

# EAST AFRICAN ALERT



## FOUR MUTINIES IN FIVE DAYS SPARKED OFF A COLOSSAL MILITARY OPERATION

**R**EBELS overthrow a government; soldiers mutiny, sack their British officers and rampage through towns terrorising civilians including British women and children; three African leaders appeal for help. It all happened within a few days and initiated the biggest military operations since Suez. It was a hectic month for an already extended British Army Strategic Reserve. Here is the diary of that month:

### DAY ONE

About 600 armed rebels overthrew the government on the tropical island of Zanzibar about 20 miles off the coast of East Africa. Britons barricaded themselves in their homes as mobs raided police armouries, cable offices, the radio station and airfield. A request for British troops to be flown in was refused.

### DAY FOUR

One company of 1st Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment, flew from its barracks in Nairobi to Mombasa and embarked on the Royal Navy frigate *Rhyl* which sailed immediately for Zanzibar with orders to assist in the evacuation of Britons if necessary.

### DAY SIX

The coup was complete. About 150

Britons, mainly women and children, left the island.

### DAY SEVEN

Soldiers and sailors on HMS *Rhyl* gave 62 pints of blood to a Zanzibar hospital where hundreds of injured natives were being treated.

### DAY NINE

Flare-up Number Two. Soldiers of 1st Battalion, Tanganyika Rifles, mutinied over pay and promotion at their barracks near Dar-es-Salaam, forcing their British officers and non-commissioned officers to leave for Nairobi immediately by air. Mutineers rampaged through the town setting up road blocks and taking over the radio station. To protect British nationals the aircraft carrier *Centaur*, with 500 Royal Marines

of 45 Commando aboard, sailed from Aden, and HMS *Rhyl* left Zanzibar, the ships meeting off Dar-es-Salaam. The 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards, cut short a training exercise in Aden and immediately returned to barracks in Kenya.

### DAY TEN

Men of 2nd Battalion, Tanganyika Rifles, 400 miles away, joined the mutiny and sacked their officers, who were similarly flown to Nairobi. The destroyer *Cambrian* left Aden for the East African coast.

### DAY TWELVE

Flare-up Number Three. In neighbouring Uganda, men of 1st Battalion, Uganda Rifles, kidnapped the country's foreign minister at their barracks at Jinja and forced him to authorise substantial pay rises. British officers and non-commissioned officers were confined to their quarters and no one was allowed to approach or leave the barracks. Mr Milton Obote, the Prime Minister, appealed to Britain for help

Above: Scots Guards leap from a truck to take over an airport in Uganda shortly after the third mutiny

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and within 45 minutes seven aircraft left Nairobi carrying men of 1st Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment, and 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards. They landed at Entebbe and set about securing the airfields and other strategic installations.

### DAY THIRTEEN

Flare-up Number Four. Men of 11th Battalion, Kenya Rifles, mutinied, seizing weapons and ammunition. In the confusion one man was killed before scout cars of 3rd Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, arrived at the barracks at Lanet, 100 miles north of Nairobi, and



Mutinious troops of the Tanganyika Rifles are marched off at gun point by a Royal Marine commando.

in Northern Ireland, and 6th Infantry Brigade Group in Rhine Army, were placed on seven-day stand-by.

### DAY FOURTEEN

Dawn in Tanganyika. While HMS *Cambrian* fired her guns as a diversion, 60 Royal Marine commandos landed by helicopter from HMS *Centaur*. They were led by Brigadier Patrick Sholto Douglas MC, the British commander of the Tanganyika Rifles, who had been in hiding since the mutiny. They moved quickly to the mutineers' barracks, rushed the guardroom and took over the camp while most of the soldiers were asleep. The remainder of 45 Commando were ferried ashore by helicopter to assist in rounding up the mutinous battalion.

Dawn in Uganda. One platoon of the Staffordshires, armed with *Sten* guns, stormed the guardroom and arsenal at Jinja Barracks. By the time the African soldiers were awake, Staffordshires and Scots Guards were in complete control. British women and children were evacuated and the African soldiers disarmed.

Dawn in Kenya. Royal Horse Artillery

scout cars were fired on when they approached the mutineers' barracks at Lanet. They returned the fire and finally crushed the mutiny after Mr Jomo Kenyatta promised to investigate the army's pay and conditions.

### DAY FIFTEEN

The mutinies had crumbled. Arrangements were made to disband the Tanganyika Rifles; 500 men of the Uganda Rifles were sacked after another pre-dawn raid on their barracks by the Staffordshires; and investigations started in Kenya.

Then followed the post-mortems, the investigations, recriminations, dismissals, arrests, trials and above all, from the three African leaders, sincere thanks and praise for the conduct of the British troops.

And while the situation slowly returned to normal, Mr Duncan Sandys, Commonwealth Relations Secretary, speaking in the House of Commons, congratulated the three Services for the "promptness and efficiency with which they discharged these difficult and unusual tasks."



Tanganyikan mutineers hand over their weapons to British troops after being captured in the bush.

restored order. The Gunners secured the armoury, set up road blocks and took over the officers' mess where the British families had gathered. In Nairobi the remaining company of the Scots Guards took over key positions and 8th Independent Recce Flight, Army Air Corps, moved its aircraft further away from the capital for safety.

Meanwhile troops were moving fast. About 680 Royal Marines of 41 Commando left Lyncham for Kenya. HMS *Rhyl* and the survey ship *Oteen*, with a company of Gordon Highlanders on board, arrived in Mombasa harbour. The company of the Staffordshires which had been aboard HMS *Rhyl* throughout the crises was flown to Nairobi. In England, 26 Regiment, Royal Artillery, was placed on short-notice alert at Shoeburyness as spearhead unit of the Strategic Reserve. The 1st Battalion, The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment, in Malta; 39 Infantry Brigade Headquarters, Northern Ireland; and 1st Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment, in Rhine Army, were all put on 72 hours alert and 1st Battalion, The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment,



With fixed bayonets, two men of the Royal Horse Artillery guard prisoners in a football goal net after the Kenya Rifles' mutiny.



### COVER PICTURE

When men of the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards, went into action to quell the mutiny in Uganda they had to leave behind Ullita and Fortior, the twin lion cubs they have adopted as battalion mascots. *SOLDIER*'s front cover picture, taken by an Army Public Relations photographer in Kenya, shows Ullita giving a friendly pat on the cheek to Regimental Sergeant-Major Campbell Graham. Unfortunately it probably won't be many months now before the cuddly twins are a little less cuddly and a lot less friendly!