointing out the dangers of the Mau Mau movement was there, but there was a lack of appreciation of the import of this information. There was no properly constituted body to assess the value of the many reports received or to keep matters of intelligence policy under constant review. Basically, the intelligence organization was at fault.

Security and political intelligence from the earliest days were considered to be the responsibility of the Kenya Police. Responsibility for this function was actually vested in the Special Branch, whose director became responsible to the government for all matters pertaining to intelligence and security and immigration control. The main function of Special Branch was the collection, but not necessarily the final assessment, of political intelligence.

The Special Branch at this time was small and had insufficient personnel in the provinces. It had to rely on reports from other government agencies. As the collection of political intelligence was always less urgent that the detection of crime, it suffered in consequence. This defect was realized well before the declaration of the State of Emergency but shortage of staff and lack of funds ameliorated against rectifying it. A further defect of some importance was the failure to disseminate intelligence downward from Nairobi. The importance of this was never fully appreciated by the government.[4] Sir Percy Sillitoe, Director General of Security Forces in the United Kingdom, arrived in Kenya in November 1952 to assist in reorganization of the Special Branch. By the end of November he had submitted his findings which were quickly accepted. Reorganization was underway soon thereafter.

OPPOSING FORCES

Upon the declaration of the State of Emergency, British troops began arriving from elsewhere in East Africa to join the three battalions of the King's Africa Rifles permanently stationed in Kenya. The first unit to arrive was the 1st Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers from the Suez Canal Zone. The entire battalion of 450 men arrived by air within two days. It was this unit that conducted a flag march shortly after its arrival and immediately following the arrest of Jomo Kenyatta and 82 others. A flag march in this

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4Majdalany, p. 105

case meant driving around Nairobi and the surrounding district in trucks, with bayonets fixed. Kenya was used to African troops; a British unit was a significant rarity.[5]

Prior to the declaration, three additional battalions of King's Africa Rifles stationed elsewhere in East Africa had been discretely added to the troop list in Kenya. Subsequent actions included a call to arms of the Kenya Regiment and the Kenya Police Reserve, both organizations composed of European settlers.

The Kikuyu Home Guard later to become one of the prime targets of the Mau Mau, reached a strength of 10,000 by January 1953. This organization represented the resistence movement to Mau Mau and its strength was almost equal to that of the Mau Mau. Posts of about 50 men each were established, with the Home Guard personnel armed only with bows and arrows .

The 39 Brigade, consisting of two battalions---the Buffs and Devons---arrived in April 1953 and after a month of acclimatization played a key role when the British forces assumed the offensive. Some of the other elements which saw action in Kenya were the British 49 Brigade, the 70 East Africa Brigade, an armored car squadron, a heavy anti-aircraft battery (used in a ground support role), two flights of RAF Harvards, and one squadron of Lincoln heavy bombers. Eleven British infantry battalions saw service in Kenya during the period 1952-56. A summation is found at Appendix 1.

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[5]"British Troops Sent to Kenya," New York Times, October 20, 1952, p. 6; "British Put Troops in Kenya to Halt a Reign of Killings," New York Times, October 21, 1952, p. 1

The opposing forces of the Mau Mau militant wing were called the Kenya Land and Freedom Armies. This force totaled some 12,000 Africans in small, loosely controlled fighting groups, only 12 percent of whom were armed with precision weapons. While the terms army and battalion were strictly figurative, other unit designations were valid by western standards. A company consisted of from 100 to 250, a platoon (the batuni) from 50 to 100, and the section from 10 to 50.[6] The Mau Mau could not resist the titles and styling that went with the British rule so that the naming of their units became a farcial travesty of British forms and nomenclature. Some of the major Mau Mau units were: six Ituma Ndemi Kimuri Armies of Nyeri, Gikuyu Iregi Armies of Fort Hall, the Hika Hika Battalion (six companies), the Ruhenia Battalion of General Gachuma, Gen Tanganyika's 195 Tanganyika Battalion, the Mbura Ngebo (western) Armies, and General Rui's Kenya Liberation Army.

Commander-in-Chief of the Mau Mau forces in the Aberdares Mountain region was Dedan Kimathi, a 33-year-old former clerk. Waruhiu Itote, a 31-year-old ex-corporal of the King's Africa Rifles commanded all forces in the Mount Kenya area. Itote was nicknamed General China.[7]

OPERATION COWBOY

The initial roundup of 200 ringleaders in 11 operations during 1952 did not break the back of the Mau Mau. To the chagrin

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[6]Majdalany, p. 160
[7]Ibid., pp. 157-158

of the British, they found that they had underestimated the extent of the Mau Mau organization which was sufficiently decentralized to enable the Mau Mau to function as before. It was obvious from the initial results that the intelligence set-up and the command structure were inadequate for conducting an effective campaign against the Mau Mau. To counter this basic unpreparedness, plans were made to expand the police forces. As previously mentioned, Sir Percy Sillitoe was called in to advise on a total reogranization of Police Special Branch, the colony's intelligence service. Another important step was the formation of a Home Guard composed of loyal Kikuyu plus some from the Embu and Meru tribes. Armed with spears, pangas, and bows and arrows, these men fortified strong points and villages, and battled the Mau Mau whenever they attacked. Action such as this, which used African against African, was advocated by Lord Delamere in January 1953.[8]

Throughout 1952 operations were basically defensive in nature. British units operated widely dispersed, improvising methods of cooperating with their police opposite numbers, with the nearest district officer, with the settlers and police reservists in European areas, and with the chiefs and headmen in Kikuyu locations.

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[8]US Consulate Nairobi, Papers on Kenya 1930-1954, Foreign Service Dispatch Number 239, 30 January 1953. Hugh Cholmondeley, the third Baron Delamere, was one of the colony's great founders. After a series of hunting expeditions to East Africa, he decided that the beautiful and empty land was to be his vocation. Together with Sir Charles Eliot, he laid the foundations of the country. He advocated the liquidation of the Mau Mau problem by organizing the Masai Youth into troops, which would then root out the Mau Mau and dispose of them. He criticized the use of white troops. To him it was an African problem which should be solved by Africans.

It certainly wasn't war as learned at Sandhurst; it was a crime wave, not war.[9]

The Attorney General remained responsible for internal security operations during this period. The defects of this organization were recognized as early as 1951, but it was not until 1953 that the Secretary of State directed that the responsibility for law and order be handed back to the Chief Secretary.

In November 1952, Tom Mbotela, a long-time Kenya Africa Union vice-president and opponent of Jomo Kenyatta, was murdered. His name was added to the list which already included Senior Chiefs Waruhiu and Nderi. It was a list of those who dared oppose Jomo Kenyatta and his followers.

November 1952 also witnessed Operation COWBOY, which was actually the first large-scale use of troops to support police and the first published case of mass punishment. During the operation a portion of the Kikuyu Reserve was sealed off and some 4,000 cattle and sheep were rounded up and held hostage until the population furnished information concerning the recent murder of Senior Chief Nderi. Nderi, accompanied by two Tribal Police, had run into a group preparing for an oathing ceremony. They were hacked to death when Nderi ordered the crowd to disperse. The information was soon received by the government but only half of the livestock returned. The other half was sold as punishment.[10] The power to

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[9]Majdalany, p. 112.

[10]"Some Seized Cattle Returned in Kenya," New York Times, December 2, 1952, p. 11.

impose mass punishment was just one of the suppressive powers available to the Governor after the declaration of the State of Emergency.

This technique of mass punishment was initially not effective because the Kikuyu were less afraid of the government than the Mau Mau. The Mau Mau movement was allowed to become well entrenched and despite the strong police measures being used against it and the arrest of the purported leaders, there was no evidence that conditions were better or worse at the end of 1952 than they were when the State of Emergency was declared two months before.[11]

These acts--the declaration of the emergency, the show of force, and the arrest of African leaders--constituted the most important internal defense operations in 1952.

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[11]US Consulate Nairobi dispatch, December 1952.

CHAPTER III

INITIAL ACTIONS AGAINST THE MAU MAU

The early days of 1953 saw the beginning of a murder campaign by the Mau Mau. Their first objective was to enforce complete unity among the Kikuyu before turning on the settlers and the security forces. The pro-government supporters, or loyalists, among the Kikuyu were a major target.[1] However, the European settlers were not exempt from the terror which began on New Year's Day 1953. The murder of Messrs. Fergusson and Bingley as they sat in their dressing gowns after dinner was the beginning.[2] Later in the month the brutality of the Mau Mau atrocities was to send shock waves beyond the boundaries of East Africa. The Ruck family---husband, wife,and young son ---the embodiment of settler Kenya at its best, was brutally murdered. The Rucks were exemplary in their treatment of all Africans, not just those who worked for them. Soon other settlers fell victim to Mau Mau violence. Casualties could have been fewer but Europeans could not bring themselves to believe that their servants would let them down.[3] The main

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[1]A. M. MacPhee, Kenya (1968), p. 129.

[2]It was the custom among the Europeans in the Kenya Highlands to change into pajamas and dressing gown for the evening meal which was served at about nine p.m. The work day normally began at six a.m. and ended with a bath at about seven p.m. Fergusson and Bingley were armed but were overpowered before they had time to reach into the pocket of their dressing gowns for a pistol. It became clear that the pistol had to be on the arm of the chair or close by on the table, preferably cocked.

[3]Majdalany, p. 120

danger for Kenya was the possibility that Mau Mau might spread to other tribes and that the Communists might be able to profit from the crisis in Kenya.[4]

Lack of cooperation and coordination between the various branches of the security force continued to plague operations in 1953. There was too much remote control by London and the security forces needed an overall commander. Sir Evelyn Baring continued as Commander-in-Chief as well as Governor. The security forces did lack an overall commander, they did lack an overall plan and purpose, they did often wonder if they were all fighting the same war.[5]

A series of civil actions was soon initiated in an attempt to curb Mau Mau excesses. Certain officials were authorized to expropriate land, buildings, and livestock in the interest of public safety or to insure the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community. Courts were authorized to admit statements of certain public officials concerning confessions made in police stations and later repudiated by African suspects in the courtroom. Carrying of arms by Africans was forbidden under the penalty of death.[6] The Governor was authorized to close schools and ban publications. Curfews were established and new identity cards issued. The roads leading in and out of Nairobi were blocked at night. As a part of his emergency powers, the Governor was

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[4]US Consulate Nairobi dispatch, December 18, 1952.

[5]Majdalany, p. 122

[6]"Kenya Decrees Death for Arms," New York Times, April 17,1953, p. 9.

empowered to detain anyone without subsequent referral to a trial, when it was in the interests of public good.

MAJOR GENERAL HINDE ARRIVES

In January 1953, Major General (then Brigadier) W. R. N. Hinde, the Commander of the Cyrenaica District in Libya, was spending the last months of his Army service and preparing for retirement when a message arrived offering him the position of military advisor to the Governor of Kenya, with the rank of Major General. Hinde was a cavalryman who had commanded a brigade in the Seventh Armored Division during the desert campaigns of World War II. Later as Deputy Director of Military Government in the British sector of Berlin he had shown a considerable flair for getting on with difficult people.[7] His commander during the period of long and protracted debate with the Russians was General Sir Brian Robertson and when Robertson subsequently became Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East, he succeeded in securing Hinde as Chief Civil Affairs Advisor to the commander of the land forces. The challenge of a new assignment in Kenya and the opportunity for promotion persuaded Hinde to accept the assignment as advisor to Governor Baring. A few weeks after his arrival, his title was changed to Director of Operations. There was a precedent for this latter move. The Director of Operations had successfully run the war in Malaya and the Director of Operations Committee used was

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[7]Majdalany, p. 130.

composed of the heads of three services, the Commissioner of Police, the Director of Intelligence, and other lesser officials.[8] General Hinde recognized the need for civil-military coordination and so immediately reorganized the system of planning and coordinating operations, incorporating many of the desirable features of the Malayan organizations.

EMERGENCY COMMITTEES ESTABLISHED

The joint committees as reorganized by General Hinde were given specific form and procedures. At province and district level they were called Joint Emergency Committees and were organized to determine general policy. Day-to-day operations were planned by Joint Operations Committees. These joint committees included representatives of the Army, the police, the administration, and a suitable local settler. They were served by an executive officer who was a member of both committees.[9] At the highest level, a War Council soon replaced the Emergency Committee because the latter proved too unwieldy. The War Council was composed of the Governor, Deputy Governor, Senior Military Commander, and a European Minister without portfolio.

Hinde found that lack of information about the enemy was still critical. The enlargement of the Special Branch was not yet noticeable and a military intelligence network to supplement the

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[8]W. J. Pike, The Makyan Emergency (1948-1960): A Limited Warfare Case Study (U) (1965), p. 7

[9]John B. George, April in Kenya, American Universities Field Staff, Letters and Reports from the Field, 1953, pp. 2-3.

Special Branch did not exist. Meanwhile, the police were recruiting extensively, the King's Africa Rifles were augmenting the police, and the Lancashire Fusiliers were released from other duties to protect the Rift Valley Europeans and patrol the Aberdares Forest. The Kenya Regiment joined in all activities, as needed. As a result of extensive recruiting the Kikuyu Home Guard had reached a strength of 10,000.

General Hinde also found frictions prevalent between all elements. The UK soldiers were handicapped in dealings with the Kikuyu because they could not speak their language. They were accused by the European settlers of being nosier than elephants. To make matters worse, Kenya was a haven for retired officers who at times even attempted to direct operations.

PROHIBITED AND SPECIAL AREAS

Realizing that somehow they must isolate the Mau Mau from their sources of supply, the British established Prohibited Areas in both the Aberdares Forest and Mount Kenya. A member of the security forces was authorized to shoot on sight any person found in, or seen entering, a Prohibited Area. Virtually the entire area of operations but especially the Kikuyu Reserve was declared a Special Area. A member of the Security Force was authorized to use lethal weapons in order to stop, and submit to search, any person who failed to stop when challenged in a Special Area.

After General Hinde's arrival, the security forces began to be aware that at last there was someone in charge. There was less

need to make the war up as they went along. General Hinde still had to counter a general underestimation of the enemy by many who were convinced that the Mau Mau would not stick it out for long.

MASSACRE AT LARI--THE TURNING POINT

The brutal slayings at Lari on 26 March 1953 proved that the Mau Mau movement was not about to collapse. In a single night the Mau Mau inflicted on the government forces their most grievous setbacks of the Emergency.

In a bloodbath unequalled throughout the insurrection, 84 persons were massacred, two-thirds of them women and children. Over 200 huts were totally destroyed by fire. The doors were bound shut so that the occupants could not escape and then the huts were soaked with gasoline and set afire. Most of the 31 victims who survived the burning of their huts were horribly mutilated.Typical reports tell of children being killed, their blood drunk, and their bodies thrown at their mothers before they too were killed or mutilated.

The Mau Mau force of 1000 was the largest single force concentrated by the Mau Mau anytime during the insurrection. The attack was planned in detail and executed with precision. The incident happened while the company of King's Africa Rifles, which normally provided protection, was away protecting the Atli River prison where trouble was expected. The success of the raid was entirely due to government error. Although information was received concerning the Mau Mau intent to raid Lari, the troops

were still removed from the area the day of the attack.

The carnage was sickening even to some of the passive Mau Mau, and in a sense might be called the turning point of the insurrection. Intelligence information, hitherto unavailable, began to trickle in in an ever-increasing stream. This senseless massacre sickened many Kikuyu who were wavering between the government and Mau Mau. There was new rallying to the Kikuyu Guard. From that point on the Mau Mau could never win.[10]

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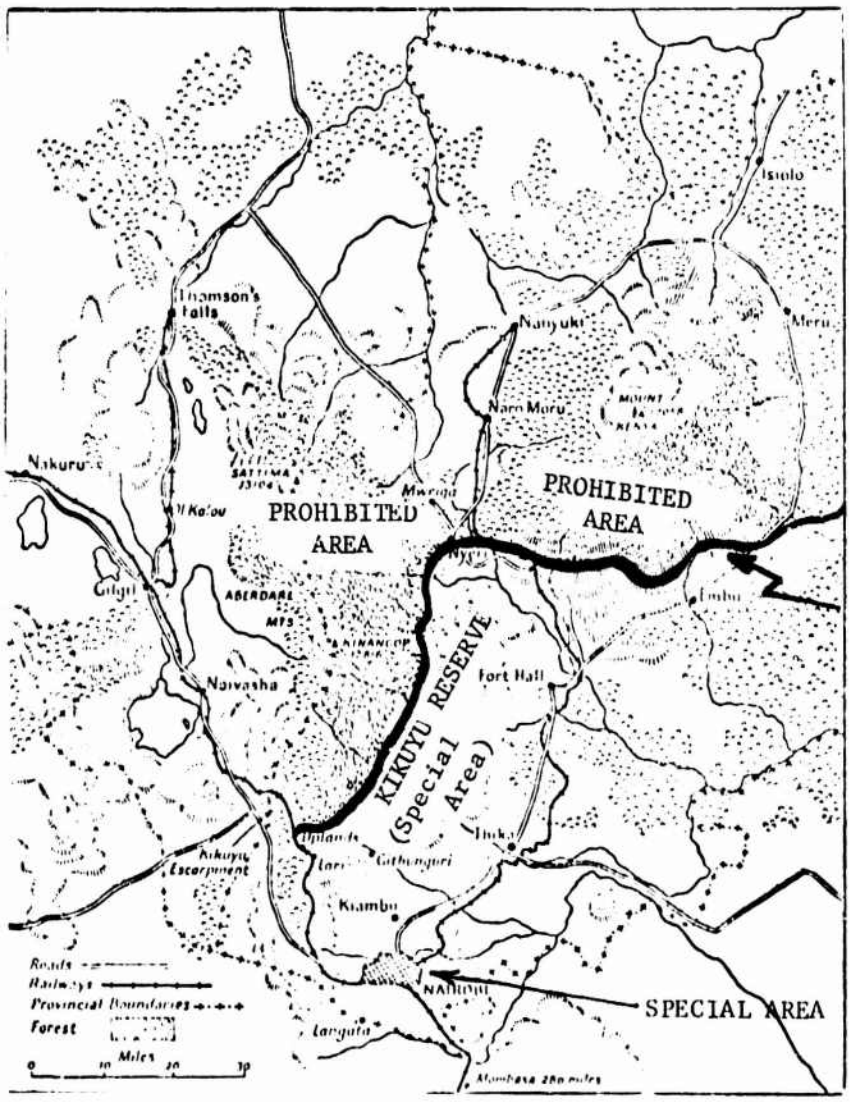
[10] L. S. B. Leakey, "Behind the Blood Oath of the Mau Mau," New York Times, May 3, 1953, Section VI, p. 14



(100 mile long strip) PROHIBITED AREA

FIGURE 4. Prohibited/Special Areas

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CHAPTER IV

OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS BEGIN

In June 1953 major changes occurred with the arrival of General Sir George Erskine to assume the newly established position of Commander-in-Chief, East Africa, reporting directly to London. Prior to receiving orders to establish this independent command in Kenya, Erskine had been Commander-in-Chief of Land Forces, Middle East Command. Major General Hinde, who had previously been a member of Erskine's staff, now reverted to Deputy Director of Operations; however, he still retained the responsibility for coordination of the military-civilian effort and operational planning. Not long afterwards Major General Heyman reported as Chief of Staff to round out Erskine's team.[1] Unlike the situation in Malaya and later in Cyprus, the military was not overall in charge in Kenya. The reasoning was that the Mau Mau insurrection was a local operation affecting only three districts (two provinces), one-sixteenth of the land area. Peace and war had to be waged simultaneously. In a State of Emergency, the Governor continues

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[1]"Kenya", Keesing's Contemporary Archives: Weekly Diary of World Events, Vol. IX (1953-54), p. 13066. (The Chief Native Commissioner volunteered the information that previous to the appointment of General Sir George Erskine as C-in-C, East Africa, there had been considerable bickering and lack of cooperation between the two top military officers--Lt. General Alexander Cameron, GOC in East Africa (who became Erskine's Deputy), and the Director of Operations, MG Hinde. Sir George exhibited the personality and authority to pull the divergent forces together increasing their effectiveness and morale.--US Consulate Nairobi dispatch No. 11, 10 July 1953.)

to administer the civil affairs of the colony, and the Commander-in-Chief works with him. Contrast this to Malaya where the posts of High Commissioner and Director of Operations were subsequently in 1951 amalgamated into one person, General Sir Gerald Templer.[2]

SWEEP BY 39 BRIGADE

General Erskine was quick to note the lack of aggressive use of military forces and immediately ordered offensive action into the Aberdare Mountains, an area of some 600 square miles. Again, Erskine was drawing on the lessons learned in Malaya. It was well known that a major factor affecting the outcome of the Malayan Emergency was that the British early recognized that to win, they had to seize the initiative and take the offensive to the guerrillas, operating on guerrilla standards and on guerrilla territory--the jungle.[3]

Under General Erskine's plan, the army was phased out of its static police-type duties and released to hunt Mau Mau in the Prohibited Areas. To the aforementioned Prohibited Areas(Aberdares and Mount Kenya) was added a third of considerable importance. This was a strip one mile wide running the length of the forest range opposite the Reserve, up the eastern side of the Aberdares and along the southern and eastern sides of Mount Kenya. This strip served as a forbidden area between the Mau Mau in the forest

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[2]Pike, p. 7.
[3]Ibid., p. 18.

and their supporters in the Reserve and it was lined with police posts.[4]

General Erskine's operation plan called for three striking forces. The main infantry effort was to be made by the 39 Brigade consisting of the Buffs and Devons, assisted by the Kenya Regiment. The 39 Brigade had arrived in-country in April and had just completed a month of acclimatization in the Rift Valley camp. This force operated in the Reserve and outwards to the forest. A mobile column of armored cars and spare infantry made up the second force which had a mission of covering the open spaces and acting as a reserve force. The third component of the force was a flight of eight RAF Harvard trainers equipped with improvised bomb racks. Their task was to bomb part of the forest area to deter its use by the Mau Mau.[5]

It was a beginning but the initial offensive operations were basically unsuccessful. The security forces which had been dispersed defensively for so long were not prepared to bring the battle to the Mau Mau. In the Kikuyu Reserve the Mau Mau were unidentifiable and in the forest they were invisible. The army units operating in the Reserve needed a tangible target but found none against which to concentrate. A start had been made and as soon as new units became available to the British and tactics were modified, the Mau Mau would be on the run.

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[4]Majdalany, p. 162

[5]J. B. George, Kenya Quandry (1953), p. 4.

FOREST TACTICS

It was soon learned that the Mau Mau were indeed experts at concealment in the forest and that they were fleet of foot and could move with great silence. They were normally anxious to avoid action with all forms of organized military forces. Mau Mau sentries were placed along all the approaches to their camps to warn of the approach of security forces. Discipline was tight; death would result from disobedience.

The British, on the other hand, had to cut their way into the forest at the start of an operation and in so doing gave away their position to the Mau Mau. Qualities had to be developed in British troops similar to those required to track and shoot shy game. The operations had to start from inside the forest. Therefore with the help of the Public Works Department, five tracks were cut into the forest to a depth of 7000 yards and battalion bases established at the end of each, deep in the forest. This proved more successful and additional tracks were cut.

The army took part in four distinct types of operations in Kenya. It assisted the police and civil administration in the major towns such as Nairobi, Nakuru, etc., in cordoning, guarding detainee cages, and escorting detained persons to cages. It assisted the police and civil administration in the prevention of stock thefts in the European farming areas by patrolling around farms and pursuing gangs after incidents. (Successful pursuit and capture of gang members required skilled use of tracker teams, a subject to be discussed later in this section.) The third type

of operation, the elimination of terrorist gangs in the Reserves and assistance in the restoration of law and order was used by General Erskine when he initially shifted to the offensive. The final type of operation and the most important was the complete destruction of all terrorists in the Prohibited Areas. This type of operation was often carried out in conjunction with the RAF.

To meet the special operational conditions found in Kenya, every unit engaged in anti-Mau Mau operations formed at least one tracker/combat team composed of six handpicked men, augmented by two African trackers, a tracker dog and handler, and a patrol dog with handler. These teams were commanded by officers who had received special training in tracking, use of trackers and wardogs, and in advanced Mau Mau fieldcraft.[6] Properly trained and used, wardogs were of great value to battalions engaged in antiterrorist operations. They brought to the troops they accompanied keener senses than those enjoyed by human beings and that sixth sense which humans usually acquire only after many years of fieldcraft. In Malaya, attempts to train and use dogs proved futile and was abandoned in favor of native trackers.

Tracking is used by Africans normally when hunting animals or finding strayed stock. Animals do not conceal their tracks and have set characteristics which, when known to the tracker, make animal hunting comparatively easy. Tracking Mau Mau was much more difficult. Realizing that the security forces were using African

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[6]East Africa Command, British Army, A Handbook on Anti-Mau Mau Operations (U), CONFIDENTIAL (November 1954), p. 11.

trackers to hunt them down, the Mau Mau gangs used various methods to conceal their tracks. The method of making contact with gangs by tracking, was very successful, when care had been taken to insure that the trackers came from tribes most suited to the terrain in which the unit was located.

Military units used European white hunter techniques. Ambushes were set near tracks and water holes used by the Mau Mau. There were a considerable number of paths in the forest originally made by big game. Both Mau Mau and the British patrols used these trails when quick, silent movement was required.

Military sweeps were initially fairly successful. The aim of the sweep was to insure that the area was so well searched that no one could remain undetected in it. As a general practice two companies of infantry, about 200 men, called the sweep party would drive the enemy toward three firing lines (the stop party) formed in the shape of an inverted U. The stop parties were required to provide a high rate of accurate fire and were therefore normally provided by the army rather than the police or Kikuyu Guard. On the other hand, it was often desirable to get the Kikuyu Guard backed by the police to provide the sweep parties since the numbers required were large. As with any operation a reserve was constituted to deal with any emergencies. Actually two types of reserves were desirable when carrying out a sweep, a normal reserve to engage and destroy any Mau Mau who offer resistence within the area being swept and a follow up reserve to follow up and destroy any parties of enemy who break through the stop line. The Mau Mau

still eluded the sweep parties and remained undetected in the thick undergrowth.

Except for reconnaissance and dropping supplies, air power was relatively ineffective. In the daytime, little could be seen because of the thick canopy; however, some of the pilots spotted Mau Mau fires at night, and reported their location to ground units which moved in as soon as possible. The British tried bombing the jungles which did little more than discourage the Mau Mau from occupying those parts of the jungle and madden the animals. A number of soldiers were wounded by elephants and rhinos who attacked after being frightened by bombs.

TRAINING

The British found that patrolling was a vital task of the infantry soldier which occupied the greater part of his time. When not operating against the Mau Mau, the various aspects of patrol training, including shooting from the shoulder, were practiced continually. "The finest gun in the world was valueless against an enemy who, if he appeared at all, appeared momentarily, fleetingly before the forest swallowed him--unless the soldier was a sharpshooter."[7] The most important requirement in anti-Mau Mau operations was for every individual to be able to fire a quick, accurate shot, at comparatively short range against a moving target from the standing or kneeling position. Every company was required

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[7]Majdalany, p. 173.

required to construct a jungle range whenever it moved to a new location. Frequent requalification in weapons had been an important feature of jungle warfare in Malaya also. Not only was it necessary to conduct known distance firing practice, but also retraining in quick,accurate firing from any position under jungle conditions.

Encounters with the Mau Mau were usually unexpected and the ensuing action extremely brief. It was therefore essential for patrols to be thoroughly trained in Battle Drills (also called Immediate Action Drills) so that patrol commanders were not forced to waste precious time giving out orders. For these drills to be effective, they had to be practiced frequently. Each individual had to know what to do in each set of circumstances.

Since pursuits of Mau Mau were often necessary at high speeds over long distances, all troops coming to Kenya were required to be in a high state of physical fitness with cross-country running augmenting normal marching. Officers were required to lecture their men on the standards of mental alertness which successful forest operations involved. The men were made to understand that they were to be engaged in a game of blind man's bluff with a very skilled adversary. Another matter which was impressed on the men even before they arrived in Africa was the need for silence in the forest. Silence was the rule.

The British found that four weeks acclimatization was required before any individual should take part in operations. This was required because of the altitude---above 11,000 feet---and the

climate. Advance parties of units were briefed on operational requirements and attended courses at the East Africa Battle School where fieldcraft, jungle tactics, and the correct use of native trackers and wardogs were taught.

The only specialists who were required in greater numbers than in other theaters were radio operators. The British considered that 25 percent more radio operators should be trained before arrival in East Africa.[8]

THE FOREST BATTLEGROUND

A look at the geography of the battleground reveals that the two great mountain citadels of central Kenya-Mount Kenya and the Aberdares--gave the war its image.[9] The Mau Mau conflict was confined to the Central Province of Kenya which includes the Kikuyu Reserve and the three settler districts of the adjoining Rift Valley Province. This area encompasses approximately 14,000 square miles or one-sixteenth of Kenya.

The Aberdares Range which is some forty miles long and fifteen wide borders the Reserve. Fifty miles to the mortheast is majestic Mount Kenya, containing glaciers down to 15,000 feet. Nyeri District faces both these mountain features. The slopes of both the Aberdares and Mount Kenya contain belts of ordinary forest and bamboo, being followed at about 11,000 feet by moorland. The mixed forest begins at approximately 7000 feet and is composed of podo,

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[8] A Handbook on Anti-Mau Mau Operations, pp. 1-2.
[9] Majdalany, p. 169.

cedar, and wild fig trees between sixty and eighty feet high. The undergrowth is too thick to penetrate without cutting, unless one stumbles on a game trail. At 8,000 feet, the bamboo begins and stretches for another 2,000 feet. The giant bamboo, three to four inches in diameter and 20-30 feet high, is not so thickly clumped as to prevent passage but presents an obstacle to movement because of the dead and rotten bamboo trunks on the forest floor. A walker could sink through crackling deadwood to his waist. The dwarf bamboo is only one inch in diameter and 12-15 feet high, but grows in thick clumps. Hacking a path through it is both exhausting and noisy. To cover 500 yards in an hour carrying the equipment of a soldier was to make good time. With rain, it would take two hours or more to cover the same distance. The moorland was springy under foot with coarse grass or peat that was sometimes marshy.[10]

The forest was the thing that had to be learned by the British since the Mau Mau knew and understood it intimately.

THE KENYA REGIMENT

The Kenya Regiment was a major asset in the fight against the Mau Mau for it gave the British leadership an African mind to think with.[11] It consisted of from 200-300 highly specialized, trained Kenya-born Europeans. The Kenya Regiment was an officer producing unit of the Territorial Army originally formed to provide

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[10] A Handbook on Anti-Mau Mau Operations, pp. 1-2.
[11] Majdalany, pp. 176-177.

the King's Africa Rifles with a source of officers in wartime. There were never enough of these highly talented individuals for the many tasks requiring their skills. The Kenya Regiment provided guides to tactical units, interrogators to assist Special Branch in the intelligence effort, and commanders for some of the new police posts in the Reserve.

THE POLICE RESERVE AIR WING

The Police Reserve Air Wing had its beginning in 1948 when it was determined that Kenya's vast spaces and bad roads could more reasonably be policed by light aircraft than by use of conventional overland means. Funds would not permit the small group of weekend fliers that made up the organization the luxury of anything more than a second-hand Auster aircraft. When the Emergency was declared in 1952, this group formed an operational flight and immediately went into training. The Auster turned out to be unequal to operations at the high altitudes of the Mount Kenya/Aberdare Range area so they hired aircraft from a charter company. The Air Wing was located at Nairobi West with flights located at Mweiga and Nakuru. Mweiga was the forward base for the campaign in the forest and contained a 400-foot strip at 6,500 feet. By July 1953, when General Erskine had the British troops on the offensive, the Wing had grown to a strength of 14 full-time and 12 part-time pilots. They had acquired American Tripacers and later Cessnas, which were the only light aircraft that could perform adequately at 14,000 feet and higher. These light aircraft could carry a maximum of

three passengers, or 200-300 pounds of supplies, or a small number of 20-pound bombs. No helicopters could operate at such altitudes. The primary role of the Wing was close support of the infantry fighting in the forest. They also performed limited supply dropping, operational reconnaissance (day and night) artillery reconnaissance, and contact reconnaissance. (Contact reconnaissance is defined as the relaying to a unit on the ground its location.) Because of the severity of the terrain and the problems of disorientation the Wing would radio the locations to units on the ground. Aerial reconnaissance also played an important and continuing role in the Malayan Emergency where the difficulty of self-location was also encountered.[12]

RESULTS AT THE END OF 1953

At the end of 1953, the security forces were at peak strength. There were 10,000 British and African soldiers in the fight against the Mau Mau. Police strength had increased to 21,000 men, including some 6,000 part-time auxiliaries. Although figures vary, the Kikuyu Home Guard reached a strength of 20-25,000 and for the first time had rifles and shotguns to supplement their basic armament of bows and spears.

Militant wing Mau Mau casualties in the 14 months since the declaration of the State of Emergency were 3,064 killed and over

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[12]Pike, p. 32. A major deficiency confronting British forces in Malaya and persistent in other limited war situations, is that of self location by troops on patrol or away from base camp.

1,000 captured. Security force casualties during the same period were negligible. General Erskine's offensive actions were obviously taking their toll. Operations against the Mau Mau Passive Wing in the Reserve were likewise effective with some 156,459 Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru arrested, 64,000 of whom were brought to trial. During the fourteen months of the Emergency 16 Europeans were killed and five wounded while 613 loyal Kikuyu were killed and 359 wounded.[13] These figures reemphasize the fact that the first aim of Mau Mau strategy was still to crush resistence within the tribe before going against the government and the Europeans but it was also clear that the Mau Mau could no longer win.

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[13]Majdalany, p. 189.

CHAPTER V

FOCUS ON NAIROBI

As General Erskine analyzed the results of British operations in 1953 and began preparing his plans for 1954, it became obvious to him that a great deal of the success of the Mau Mau in the forest could be attributed to aid from the so-called Passive Wing in Nairobi. From this administrative base, the Mau Mau gangs were provided with weapons, ammunition, recruits, and money. The supply system was controlled by the Central Committee in Nairobi with subordinate committees operating throughout the Reserve. Thus the capital of Kenya with nearly 65,000 Kikuyu took on an importance equal to that of the Prohibited Areas. The Mau Mau bandits had to be isolated from their food and supply in the populated areas and so General Erskine decided that a blitz operation to clean up the city would be undertaken early in 1954. The code name for the operation was to be Operation ANVIL.

CAPTURE OF GENERAL CHINA

In February 1954, before planning had commenced on ANVIL, news was received that in a routine security force operation in the Mount Kenya area, Waruhiu Itote, better known as General China, had been captured. The commander-in- chief of the armies on Mount Kenya was the first high-ranking leader to be interrogated and one of the few leaders of any importance to be captured.[1] This changed

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[1]"Kenya", Keesing's Contemporary Archives, Vol. IX, p. 13453. By April 1954 only eight major leaders had been killed or captured.

the intelligence picture drastically because by the patient and skilled efforts of Police Commissioner Ian Henderson, a European settler fluent in the Kikuyu language, China eventually told all he knew of the Mau Mau movement. As a result, a complete order of battle was obtained for the first time. However, no intelligence was obtained concerning General Kimathi's armies in the Aberdares region which indicated a lack of contact and coordination within the Mau Mau organization. Under further persuasion by Henderson, China offered to return to Mount Kenya and arrange for the surrender of all the Mau Mau there. Henderson thought that it was worth a try since the Mau Mau gangs in the forest had been under constant pressure by the security forces for many months. As food became scarce and living difficult, morale declined and many were anxious to return to the easy life of the Reserve. He convinced General Erskine to permit a surrender attempt. Thus as plans for ANVIL progressed, another operation called WEDGEWOOD sought to arrange the surrender of the 5,000 Mau Mau on Mount Kenya, without bloodshed.

OPERATION WEDGEWOOD

This mass surrender effort was directed from a hut in Nyeri from which Henderson and members of Special Branch operated. China was brought from his prison cell in Nairobi to assist in making contact with the remaining Mau Mau leaders. The major roadblock in Henderson's plan was the natural suspicion of the Kikuyu. Letters

were sent to the Mau Mau leaders by courier pointing out government strengths as well as Mau Mau weaknesses, and stressing that the population in the Reserve was suffering as a result of Mau Mau activity. In addition, China made personal contact with Passive Wing leaders in the Reserve. Negotiations between various Mau Mau leaders, China, and Henderson continued for three months. After several abortive attempts, General Erskine decided to permit one last try at bringing the sides together. Finally, in early April 1954 it was agreed that the gangs from Mount Kenya would surrender. By that time two of General China's subordinate commanders--Kaleba and Tanganyika--were also in British hands and they too offered to help in arranging the final details of the surrender operation. To assist in preparations, a ceasefire was put into effect by the government from 30 March-10 April. The day before the surrender a large gang was reported in the Reserve in violation of the truce terms. Thinking that it was one of the anti-surrender groups, security forces fired on it, killing 25 and capturing nine. Later information revealed that the group was part of a larger group of 800 en route to join 2,000 other Mau Mau preparing to surrender, who had assembled just inside the forest opposite Nyeri. Operation WEDGEWOOD failed just when it appeared that there was a chance of success; however, based on information provided by General China, a massive and successful roundup of Mau Mau Passive Wing leaders in the Reserve was conducted.

CHANGES IN INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION

The greatest handicap under which the security forces labored in the early months of the Emergency was the lack of operational intelligence. The capture of General China was not the first optimistic sign on the intelligence horizon.

The intelligence situation had been improved when District Military Intelligence Officers (DMIO) were sent to Kenya from England to build up a military intelligence organization. Since August 1953, these DMIOs had been working alongside the Special Branch officers and paying particular attention to the needs of the army. These officers provided commanders with necessary planning information and controlled from four to six Field Intelligence Officers in each district. These Field Intelligence Officers were charged with obtaining information from covert sources.[2] Although the flow of strategic intelligence had increased, it was not until the capture of General China that tactical intelligence on gang movements and locations was available for use in targetting the enemy.

OPERATION ANVIL

Concurrently with Police Commissioner Henderson's surrender negotiations in conjunction with Operation WEDGEWOOD, planning was completed for Operation ANVIL, possibly the most decisive operation

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[2] A Handbook on Anti-Mau Mau Operations, pp. 8-9.

of the insurrection. The objective was the destruction of the Mau Mau Central Committee, logistic base, and recruiting system in Nairobi. The government knew that the central leadership of the Mau Mau was in Nairobi but could not identify and capture the leaders among the 65,000 Kikuyu living in the city. They were employed in all types of activities from government jobs to common laborers. Many were servants in European homes or clerks in the offices.

In order to maintain surprise as to the starting date and nature of the operation, no prior preparations were made except the construction of detention/reception camps for 20,000 at Langata, MacKinnon Road and Manyani. The equipment and labor to establish the camps were provided by the Middle East Command. A force of approximately 25,000 was discreetly relieved of other tasks and assembled and briefed prior to 24 April. The force consisted of four British battalions, one King's Africa Rifle battalion, part of the Kenya Regiment, and approximately 24 police platoons. On the morning of 24 April 1954 the army covered all exits from the city of Nairobi, after which sectors were cordoned off and searched by police. When a sector had been searched, the army would retain control of it until the overall operation was complete.

After being assembled by the police, members of the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru tribes were segregated, screened further, identified, and taken to a reception camp outside the city. In the first 48 hours 11,600 Africans were screened and of that number 8,300 were passed to the camp at Langata for detention, pending closer screening.

In the reception camp a new technique was used whereby informers and ex-Mau Mau were dressed in long robes and hooded to conceal their identity and suspects made to pass in front of them where those active in Mau Mau were identified. Although many of the hooded Africans tended to point out those against whom they had a grudge as well as bonafide Mau Mau activists, the system was effective and had a terrifying impact on those being screened. After this intensive screening, those identified as active Mau Mau were moved to camps some distance away from Nairobi where they spent the rest of the Emergency.

By 8 May, at the end of Phase I, 30,000 Africans had been screened. Of this group, 16,538 were detained, and the remainder, including 2,500 dependents, was returned to the Reserve. Phase II of this cordon and search operation, which lasted an additional two weeks, was conducted with reduced forces and consisted of rescreening and additional mopping up. The problem was then to prevent those shipped to the Reserve from coming back. This was accomplished by issuing new forgery proof identification cards to all Africans in Nairobi and restricting movement into and out of Nairobi.

Although somewhat indiscriminate in its methods, in that some innocent Kikuyu were caught up in the quotas of those detained and subsequently contaminated by the hard-core Mau Mau in the camps, Operation ANVIL destroyed the Mau Mau infrastructure in Nairobi. The crime rate in Nairobi was reduced to 25% of that which existed in the pre-Emergency months. The leadership of the Central

Committee of the Mau Mau was completely broken, resulting in the virtual elimination of central control of the forest gangs. Mau Mau units in the forest were reduced to gangs of 10 to 20 personnel instead of 50 because they were deprived of the steady stream of supplies previously enjoyed. Similar operations were conducted in other areas, where thousands of Africans were detained as members of the Passive Wing. In addition, a battalion was permanently stationed in Nairobi and conducted further post-ANVIL raids on the more notorious parts of the city. Operation ANVIL appeared to be the turning point of the insurgency.[3] From that point on the Mau Mau threat decreased steadily for the Passive Wing no longer controlled and supported Mau Mau units in the forest.

VILLAGIZATION

One of the most effective forces in bringing the Emergency to an end was the resettlement of the Kikuyu in villages. As is well known, the Kikuyu did not normally live in villages. They lived in family groups of three to five huts spread along the ridges within the Reserve. Therefore the decision to implement the villagization plan flew in the face of a great stream of official advice which maintained that the Kikuyu would not live in villages. Again there was precedent from British operations in Malaya where some 650,000 squatters had been resettled in 55 villages.[4] The resettlement in Kenya was under the supervision

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[3]Majdalany, p. 207.

[4]P.B.G. Waller, A Study of the Emergency Regulations of Malaya, 1948-1960 (1967), p. 76.

of the Tribal Police and by late 1954, a million Kikuyu had been resettled in 720 villages. The Kikuyu built their own villages and each village had a tribal police post or a Kikuyu Home Guard post. Although initially a defensive move, the resettlement effort had a far-reaching social effect for the good. Gradually, the new villages became economically viable communities and were given a say in the conduct of their own administrative affairs. On the European farms the labor force was similarly regrouped. Thus a network of firm, interlocking bases that could be protected effectively was established and the defenses of both the European areas and the Reserve were greatly strengthened.

CHAPTER VI

SUBSEQUENT MILITARY OPERATIONS

General Erskine dispensed temporarily with the forest offensive for the remainder of 1954 because the majority of the security forces was occupied with the handlings of detainees and with follow-up operations in the three districts adjoining Nairobi. The forest was mainly left to the RAF, although the Kenya Police did assist in keeping the forest gangs on the move and slowly reducing the effectiveness of the Active Wing of the Mau Mau.

It was at this time that the use of countergangs or pseudo-gangs was initiated by both the police and the army.[1] The interrogators of the Kenya Regiment had found that a characteristic of the Kikuyu was loyalty to an individual rather than to an idea or abstraction. By surprising the Kikuyu with his knowledge of them and their gangs, the interrogator became the one to whom the Mau Mau would give their allegiance. Thus after rehabilitation, selected ex-Mau Mau were used to guide government patrols and to lure the Mau Mau gangs into ambushes. Gradually the ex-Mau Mau members of the patrol were armed and the European leadership removed. In the final stages of the campaign, the pseugo gangs were composed entirely of armed ex-Mau Mau who performed very effectively.

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[1]Dumas, p. 27. It was remarkable on how many occasions in Malaya a former insurgent was prepared, after experiencing humane treatment, to lead security forces back into the jungle to eliminate members of the MRLA who, a few days previously, had been his comrades in arms.

OPERATION HAMMER

General Erskine's plan for 1955 was to send the army back into the forest to destroy the estimated 4,000 hard-core Mau Mau or drive them into the keserve. The first operation of the year was Operation HAMMER in which ninety percent of the total military force in Kenya was utilized. The plan was to clear the moorland at the top of the Aberdares Range and then sweep downward through the forest in a series of coordinated patrols to flush out the Mau Mau. Tribal police and Home Guard forces would form stop lines along the forest fringe to ambush any Mau Mau attempting to break out of the forest.

It took a week to clear the moorland area and an additional two weeks to cover the four to six miles through the forest. The hope was that the Mau Mau could be flushed out by the sheer weight and density of the forces sweeping through the forest but the results proved disappointing. Only 99 Mau Mau were killed, 32 captured, and 30 surrendered. It proved again that a terrorist was an elusive quarry in thick forest.[2] It also confirmed that the sweep was not the most satisfactory way of using British soldiers against such skilled fighters as Mau Mau.

OPERATION FIRST FLUTE

Since Operation HAMMER had obviously been ineffective, General Erskine changed his tactics and about two months later

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[2]"Kenya", Keesings Contemporary Archives, Vol. X, p. 14247.

(late February) launched Operation FIRST FLUTE in the Mount Kenya area. In this operation the troops did not sweep the forest but dominated it by securing specific areas (called flogging the forest) to provide more uniform coverage. Each unit remained permanently in its area searching, patrolling, and generally keeping the gangs from settling in a single location. This operation lasted two months and during that time Police Reserve Wing aircraft air-dropped some 100,000 pounds of supplies at altitudes up to 14,000 feet. This final forest operation was likewise unimpressive in that only 277 Mau Mau were killed, captured, or surrendered. It was, however, a successful demonstration of force, and Mau Mau morale was reduced.

Both Operation HAMMER and Operation FIRST FLUTE proved that the policy of building up Kikuyu Home Guard and Police Forces so that they could assume security functions, thereby releasing the army for active operational duty, was a sound one.[3]

COMMAND CHANGE

In 1955 after two and a half years as Commander-in-Chief, General Erskine turned over his East Africa Command to General Sir Gerald Lathbury.[4] Erskine had been a dynamic, flamboyant commander who had arrived in Kenya in June 1953 fresh from success

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[3] Ibid.,

[4] Mac Phee, p. 142. (The New York Times of 11 January 1955 indicated that the transfer of Erskine to Britian to be GOCinC, Southern Command, did not represent any criticism to Erskine.)

in the Canal Zone. He had immediately instilled an offensive spirit in his forces by bringing large-scale military operations into the forest ere Mau Mau had previously felt secure. He had literally broken the back of the Emergency. At the time of Lathbury's arrival, the strength of the Mau Mau Militant Wing had been reduced from 12,000 to about 5.000. Surrender talks which were underway showed that many of those remaining were tired of their forest life. Control of the forest fringe was making it harder and harder for the Mau Mau to venture out of the forest into the Reserve without being detected. A great ditch had been constructed for 50 miles along the east and south border of the Mount Kenya forest. It was 18 feet wide and 10 feet deep with sharpened stakes along its bed plus miles of booby trapped barbed wire. This obstacle prevented the Mau Mau from slipping into the Reserve for food. This was the legacy left by General Erskine.

General Lathbury, one of the younger British generals to emerge from World War II, came to Kenya with no preconceived ideas. He soon came to the conclusion, however, that the time for massive army operations had passed.

Operations HAMMER and FIRST FLUTE, which pitted conventional forces against the Mau Mau, had confirmed that the effectiveness of conventional military forces against the Mau Mau was marginal at best and prompted increased emphasis on the use of pseudo gangs. Special Branch had been taking Mau Mau converts on patrols to act as guides for some time. By early 1955 the British were arming and using former Mau Mau in open warfare against Mau Mau gangs

operating in the forests. In May 1955, five Special Forces teams of ten ex-Mau Mau each, commanded by a European, were organized and sent to a new training area built at Nyeri. This Special Forces concept was actually the brainchild of Ian Henderson, and so the Special Forces became the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police rather than the army. Thereafter pseudo gangs were trained at a central location, relieving local intelligence officers and police of this function. The Mau Mau converts were given arms for these operations and successfully tracked down and killed their former leaders or comrades.

OPERATION DANTE

Kiambu Forest north of Nairobi had previously been free of gang activity; however, with the smashing of the Passive Wing in Nairobi, some of the strong arm groups formed themselves into free-lance groups and proceeded to make a nuisance near Nairobi. This prompted General Lathbury to order four infantry battalions to move into the Kiambu forest to prepare ambushes and to take control of various sections of the forest. This operation, which turned out to be the final large-scale military operation, began on 15 July 1955 and was called Operation DANTE. The antiaircraft artillery, used in a ground support role, and RAF aircraft supported the operation. They used attacks by fire to drive an estimated 300 terrorists from positions deep in the forest toward the ambush line. The previous lack of success of the forest sweep made this forest domination technique appear to be a better tactic.

At the end of the first week, however, the results were not encouraging. The aircraft continued to bomb and strafe the forest. During the second week the troops moved into those areas to search out and destroy any survivors of the Mau Mau gang. Operation DANTE continued for a month but in the end only served to confirm General Lathbury's feeling that the army was not the best instrument at the time.

At the same time, the population sweep was meeting with increased success. Tribal Police and Kikuyu Guard units formed stop lines on one edge of the forest and a sweep line of Africans, mostly women, would sweep through the forest hacking down the underbrush and killing every living thing encountered, including Mau Mau. They cut up in small pieces any Mau Mau caught in their path. Certain operations of this kind utilized up to 70,000 Africans shoulder to shoulder in the sweep line. The development and utilization of this technique helped to increase the flow of surrenders besides encouraging the African population to help itself.

It was announced in Nairobi on 1 September 1955 that two battalions of British and one battalion of Africans would be withdrawn in the following four months, leaving approximately 5,000 British and 7,000 African troops still in the Colony.[5]

In the last three months of 1955, Mau Mau activities were almost entirely confined to thefts of cattle.

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[5]"Kenya", Keesings Contemporary Archives, Vol. X, p. 14423.

CHAPTER VII

FINAL OPERATIONS

After the completion of Operation DANTE the only functioning Mau Mau gangs were those in the Aberdares. Several small gangs remained in the Mount Kenya area but they were cut off from their source of supply by the great ditch and the police. The Special Forces continued to achieve good results against the gangs--since April 1955 they had disposed of 24 of the 51 major leaders.

It was estimated that there were probably 1,500 Mau Mau scattered throughout the 6,000 square miles of the rugged Aberdares. The Security Forces were ineffective against them as were the pseudo gangs because the Mau Mau were by then suspicious of everyone, including other bonafide Mau Mau gangs. They were the target of an intensive psychological warfare program in which leaflets and aircraft-mounted loudspeakers were used.

A major operation by the security forces took place during the first three weeks of the year when a gang of some 70 terrorists was surrounded in the swamp on the shores of Lake Naivasha in the Rift Valley. Twenty-two terrorists were killed, captured, or gave themselves up during the operation.

The success of the final campaigns against isolated pockets of Mau Mau resistance was once again the direct result of the efforts of Police Commissioner Henderson. Since he knew the Mau Mau probably better than anyone in Kenya, he recruited additional ex-Mau Mau to lead groups back to where they came from. Their

recent membership in the forest gangs enabled them to be especially effective. After months of intensive work by Henderson and his pseudo gangs, the personal dual between Henderson and General Kiamathi, the top Mau Mau leader in the Aberdares, ended in the capture of Kiamathi. His capture on 17 October 1956 marked the end of the Mau Mau as a threat to the internal security of the colony. In the end it had taken Africans with European leadership to find the way to the last of the important Mau Mau.

Two British battalions plus certain ancillary units (2,200 troops) were withdrawn from Kenya between April and June, leaving only one British battalion in the forces engaged against the Mau Mau. Lathbury subsequently announced that at the end of a 26-day special operation in the forest southwest of Mount Kenya, the terrorist strength in Meru had been reduced to the point where it no longer presented a military problem. The King's Africa Rifles were therefore being withdrawn.[1]

Governor Sir Evelyn Baring declared on 3 November 1956 that only 200-300 terrorists were still active. Eighteen months previously, 51 major gang leaders had been at liberty. Now only two were still at large, the better known being Stanley Mathenge, former second in command to Kiamathi. Therefore Baring directed that the police take over the anti-terrorist operations from the army.[2]

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[1]"Kenya", Keesings Contemporary Archives--Weekly Diary of World Events, Vol XI (1957-58), p. 15632.

[2]Ibid.,

Governor Baring who had served throughout the Mau Mau emergency period was due to retire in 1957 but agreed to stay on for an additional 18 months to see the task through to completion. He was replaced as Governor in January 1960 by Sir Patrick Renison.

By the end of 1956, the operational phase of the Emergency had ended. On 12 January 1960 the new Governor declared the end of the Emergency.

A summary of the casualty figures at the end of 1956 was as follows:[3]

	Killed	Captured	Wounded
Mau Mau	10,527	2,633	
Security Forces	600		579
Europeans	(63)		(102)
Asians	(3)		(12)
Africans	(534)		(465)
Loyal Africans	1,826		918
Europeans	32		26
Asians	26		36

Combat figures revealed that among the various groups making up the security force, the greatest damage to Mau Mau was inflicted by the Kikuyu Home Guard and the Tribal Police. Between them they had accounted for 4,686 or 42% of the Mau Mau killed.

Perhaps the most surprising statistic of all is the number of Europeans killed--32--yet the war was fought with the aim of driving them from Kenya. The monetary cost was about $150,000,000, half of which was borne by the Kenya government.

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[3]Majdalany, p. 221.

CHAPTER VIII

LESSONS LEARNED

> Our system may not be suitable for other countries and we do not say that the methods we used were necessarily the best. All we say is that these methods worked in Malaya. We learned the hard way by making mistakes, trying schemes which did not work, and then evolving others until we hit on a workable answer. There is no textbook solution to guerilla warfare, but possibly some of the basic principles we used, suitably modified, might be of assistance to other countries with a similar Communist terrorist problem. [1]

Except for the reference to the Communist threat, these final points from the standard Malayan police lecture might well have been written about the events that transpired in Kenya during the period 1952-1956.

What were the lessons learned from Kenya that might be useful to those faced with a similar uprising? What did the British military forces in particular do right or wrong during the Mau Mau period? The subsequent paragraphs will attempt to focus on these specific questions in an effort to add to our limited knowledge of techniques to be employed and the pitfalls to be avoided in low intensity conflicts.

As indicated in the pre-conflict case study and other references, the Kikuyu had grievances that were easily exploited, exaggerated, and used in developing ill feeling against the Europeans. Some of these grievances were: the layered social structure, the

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[1]Waller, p. 2.

lack of opportunity for educational and economic advancement, a political establishment dominated by whites, discrimination, and the alleged theft of tribal land. The participation of may Kikuyu in World War II also created discontent. In addition, the Kikuyu traits of superstition, secretiveness, etc. were easily exploited by Mau Mau leaders.

In hindsight it is fair to state that the colonial government had adequate warning of the impending Mau Mau rebellion but lacked the will and means to stop it. There was no government plan to either defeat the impending emergency by military means or to remove the basic conditions that were causing the unrest. Any actions which the government proposed to take had to be cleared with London--a time-consuming operation. At the point where constructive measures were required, the government imposed instead extremely harsh measures. Another contributing factor was that during the pre-conflict period the Labor government in London had other problems and was reluctant to take decisive action.

The Mau Mau achieved their political goals but suffered a disastrous military defeat because of their:

1. Apparent lack of a strategy, clear-cut objectives, or methods of operation;

2. Lack of communication/coordination between the various Mau Mau units;

3. Poor leadership and poor organization of units;

4. Inadequate weaponry;

5. Failure of the Mau Mau movement to spread to other tribes;

6. Lack of external support or advice;

7. Inability to maintain the loyalty of its members or the Kikuyu population;

8. Excessive use of force (e.g., the massacre at Lari) and the extreme violence in conjunction with oathings.

British military successes were due less to purely military operations than to an effective integration of all available means. Some of the more important lessons learned are as follows:

1. Initially, there were too few police to provide the required security and it became necessary for military forces to perform static type duty--a poor use of military forces.

2. Initially, the intelligence organization was poor. The Police Special Branch was undermanned and did not have the subordinate elements extending down to the provinces. Military intelligence was nonexistent but as soon as District Military Intelligence officers were sent from England attention was given to military intelligence requirements.

3. Once the State of Emergency was declared, the initial military efforts were defensive and were not successful. Security forces were slow to react to Mau Mau terrorist techniques; however, the initiative quickly changed when offensive operations were undertaken.

4. The British and indigenous forces produced few tactical innovations. The most important technique developed, which once again was adopted from Malaya, was that of using guerrilla-type tactics to carry the offensive to the guerrillas. The pseudo gangs

and later the Special Forces used this technique with great success. Kikuyu against Kikuyu turned out to be one of the most successful weapons in the fight against the Mau Mau.

5. In any such future campaigns, all security forces need to be under a central head early in the conflict. This was achieved in Kenya in January 1953, when MG Hinde was appointed Director of Operations, and continued with the appointment of GEN Erskine as Commander-in-Chief.

6. Villagization (a concept imported from Malaya), a firm grip on the supply base of Nairobi (Operation ANVIL), and vastly improved intelligence services eventually prevented the Mau Mau from operating without being caught.

7. British populace and resource control measures were strikingly successful. Villagization resettled approximately a million Kikuyu in some 720 villages, isolating the Mau Mau from their political and logistical base. This highly unorthodox step proved very effective and probably did as much on a long range basis to win the struggle as any other individual measures undertaken. The Africans built the new villages with their own materials at a cost of approximately $140 per village. In further populace control measures, the British issued new forgery-proof identity cards and cordoned off the area around Nairobi thus preventing those returned to the Reserve from coming back. In addition to the villagization program, General Erskine strongly held that tight control of food offered the greatest promise of destroying the terrorists. Rigid control on the transit of foodstuffs was

initiated. Crops were protected and livestock corralled under guard at night as a defense against theft and mutilation.

8. Mau Mau intelligence was considered excellent throughout the insurgency, although it lacked characteristic western sophistication. The key sources were the Mau Mau employed by whites or sympathizers working in shops, military installations, etc. The greatest single blow dealt Mau Mau intelligence was the virtual elimination of trusted party members from Nairobi as a result of Operation ANVIL.

9. A major problem confronting British troops in the jungle environment was that of self-location by troops on patrol away from base camp. Valuable time was often lost in tracking operations because of the disorientation suffered. The use of the Kenya Police Reserve Air Wing for contact reconnaissance helped alleviate the problem.

10. Bombings in the forest had limited success but use of the aircraft from the Kenya Police Reserve Air Wing to pinpoint friendly locations, guide teams toward Mau Mau targets, and air drop supplies, letters, etc. proved valuable.

11. The superiority in strength of the security forces proved to be a limited advantage. Mau Mau mastery of the forest more than compensated for the disparity in strength.

12. The use of large formations of troops against the Mau Mau proved impractical. Land travel was unbelievably difficult over narrow, mountainous jungle trails. Extreme altitudes prevented use of helicopters to increase mobility.

13. As in Malaya, when contact was made by patrols, guerrilla reactions were so quick that rarely was there time for more than one rifle shot before the guerrillas disappeared into the jungle and made their escape. An effective detector or sensor device might materially assist in the people detection problem in both offensive and defensive situations.

14. Smells were detactable--insect repellents and deodorants which were completely odorless were necessary to prevent disclosure of human presence.

15. In many cases the decisive factor in success was not formation, size of party, range information or weapon training, but the individual reaction of a soldier suddenly encountering a guerrilla after many hours of fruitless patrolling.

16. Sweep-type operations in the forest proved futile. New tactics concentrating on area domination by small groups of military personnel plus the so-called "population sweeps" by as many as 70,000 Kikuyu men and women proved to be much more successful.

17. British training methods had to be revised to cope with the conditions in Kenya. The British soldier has to learn to be a sharpshooter and to live in the forest in order to defeat the Mau Mau in his forest environment. Greater use had to be made of sentry/tracker dogs and native African trackers. This required special training. Relatively few individuals in the army or the police could speak the Kikuyu language. Greater emphasis was placed on at least a minimal capability in the language. Training

prior to arrival in Africa stressed physical conditioning and each unit coming from England went through a month-long acclimatization period at their African training camp.

18. Designation of Prohibited/Special Areas which were forms of free fire zones aided in separating the Mau Mau from his support in the Reserve.

19. There was a need for civil-military coordination. This was achieved by the formation of the so-called Emergency Committees at all levels, which permitted integrated planning and implementation.

20. Doctrine was based on the use of surprise, on speed of reaction, on simple plans. Battle Drill (Immediate Action Drill), a standard procedure in British training, was modified for jungle warfare so that despite quickly developing situations and low jungle visibility, each member of a small force not only performed his own task immediately but also knew the location and task of the other members.

21. Psychological and intelligence operations were closely related. Effective psyops and intelligence-gathering programs had their beginnings when information on Mau Mau was provided by Mau Mau converts such as General China. Prior to that time the Government was faced with a well-executed Mau Mau psychological campaign utilizing political activity, propaganda, and the mystique of the oath. For many Africans it had assumed the aspect of a new religion.

22. Control of firearms was a continuous problem. The Mau Mau acquired many by theft from white civilians while most ammunition was obtained by stealing from government depots. Both sources were subsequently shut off when security measures were tightened.

23. Rehabilitation of captured Mau Mau and suspects was a remarkably effective operation. It was administered in progressive stages which included the best features of western and Mau Mau psyops and incorporated as well, the Communist technique of public self-criticism or confession. Above all, the British realized that the key lay in firm, kind, and gentle handling; good treatment and food; the stabilizing influence of other former Mau Mau; and the faith shown by allowing them to retain their weapons in camp and to roam freely.[2]

In hindsight it is easy to forecast that the Mau Mau campaign was doomed from the outset because it lacked the outside support necessary for a successful insurgency, it was facing a strong, determined government, and it did not have the support of the majority of the people.

Never was the British soldier equal to the Mau Mau. Victory came about because of good use of available intelligence, rehabilitation of prisoners/suspects and their use to fight Mau Mau and isolation of the Mau Mau from the population.

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[2]USA Command and General Staff College, RB 31-100: Internal Defense (1970), Vol. I, p. 6-26.

Full independence came to Kenya on 12 December 1963, eleven years after the State of Emergency was declared. The Mau Mau movement had achieved its political goals in spite of the almost tragic-comic conduct of the insurgency.[3]

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[3]Ibid., p. 6-29.

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BRITISH TROOP LIST

1952-56

British Army Units

Infantry	39 Brigade
	1st Bn The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment)
	1st Bn Devonshire Regiment
	49 Brigade
	1st Bn Royal Northumberland Fusiliers
	1st Bn Inskilling Fusiliers
	1st Bn Lancashire Fusiliers
	1st Bn Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment)
	1st Bn Gloucestershire Regiment
	1st Bn King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
	1st Bn King's Shropshire Light Infantry
	1st Bn Princess Victoria's Royal Irish Fusiliers
	1st Bn Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own)
Engineer	39 Corps Engineer Regiment

Royal Air Force Units

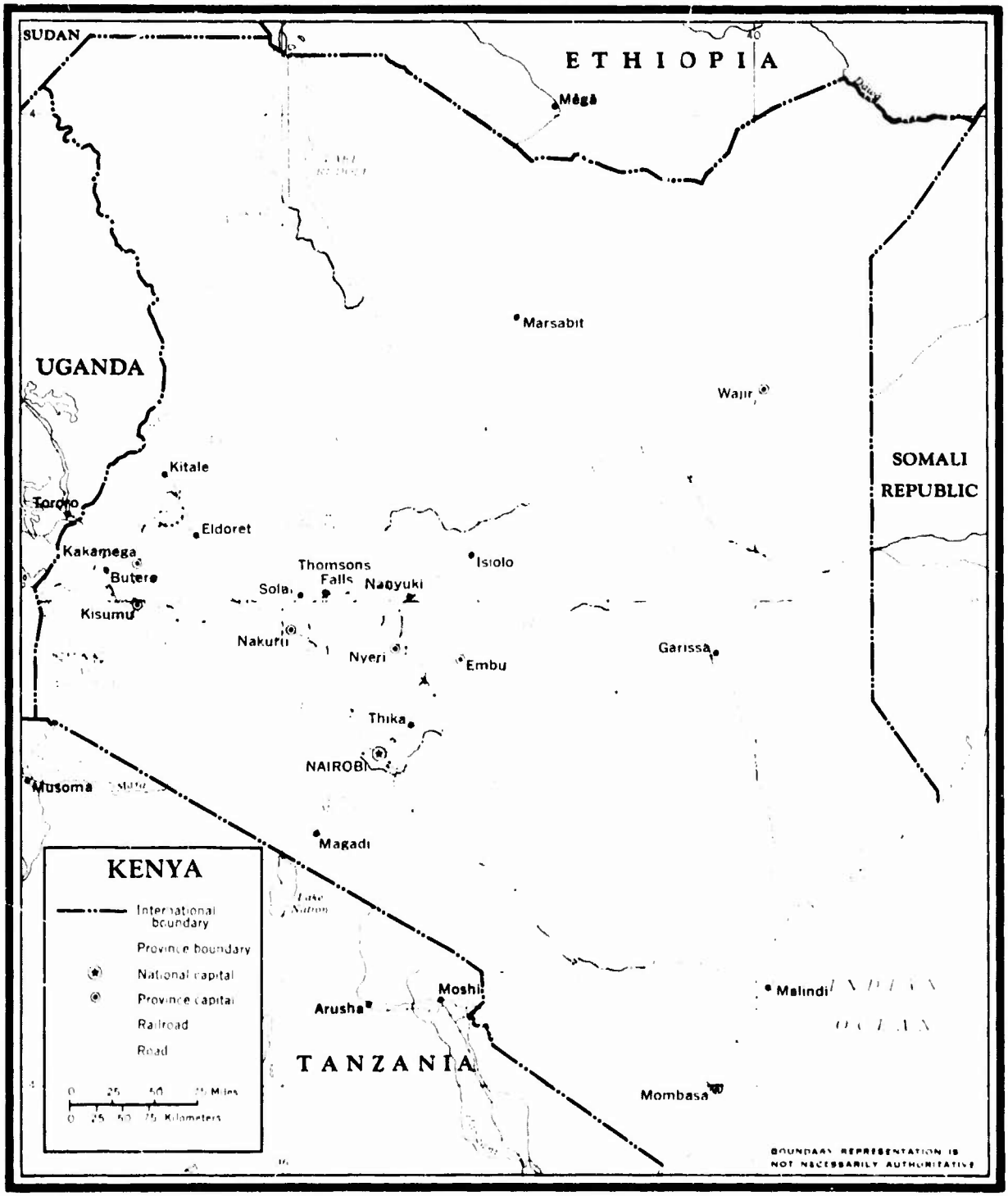
97 Squadron RAF (Lincoln bombers)
plus two flights of Harvard aircraft

East African Units

Armor	2 East Africa Independent Armored Car Squadron
Anti-aircraft	156 Heavy AA Battery (East Africa Artillery)
King's Africa Rifles	70 Brigade
	3,4,5,6,7, 23 Battalions, King's Africa Rifles
	25 and 26 Battalions, King's Africa Rifles

The Kenya Regiment (200-300 Kenya-born Europeans)
(The Emergency Force)

APPENDIX 1



Base 50358 3 66

FIGURE 1. Physical and Political Map of Kenya

Reproduced from best available copy.

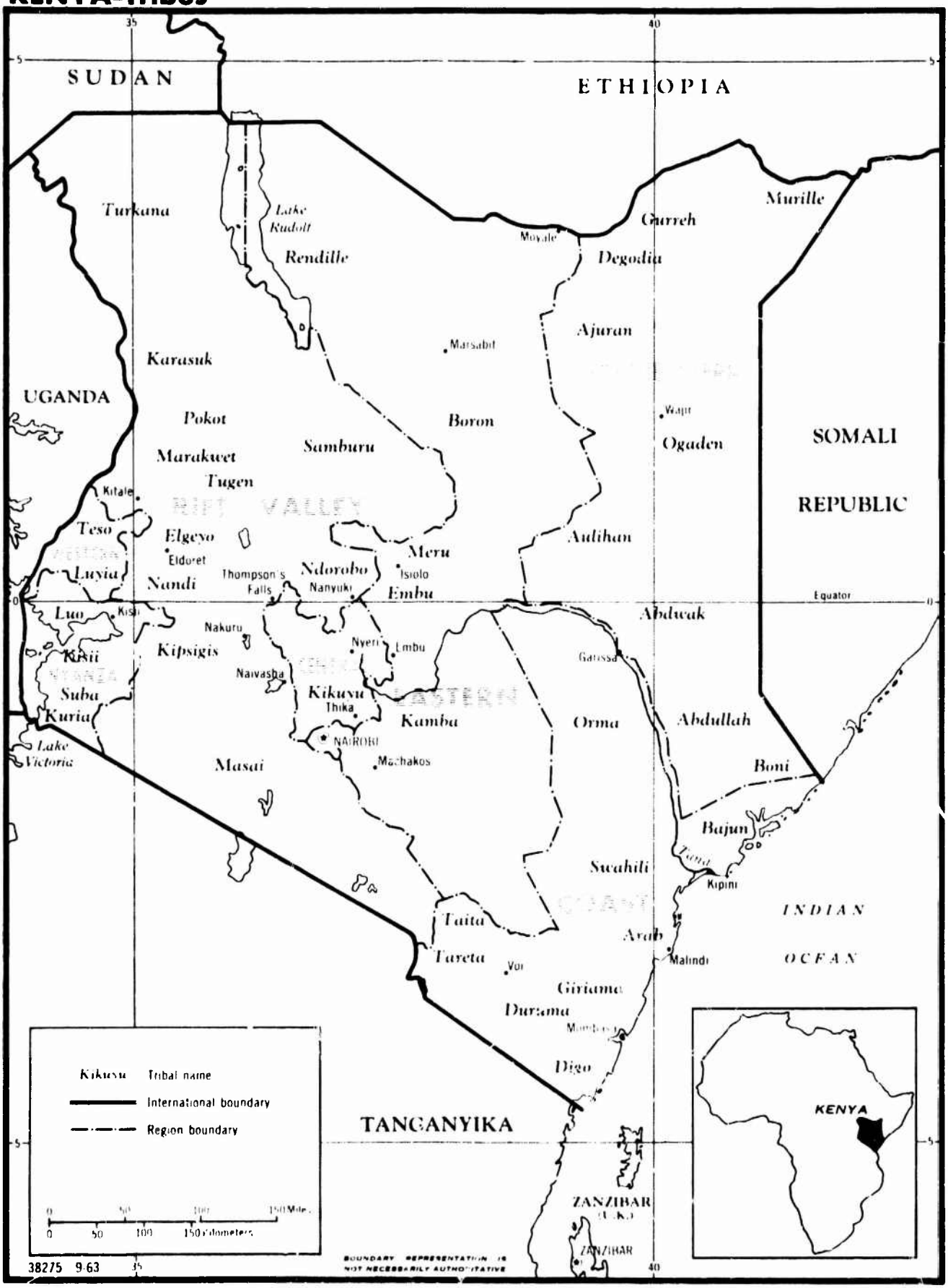


FIGURE 2. Kenya's Tribes and Provinces

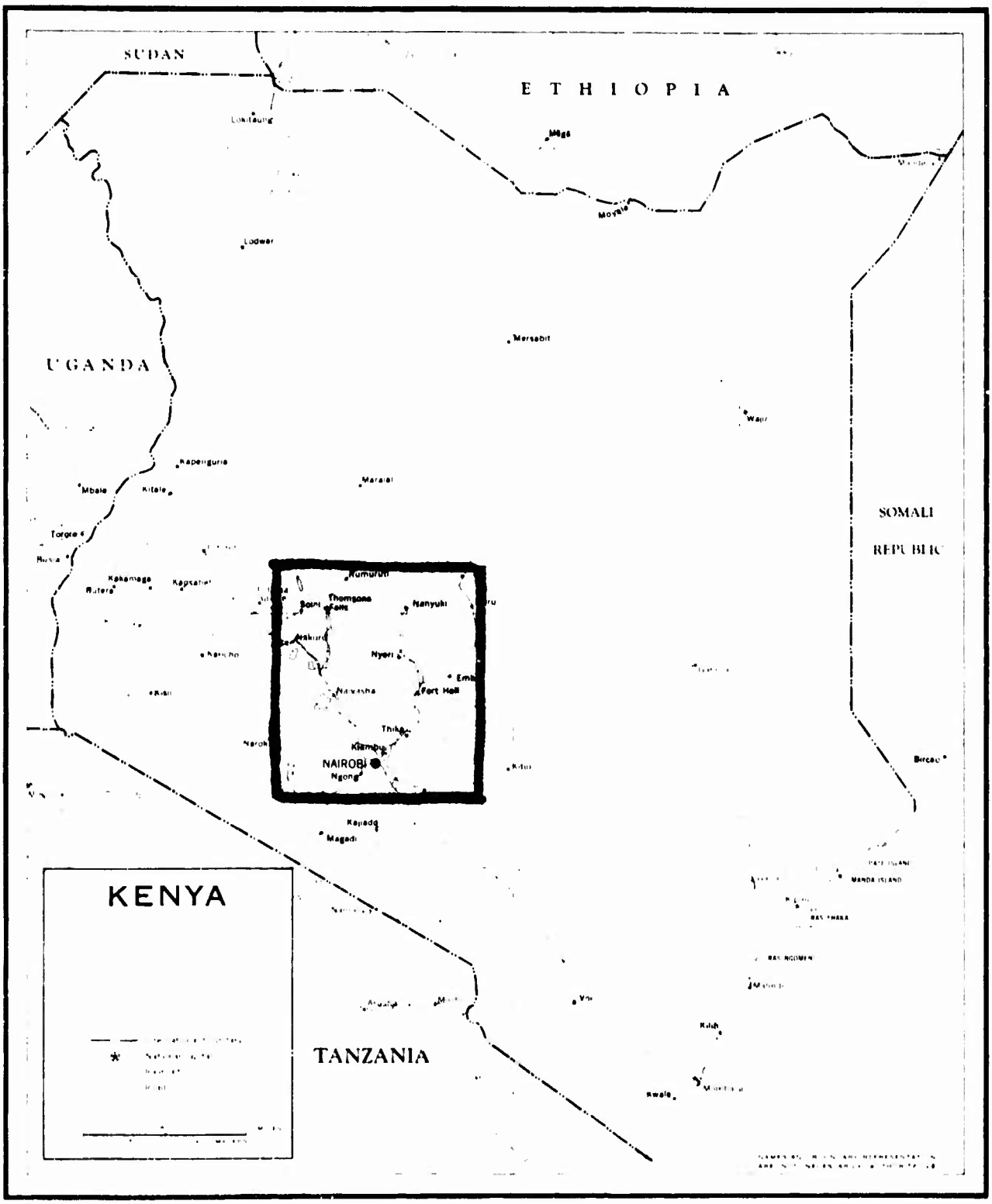


FIGURE 3. Operational Area