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Green Leader: Operation Gatling, The Rhodesian Military's Response To The Viscount Tragedy



Synopsis

On 3 September 1978, a Russian-supplied heat-seeking missile shot down an Air Rhodesia Viscount civilian airliner shortly after it took off from the lakeside holiday resort of Kariba in the Zambezi Valley. Miraculously, 18 people, including small children, survived the crash only for most of them to be gunned down in cold blood shortly after the crash by terrorists loyal to the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) leader Joshua Nkomo. Just days before the plane was shot down, the Rhodesian leader, Ian Smith, had met secretly with Nkomo for discussions, brokered by Britain, Zambia and Nigeria. However, this event dramatically changed the political landscape and wrecked a plan by the British government to mold an alliance between Smith and the Ndebele leader Nkomo, and smoothed the path for the Shona leader Robert Mugabe to become the first leader of Zimbabwe. In this fascinating two-part account, Ian Pringle (author of *À Dingo Firestorm*), describes the Viscount tragedy and the military response. He uses exclusive interviews with two survivors of the crash and the massacre, and with the first person to arrive at the horrendous crash scene (commanding officer of the Rhodesian SAS Regiment), as well as accounts from other key witnesses, to recreate the tragic event. He describes the white-hot anger felt by the small white community in Rhodesia, who howled for revenge and demanded martial law and total war. The Rhodesian military responded with Operation Gatling, a risky three-phased revenge attack on Nkomo's guerilla bases and infrastructure in Zambia. The prime target was Nkomo's military headquarters on the outskirts of Lusaka, the Zambian capital. The author uses a cockpit voice recording from the lead Canberra bomber, and exclusive interviews with the lead navigator and pilots involved in the raid to tell a fascinating, authentic and gripping story of the audacious attack, which became known as the Green Leader Raid. On the same day as Green Leader, two more bases in Zambia were attacked using air power and elite paratroops and helitroops in a well-honed tactic known as vertical envelopment. Pringle uses his own experience as a jet and helicopter pilot, and skydiver, as well as top-secret documents and interviews with key personnel involved in Operation Gatling to recreate a gripping account of Rhodesia's first large-scale attacks on Zambia. He describes the aftermath, another tragedy and a reprisal attack in Angola, which brought southern Africa to the very brink of a full-scale regional war. Green Leader is an exciting recreation of a calamitous time in southern African history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Excellent narration of a little known piece of history, largely ignored by much of the world. Very well written, with a raw account of the heinous terrorist Viscount Hunyani attack that led to Operation Gatling, in depth analysis of military operations, it's background, as well as personal information of the major players. It also gives an interesting backdrop to what the Southern African political climate has become.

Excellent history of a turbulent time. Well researched and written. A really good read. The author interviewed many of the people involved. I'm a buff on the Rhodesian Bush War, especially the RhAF and learned many new things in Green Leader. The book not only tells the story of the shoot down and retaliation, but gives good background to put the events into context.

A good read--what a pity about Rhodesia/Zimbabwe--doesn't anyone ever learn ??

An excellent factual review which I found hard to put down.

The world complains when a terrorist organisation takes down a civilian aircraft ,expecting justice ,however when two of Rhodesia's civil planes where shot down no politician in the world

condemned the act even worse was the fact that the terrorists, they then raped and murdered the survivors of one of the planes. Green leader lead is the account of Rhodesias retaliatory attack on the base of the perpetrators. Excellent account and the detail in the planning is interesting.

excellent book well worth the read.

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