

Soldiers of Fortune: An Examination of the Role and Effectiveness of Mercenaries during the Congo Crisis

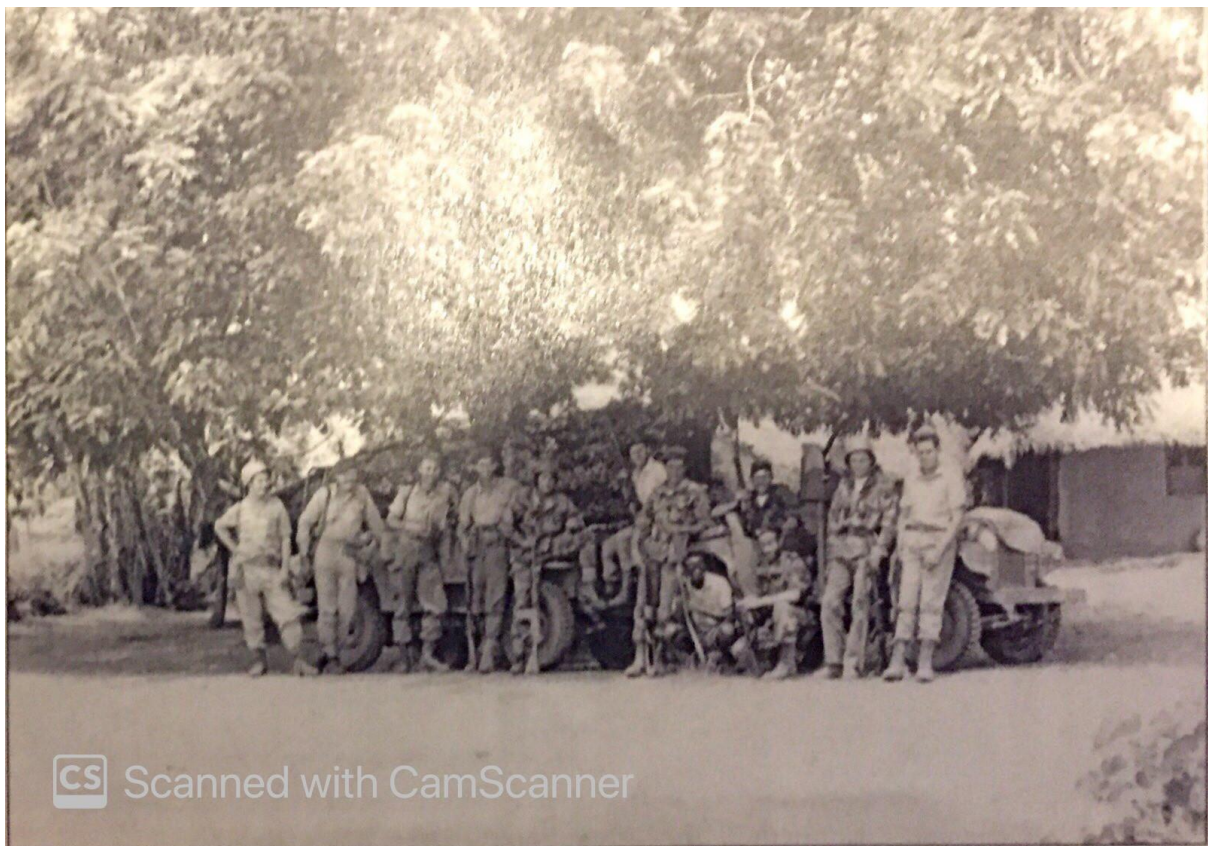


Figure 1.

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Abstract

This dissertation endeavours to examine the nature of the role, and overall effectiveness that the mercenary forces played during Congo Crisis. This will be achieved by breaking the Congo Crisis down into its timeline of events: prior to the Crisis, the Katanga Succession, and the Simba Revolt. Within each section, an examination of the mercenary activity will be conducted, allowing for a judgment on the criteria mentioned. Moreover, comparisons will be drawn to the opposing and competing forces during the Crisis, and from these, assessments can be made of the mercenary performance, allowing for conclusions to be drawn related to the dissertation question. Finally, primary, and secondary sources shall be utilised as evidence to support the conclusions, with appropriate examine of the sources given.

Acknowledgements

Dedicated to my Grandfather David Heighway, who passed away on 5th May 2020, and whose love and support has seen me to where I am now.

Dedicated to all members of my family: my mother Joanne, my father Darrin, my grandmother Jean, my uncle Tomas and my brother George; who have lent me tremendous support during my time at university and who have ultimately encouraged me to push myself and obtain a degree even when things did not go well the first time.

Dedicated to Lester Mason, my personal tutor, who throughout my two years at Lampeter has provided an immense level of academic and personal support to me.

Dedicated to Alexander Scott, my dissertation supervisor, who has been incredibly supportive both academically and privately during my time at Lampeter.

Dedicated to Mike Hoare, the mercenary commander of 5 Commando, who passed away this year on the 2nd February 2020, and whose legendary exploits served as an inspiration for this dissertation and deserve to be remembered.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to all the mercenaries that served in the Congo: may the legend never die.

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Abbreviations

ANC – *Armée Nationale Congolaise* – Congolese National Army.

Congo – Democratic Republic of the Congo.

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency.

ONUC – *Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo* – United Nations mission to the Congo, a force established to provide military assistance to the Republic of the Congo.

PMC – Private Military Company – The modern evolution of the mercenary.

UN – United Nations.



Figure 2 – A map of the Congo during the Crisis.

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Introduction

The Cold War, that long period of tension between the East and West that existed for almost fifty years, is both historical and current; the repercussions of actions and decisions made still making themselves felt today. For many, the Cold War in Africa will be as unfamiliar as many of the other nuances of the Cold War: a great series of happenings that stretched across a dark and unfamiliar continent. While the scale of the conflict and strife that occurred across Africa was terrible, as with much of history, it remains a well for both academic research and contemporary understanding in all its tenses. Which leads to the topic of this dissertation, the Congo Crisis, and more specifically, the role and effectiveness of mercenary soldiers. Beginning in 1960, the “Congo Crisis” refers to a series of events that occurred within the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1960 and 1965.¹ During this five-year period, the Congo would experience many trials, starting with an attempted army revolt in 1960,² followed swiftly by an attempted succession by the state of Katanga between 1960 and 1963.³ Soon after this, a full-scale revolt called the “Simba Revolt” would occur, plunging the country back into chaos between 1964 and 1965,⁴ before finally ending with a military coup. Throughout the crisis, mercenaries would be present, fighting. In Katanga, they fought against the Congolese army and the United Nations⁵ and during the Simba Revolt, 5 Commando struggled against the Simba rebels. The actions of the mercenaries during the Congo Crisis helped dramatically return this old profession to the world stage, both reintroducing mercenary use into other Cold War engagements, but also bringing it into the modern age, which can still be felt on the geopolitical scene today in the form of Private Military Companies.⁶

¹ A. Mockler, *Mercenaries*. (London: Macdonald, 1970). 156.

² Ibid. – this is academically seen as the starting point of the crisis.

³ A. Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. (London: Corgi Books, 1986). 81.

⁴ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 178 – The story of the mercenary did not end with General Mobutu’s coup in 1965, but it fall outside the scope of this dissertation topic.

⁵ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 78.

⁶ C. Kinsley, *Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies*. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

The relevance of discussing the mercenary reappearance and involvement in the Congo Crisis covers multiple disciplines. Firstly, the Congo Crisis stands as a case study for different fields. In the case of this dissertation, it shall serve as a study of irregular soldiers and warfare, as well as their effectiveness and expansion from this conflict. For example, one aspect that shall be discussed in chapter 3, which shall focus on the Simba Revolt, is the mercenary tactic of high-speed assaults on enemy positions;⁷ one amongst many aspects discussed on the mercenary analysis. Secondly, the Congo Crisis stands as a strong decolonisation case study, due in part to the multiple angles that can be taken with it, such as the role of Patrice Lumumba.⁸ Lumumba's part in both the Congolese independence process and his impact on the Congo Crisis through his actions and legacy, is case in point of how decolonisation and its legacy can shape the future of a nation, and how as well a few men can help shape events for years to come. Therefore, this dissertation shall in part aim to cover this in a subsequent chapter, for the story of the Congo Crisis is heavily tied not only to the mercenary, but to Lumumba and others. Thirdly, the mercenary presents a remarkable chance at a microhistory study. In a similar vein to how Ernst Jungers autobiographical work "Storm of Steel," provides a unique and fascinating look into the life and experience of the German soldier in the First World War, the works that have come out of the Congo Crisis provide that same level of insight and unique understanding of these soldiers. Mike Hoare for example, the commander of 5 Commando during the Simba Revolt,⁹ wrote several memoirs and accounts of his time as a mercenary during the Congo Crisis,¹⁰ as well as a few of his later mercenary work.¹¹ As the focus of this dissertation will be on the mercenaries and their effectiveness within the crisis, a first-hand account will provide invaluable information in arguing for the effectiveness of the mercenary forces in the Congo.

Now the utility of this topic has been specified, the methodology is equally worthy of mention. As previously stated, the aim of this dissertation is to discuss the role and effectiveness of mercenaries during the Congo Crisis period, with specific attention paid to activities the mercenaries participated in, such as patrols, active combat and other related scenarios. Thus, the dissertation shall combine military analysis of the abovementioned situations with more regular analysis of the mercenary roles, and argue how without the

⁷ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 93

⁸ Ibid. 66.

⁹ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 175.

¹⁰ M. Hoare, *Congo Warriors*. (London: Robert Hale, 1991).

¹¹ M. Hoare, *The Seychelles Affair*. (London: Corgi Books, 1987).

appearance of the mercenaries in both individual cases and in general, the Congo Crisis would have gone very differently, with potentially deadlier consequences. Supporting evidence shall be found in both the contemporary secondary sources available, as well as the previously stated accounts published afterwards. Last of all, this dissertation shall be broken into several chapters, with each chapter specifically detailing a period of mercenary involvement within the Congo Crisis. This dissertation shall go like so: chapter one will focus on discussing the historiography and sources, providing an overview of the content therein; chapter two will cover the contextual information relating to the Congo Crisis and the historical nature of the mercenary trade; chapter three will focus on the Katanga succession between July 1960 and January 1963;¹² finally, Chapter four will cover the Simba Revolt which occurred between July 1964 till the end of the crisis in November 1965.¹³

¹² Mockler, *Mercenaries*. 156.

¹³ Ibid. 156.

Chapter One: Mercenary Historiography

From an academic perspective, the mercenary phenomenon in the Congo Crisis is very limited in its historiography. For secondary sources, historian Anthony Mockler appears to have been the leading researcher on the subject, with his 1970 work, *Mercenaries*,¹⁴ including four chapters on the mercenaries in the Congo. Mockler would edit and add to this subject with his 1986 work, “The New Mercenaries”; creating a detailed and informative source on the period and niche subject that has proven indispensable in completing this dissertation. Since 1986 however, few historians have published anything close to the work Mockler has on the subject. Andrew Hudson’s 2012 piece “Congo Unravelling” makes a similarly informative source on the military operations in the Congo, but other works have only made passing or small reference to the mercenaries in the Congo; one exception being “Katanga” by Christopher Othen, which published in 2018, is the most recent publication to address the mercenary in the Congo. So, therefore, the secondary source pool is of good quality, but has not been updated substantially in some time.

However, there are several primary sources in the English language on the Congo Crisis, such as accounts written by Commander Mike Hoare, Ivan Smith and even a documentary filmed at the time called “Africa: Blood and Guts.”¹⁵ This is not to mention media coverage, that captured the events for both morbid curiosity and ideological standpoints;¹⁶ such as the East German Radio referring to Hoare as “That mad bloodhound...”¹⁷ in broadcasts. Of course, other primary sources do exist. Jean Schramme’s “Le Bataillon Leopard¹⁸” and Siegfried Muller’s own account¹⁹ are both other first-hand accounts of the mercenary action during the

¹⁴ Ibid. 5.

¹⁵ Known as *Africa Addio* in its original Italian form, the film was retitled “Farewell Africa” for the UK and “Africa: Blood & Guts” for the USA, dubbed in English and released in 1966. Gualtiero Jacopetti was director on the film, and filmed footage across Africa, including the mercenaries at work in late 1964. Modern criticism of the film labels it as racist and mere shock value, but the sections covering the Mercenaries gives rare moving insight into the men who fought for money. So, for the sake of brevity, the allegations against the film, as well as the court case surrounding ethical questions of production, will not be covered as they are irrelevant to the discussion on the Mercenaries.

¹⁶ Attempting to locate such things for this dissertation has been made difficult by archival restrictions, the passage of time, and the COVID-19 lockdown, for which the writer makes apologies.

¹⁷ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 83.

¹⁸ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 151.

¹⁹ Ibid. 150. – Mockler does not mention the book by name, or is he very clear about when this book was written. But given Mockler’s publication of this work in 1970, and other information about Muller’s public life

Congo Crisis. But regrettably, these works were only ever published abroad in their native languages, and as for the purposes of this dissertation, attempting to track down and translate an existing copy of either work has not proven successful.

Now much of the English language primary sources come from Mike Hoare. An accountant by trade,²⁰ Mike Hoare had served in the Second World War as a rifleman and in the far east on Lord Mountbatten's staff. Originally from Dublin, Ireland, Hoare had emigrated to Natal, South Africa in 1947,²¹ starting a family and such before his mercenary adventures. Hoare's career as a mercenary began in 1961, amusingly enough in Katanga during the first turbulent year of independence. His role in the Katanga affair was limited, however. He led a mercenary unit known as 4 Commando,²² and worked against the Baluba's; an experience he documented in "The Road to Kalamata"²³ and "Congo Warriors."²⁴ But it would be during the Simba Revolt that Hoare would go from obscurity to "the most famous mercenary leader in the world."²⁵ "Mercenary,"²⁶ tag-lined as "Mike Hoare's personal story" of his mercenary experience in the Congo, is perhaps debatable in its authenticity or accuracy, if the cover is anything to go by.²⁷ Yet Mockler describes it as little more than a "simple chronicle" being "accurate" but neglects to cover the "awkward and interesting questions of motive, ambitions, and concealed pressures."²⁸ The adage of books and cover rings true in this case it would seem. There is also "Congo Warriors"²⁹ a seemingly more refined and updated version of the previous work, with previously unmentioned encounters added in. Moreover, there is the more recent publications by Ivan Smith, a white native of former-Rhodesia and now South Africa, who seems to have lived a storied life of adventure across the African continent. The introduction summaries it well, "a brief record of a few months in the life of a young and cocky youth who believed he was afraid of nothing."³⁰ And while the authenticity of this man's story is difficult to confirm without delving into records long since lost or tracking down associates that may or may not still be alive, it is a personal memoir. If Hoare's work is

after the Crisis, it must have existed prior to Mockler's publication. "wrote (or had written)" indicates that Mockler himself might not have been fully aware of the work.

²⁰ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 83.

²¹ Ibid. 83.

²² A precursor to the much more renowned, 5 Commando.

²³ M. Hoare, *The Road to Kalamata: A Congo Mercenary's Personal Memoir*. (London: Leo Cooper, 1989).

²⁴ M. Hoare, *Congo Warriors*. (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1991).

²⁵ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 83.

²⁶ M. Hoare, *Mercenary*. (London: Corgi Books, 1978).

²⁷ See figure 3.

²⁸ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 151.

²⁹ Hoare, *Congo Warriors*.

³⁰ I. Smith. *Mad dog killers: The Story of a Congo mercenary*. (Solihull: Helion & Company Ltd. 2012). 6.

a “simple chronicle³¹” of Command, then Smith’s work is the story of the average mercenary, providing the much-needed small details to help pick apart the effectiveness question. Finally, there is the documentary film, “Africa: Blood and Guts”, released to British Cinemas in 1966. An Italian documentary dubbed for the British market, Jacopetti’s “shockumentary” is relevant for a brief section it has on the mercenaries in the Congo. The narrator’s commentary, designed to highlight and contextualise events on screen, is a mix of poignancy and relevance to the mercenary story. In one section, music plays as shots of the various mercenaries are shown, ranging from colourful to the ordinary. The relevance of this is simple: pictures can explain much but moving images provide that much more detail. Gestures and glances, words, and work, captured in film that shows the men as they were: not frozen in time or embellished on a page. It is raw, and useful for judging effectiveness. Therefore, these sources, alongside the secondary sources from Mockler, Hudson and Namikas, can help shed a more intimate light on the proceedings, which will enable a better demonstration of the effectiveness of the mercenaries during the Congo Crisis. But before that, it is important to cover some context relating to the Congo Crisis, as it will illuminate later arguments and help illustrate the complex web that the Congo Crisis became.

³¹ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 151.

Chapter Two: An African Tinderbox

As mentioned, the mercenary story in the Congo requires first the detailing of the situation that the Congo, and by extension, the mercenaries found themselves in on the date of the 5th July 1960,³² the day the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC)³³ began its revolt and the day the Congo Crisis began. An important factor to note about the Congo Crisis is the rapidity of its escalation and the quick succession in which events transpired. For example, from the country's independence on 30th June 1960, it was only five days till the ANC revolts began, and only eleven days till Tshombe declared the succession of Katanga.³⁴ Thus, this quick descent into turmoil highlights the rather fragile nature of the newly independent Congo and the Belgian decolonisation effort. And while the independence movement and the decolonisation of the Congo are worthy dissertation topics in themselves, the relevance to the Mercenaries can be found in three key Congolese figures; Patrice Lumumba, Moïse Tshombe and Mobutu Sese Seko. It is these three men that ultimately defined the Congo Crisis and their relevance shall be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

But to begin, it is necessary to talk about the Mercenary, not as a person but as a profession, and that requires a definition. While the Oxford dictionary defines the mercenary as “a professional soldier hired by a foreign army”³⁵ this definition is troublesome. Firstly, it leaves out a lot of distinction that comes with the moniker mercenary, and secondly, you would be hard pressed to find that definition applied when they first reappeared in 1960. The mercenary was, for all intents and purposes, a non-entity before 1960. They existed of course, but mercenaries by this point had long since fallen out of fashion and had become relegated to the pages of history, ill-suited “to conflicts of ideologies fought between nation states”³⁶ as was the common belief. Although possible to chart the timeline of the mercenary profession and explore the nuances in applying the terminology to the various entities that existed like the French Foreign Legion,³⁷ that line of argument is not extremely relevant for this dissertation. In summary however, the mercenary professions origins are very old, going back to the earliest parts of human history, with one of the most notable early examples being that

³² Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 62.

³³ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 157.

³⁴ Ibid, 157.

³⁵ Oxford English Dictionary (8th Ed.). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). 352.

³⁶ Mockler, *Mercenaries*. 130.

³⁷ Ibid. 130.

of the 10,000 mercenaries hired by Cyrus in 401 BC and detailed by the Ancient Greek historian Xenophon in his '*Anabasis*' book.³⁸

Since then, the mercenary has appeared in some form or another, with the heyday of the mercenary prior to the events of the Congo Crisis being in the wars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Historian Michael Howard puts this view forward and summarises this trend in the aptly named chapter "The Wars of the Mercenaries" in his work "War in European History" with the following: "Whatever the rationale of wars... they were carried on by a largely international class of contractors on a purely commercial basis."³⁹

Immediately, this gives us a baseline for defining the term, that mercenaries are motivated by money and come from outside the nation they are employed by. Whilst the definition may not tell the complete story,⁴⁰ the international aspect of the mercenary goes against the ideological bases of modern armies, something Mockler touches on in '*Mercenaries*⁴¹'.

Therefore, the mercenary of the Congo Crisis can be summarised with three distinct characteristics. First, he is a soldier in some capacity. Secondly, he fights for money in the sense he has been hired to apply his trade. Thirdly, his loyalty is not to the nation of his origin. Now that this definition has been established, the outlying nature of the mercenary in this time becomes clear. The appearance of soldiers unaligned in any traditional sense, especially during a time of considerable change for all nations, was a shock to the world.

So, what is the relevance of this to answering the question about the effectiveness and role of the mercenaries? Well, this allows for a judgement on the calibre of men that would be involved as mercenaries in the Congo through an analysis of the historical trend. As noted in the quote by Howard,⁴² mercenaries were hired to pursue the hirers interests, regardless of what they might be. Now, considering that war is a dangerous business, and results matter, it can be concluded that the best available means will be sought, hence professional soldiers will be hired. Perhaps the signature of "professional" was not what mercenary critics would

³⁸ P. Tickler, *The Modern Mercenary: Dog of War, or Soldier of Honour?* (Wellingborough: Patrick Stephens Ltd, 1987). 15.

³⁹ M. Howard, *War in European History*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1976). 24.

⁴⁰ Congo Mercenaries sometimes fought for ideological or for principled reasons. Anti-communist sentiment was not uncommon amongst recruits.

⁴¹ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 143. - With the emergence of the nation-state and with them the rise of professional armies in the eighteenth century and the ideology behind them, the mercenary either ceased to exist or was incorporated into modern national armies. If they did exist, they were never referred to as such, and as Anthony Mockler points out, had acquired ideological characteristics that suited them for nation-state warfare and thus can be discounted from being mercenaries in the true sense.

⁴² Howard, *War in European History*, 24.

have used,⁴³ but as will be shown in chapter two, the mercenaries were from military backgrounds, and as all standing armies today are professional armies, the name fits. Therefore, the Congo Mercenaries were already going to be effective in some capacity, as they were professional soldiers, albeit not in the nation-state sense as outlined above.

Continuing, now that the mercenary has been established, it is time to concentrate on the locale of this research project, the Congo itself. The Congo prior to 1960 had a very controversial and bloody history, and one which could be subject of countless dissertations. But for the purposes of this dissertation, two important points about the Congo must be brought up: the geography and the key figures mentioned above. First, the Congo must be recognized for its sheer scale. To quote Mockler, “The Congo is an empire, not a nation.”⁴⁴ By this, Mockler is referring to the fact that the Congo is infinitely more complex than it would appear at first glance. Its landmass is greater than Europe’s and contained within this vast area are hundreds of tribes, each with its own distinct language and culture. Fundamentally, this presents another argument in favour of the mercenaries being an effective force. These men, who often were never more than numbering in the hundreds,⁴⁵ would have to cover an immense amount of ground, and as later chapters will demonstrate, were able to do remarkably well considering the obvious challenges placed before them.

In addition to the geographical factors, the mercenary story cannot be discussed without an expansion on the key figures in the Congo Crisis mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Each one of these figures are as unique in the way they impacted the Crisis as they are intertwined with each other, each acting as victim, antagonist, or protagonist at differing points of the Crisis. The first is Mobutu Sese Seko, a man who would end the Congo Crisis through a military coup on 25th November 1965.⁴⁶ Mobutu would start the crisis as a colonel in the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC) and would effectively further ignite the crisis by staging a coup against the then Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba on 14th September 1960. Following, this his decisions would help exacerbate the crisis, leading to Lumumba’s death in

⁴³ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 144. – Mercenary criticism was often levelled for many reasons, chief amongst which was the fact these men had left their former “professional soldiering” days behind and were now tarnishing the reputation of their previous occupations by association. Or in Hoare’s case, by not sticking with old traditions.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 155.

⁴⁵ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 73.- Exact numbers are difficult due in part to the chaos of the time and inaccessibility of old records, but there was an estimated 512 according to the United Nations in Katanga and roughly two hundred to three hundred in 5 Commando.

⁴⁶ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 177. – Mobutu would be the man who “come out on top” at the end of the Congo Crisis. He would also encapsulate the final period of mercenary activity in the Congo, serving as the focal point for mercenary plots. While these plots were unsuccessful, Mobutu would secure his power during this time, eventually running the country as a dictator for 32 years.

1961 and arguably causing the Simba Revolt three years later. Overall, Mobutu's relevance to the story of the Congo Mercenaries is found in his actions against Lumumba, which made the crisis worse, and his later coup in 1965.

Conversely, the figure of Patrice Lumumba is perhaps one of the more tragic figures of the Congo Crisis, the country's first democratically elected Prime Minister and a critical figure in achieving the Congo's independence from Belgium.⁴⁷ Lumumba's impact on the Congo cannot be overstated, but it is unfortunately largely irrelevant to the mercenary story in the Congo. Yet, while his life may not have much bearing, his death certainly does. Lumumba was executed in the Katanga bush on the 17th January 1961 by Katanga forces and it is here that his connection to the mercenaries arises. Due to the passage of time, and the little evidence that exists,⁴⁸ we may never truly know who truly killed Patrice Lumumba. But according to Mockler's 1986 work, it may have been a Belgian mercenary, Ruys, that "finished Lumumba off with a bullet to the head;"⁴⁹ certainly very convenient if for no one else than the ministers of Katanga. Yet Mockler also suggests that it may more likely have been Godefroid Munongo, a Katanga minister, who ordered and administered the killing by stabbing Lumumba to death with a bayonet.⁵⁰ Gerard and Kuklick support this claim against Munongo in their 2015 work⁵¹ but also implicate a Belgian policeman in the killing. Regardless, Lumumba's death would be viewed as a martyrdom by many, inciting them to use his memory and beliefs as a rallying cry for the Simba Revolt of 1964. Yet it would also have a more direct impact on the mercenary involvement in the Congo, especially the French mercenaries, which shall be discussed in the following chapter.

Finally, there is Moise Tshombe, the man most connected to the mercenary cause and the one who helped revive the profession. Tshombe's role within the Congo Crisis is the most fluid; serving as Prime Minister⁵² of the breakaway state of Katanga between 11th July 1960 and 21st January 1963, and as Prime Minister of the whole Congo from 30th June 1964 in order to deal with the Simba Revolt. He was finally being ousted from power by Mobutu in a coup on

⁴⁷ E. Gerard & B. Kuklick, *Death in the Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba*. (London: Harvard University Press, 2015). 1. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 205.

⁴⁹ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 67.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 67.

⁵¹ Gerard & Kuklick, *Murdering Lumumba*. 5. 205.

⁵² Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 61. 82. 84. – As the region was dominated by Belgian mining corporations like Union Minière, it has been argued that Tshombe was merely a front through which the capitalists could exert control over the natural minerals of Katanga. It is a statement which has evidence but is better left for another project.

25th November 1965, where he would flee once again, being used by his supporters and the mercenaries as a rallying sign in the subsequent years; before being kidnapped and brought to Algiers where he was imprisoned on 30th June 1967 and would die two years later to the day.⁵³ Tshombe's connection to the mercenaries is also the most straightforward, he was the man who employed them, first during the tenure of Katanga, and then again during his time as official Congo leader. And while more could be said about Tshombe, this summary allows for the first examination into the mercenary activity in the Congo, Katanga.

⁵³ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 156. 177.

Chapter Three: Katanga Against the World

The Katanga Succession was, like everything else in the Congo Crisis, a complicated affair. Beginning on the 11th July 1960 with Moïse Tshombe's proclamation and lasting till his signing of the official declaration on the 21st January 1963, the Katangese succession would mark the first major part of the Congo Crisis, and witness the reappearance of the mercenary profession. Geographically, the region and short-lived Republic of Katanga sits in the southern part of the Congo, flanked by Angola on its west, Northern Rhodesia on its south and Tanzania on its east. Politically, Katanga represented the further decline of the Congolese government.⁵⁴ Internationally, Katanga was a source of major international tension, leading to a long conflict between them and the United Nations. Irrespective of any of this, the state of Katanga would be the grounds in which the mercenary profession would reappear, and where an analysis of them can begin.

Now the how and why of the appearance of the mercenaries in Katanga can help in part answer the overall question of their role and effectiveness. The why of them serving in the Congo can be found in the issues that Tshombe faced. When Katanga declared secession from the Congo, one of the immediate problems faced was that of security. The revolts of the ANC had severely limited the capacity for Katanga to police and defend itself. A key cause of this lack of a gendarmerie force, was the ANC revolt at Camp Massart, Elizabethville in the Katanga region on the night of the 9th July, being one of the worst according to Mockler, due to large number of civilians who were in Elizabethville. The revolt was quelled, and the aftermath saw the disbanding of nearly all the ANC in the area, reducing their numbers from 2,800 down to 300.⁵⁵ The relevance of this is that the day after the revolt, Katanga succeeded, leaving them with an overall limited number of men to effectively police and contain a large area. In addition, international pressure was soon applied to Katanga with the United Nations arriving in the Congo on 14th July to replace the still stationed Belgian troops. The United Nations Operations in the Congo (ONUC)⁵⁶ mission was to keep the peace and help quell the crisis with the central government and Katanga. Yet as Mockler states, their "ultimate

⁵⁴ C. Othen, *Katanga: 1960 – 63*. (Stroud: The History Press, 2018). 46. 47. 216.

⁵⁵ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 62.

⁵⁶ A. Hudson *Congo Unravelling: Military Operations from independence to the Mercenary Revolt 1960 – 68*. (Solihull: Helion & Company Ltd, 2012). 2. - The acronym comes from the French way of saying it.

mission was to put an end to Tshombe's breakaway state...⁵⁷ and peacekeeping was a secondary concern.

Another issue that Tshombe immediately had to deal with was his political rivals from both within and without Katanga. As mentioned in chapter one, the Congo is a huge place with a wide ranging cultural and ethnic makeup, with one such threat being the Balubas of Northern Katanga. They were a rival political and tribal entity to Tshombe and threatened him by forming into gangs known as "Jeunesse"⁵⁸ in the north of the newly independent state. Thus, the situation by the end of 1960 was looking incredibly desperate. The ANC had invaded the north of Katanga, assisting the anti-Tshombe tribes, and had reached Kongolo.⁵⁹ This, combined with the United Nation's troops holding various positions throughout the country, meant that Tshombe needed help.

Thus, the decision to hire mercenaries was arrived at. It is arguable that the first "mercenary" to be employed by Tshombe was Colonel Guy Weber. He was hired as a military advisor, assisting Tshombe in identifying potential military actions and co-ordinating the military side of Katanga. Mercenary recruitment centres opened in Southern Rhodesia, with the goal of advertising "well-paid openings for police officers in the Katanga *gendarmeie*"⁶⁰ in newspapers and within country. When the centres moved, the recruiting changed slightly to "ex-servicemen in search of adventure."⁶¹ Directly, this presents the kind of "mercenaries" that the Katanga state was looking for: experienced men in some capacity who had a familiarity with war or policing. This identifies the "role" of the mercenary in Katanga. They would be expected to serve as soldiers, to fight for Katanga and help secure her independence. Moreover, Tshombe realised that he would need more than just former policemen to secure Katanga, and thus turned to the French for assistance. To cut a long story short, the French sent a veteran military officer by the name of Colonel Triniquier to evaluate things, but the events of Lumumba's death⁶² changed things, leading to Triniquier resigning and returning to Katanga with 20 officers who were hired on by Tshombe's government as

⁵⁷ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 63. – The UN had the backing of both the USSR and USA for once, yet Mockler's position could come from his friendlier disposition towards Mercenaries.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 63. – It translates to "youths" in French and given they were armed with sharpened chains amongst other weapons, the title was used as one of terror.

⁵⁹ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 23. – Mercenary pilots flying for Katanga helped break the advance and scatter the ANC, creating a stalemated front.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 64.

⁶¹ Othen, *Katanga*, 104. 106. – The recruitment offices would move to South Africa following trouble with the Rhodesian police. Also, the policeman role was ultimately a lie, leading to a few dissenting upon learning this or attempting to beat up their recruiter when he showed up to admire his work from South Africa.

⁶² Ibid. 68.

mercenaries in March 1961. This was not to be the only French mercenaries, as ex-French Foreign Legion paratroopers⁶³ from Algeria would start arriving in April 1961. Together, along with Belgian mercenaries⁶⁴ and their English-speaking counterparts from Rhodesia, South Africa and elsewhere, they formed *The Compagnie Internationale*, a force that would total between two hundred at the beginning and five hundred strong⁶⁵ by the end of the affair. Hence, the mercenaries were to be part of the Katanga gendarmerie, serving alongside regular Katangese forces as infantry and officers.

Now that much of the background of Katanga has been established, it is now time to turn attention to the actual effectiveness and role of the mercenaries in the Katanga conflict. The first reported engagement of the mercenaries was done against the Baluba's in Northern Katanga in late 1960. The mercenaries were split into mobile groups, with 20 mercenaries in mounted jeeps or armoured vehicles accompanying 80 Katangese in trucks. The tactic was often to drive hard and fast at enemy positions, utilising machine guns and speed of the vehicles to attack. Hudson claims this was quite effective against the Baluba's in the north, but does not give any details beyond vague generalisations and with him stating that by December of 1960 the north of Katanga was effectively out of government control⁶⁶ to the Baluba's, it is difficult to draw judgement on their early effectiveness. However, the detailing of the first proper Mercenary offensive makes judgement much easier. On 30th March 1961, Operation Conga began in earnest with an assault upon Manono,⁶⁷ with the *Compagnie Internationale* leading the operation. It is here that Othen provides a detailed account of mercenary effectiveness. As they approached Manono, they came under repeated ambush, amounting to a total of eighteen times.⁶⁸ Rifle fire from Baluba's in trenches; mortar and machine gun fire from the ANC; even arrows from the treeline. Once they reached the city at around 14:30, the mercenaries spearheaded the urban assault. At around 17:00 that afternoon, the battle was over. Thousands of ANC troops and Baluba tribesmen fled and numerous lay dead. "Useless soldiers"⁶⁹ one mercenary called them, and perhaps he was right. The

⁶³ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 66. 68. 69.

⁶⁴ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 22. – This would come in the form of Colonel Crevecoeur and approximately 200 former Belgian gendarmerie officers.

⁶⁵ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 69. 70. 74. – Mockler uses a UN report from April 1961 in which it states that the Internationale had an approximate strength of 200, broken into 5 platoons and armed and clothed by the Katanga gendarmerie. It notes the Mercenaries as 'the elite' of Katangese forces.

⁶⁶ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 22. 23. – The mentioned tactic would reappear with 5 Commando and Mike Hoare, again proving effective.

⁶⁷ Othen, *Katanga*. 109.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 109.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 109

mercenaries counted five wounded and no dead amongst their number while the Katangese alongside them only had five dead. Othen does not mention many concrete numbers, stating there was at least a force of 200 gendarmerie present for the battle,⁷⁰ but Hudson does, stating that there were 44 mercenaries under the command of Captain Robert Browne⁷¹ at the Battle for Manono. The fact that 44 mercenaries, backed up by support with “little training and less discipline”⁷² managed to survive multiple ambushes and eventually push thousands of troops out of a fortified area, certainly suggests a high level of effectiveness. This effectiveness would be mirrored in their taking of Niemba and Nyunzu in the following week.

Yet, the first mercenary encounter with United Nation troops would not go as well, with a small skirmish at the airfield at Kabalo between them and Ethiopian United Nation troops on 7th April 1961 resulting in the capture of Browne and twenty-nine other mercenaries. The mercenaries did inflict several casualties upon the UN troops before their capture,⁷³ which if one goes by Othen’s account, only adds to the seemingly comical nature of this event.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Mockler includes in his 1986 work a UN report by a Dr Mekki Abbas,⁷⁵ in which the mercenaries were described as being “the backbone of the military operations in Katanga...”⁷⁶ and “instrumental in carrying out the recent offensive...”⁷⁷ Considering that the United Nations were not particularly fond of the mercenaries,⁷⁸ this rather positive report should be taken as sign that the mercenaries were indeed of a highly effective and promising stature within the Katangese forces.

Following this, the next major military operations the mercenaries would be involved with would be primarily against the United Nations. The first of these would be between the 13th and 21st September 1961, known to the UN as Operation Marthor⁷⁹ The fighting was to centre around Elizabethville, the Katanga capital, and several other Katanga towns, including Manono, Nyzumi and Niemba, all towns the mercenaries had helped capture. For the

⁷⁰ Ibid. 109

⁷¹ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 23.

⁷² Othen, *Katanga*. 108, 110

⁷³ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 69.

⁷⁴ Othen, *Katanga*. 110. – Othen claims that hundreds of UN soldiers surrounded the airfield and sprang up from the long grass upon the mercenary approach. If as Mockler claims, several of these men were killed by the mercenaries, perhaps more could be said of the opposition’s incompetence than mercenary effectiveness.

⁷⁵ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 69.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 70.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 70.

⁷⁸ Othen, *Katanga*. 113. – Amongst the numerous declarations and orders to leave, the UN troops also disliked the mercenaries on a more personal level, due in part to losing men to them.

⁷⁹ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 26. 27. - Meaning “smash” in Hindi, the UN hoped this would finally resolve the crisis. It did not.

mercenaries, they were involved in two operations: Jadotville, and with the Katanga Air Force. The Siege of Jadotville began on the 13th September and lasted till the surrender of the Irish UN troops on 17th September. The 184 strong garrison⁸⁰ was assaulted repeatedly by two companies⁸¹ worth of Katanga gendarmerie under the command of French mercenary Michel de Clary,⁸² who over the period of the siege managed to wound 30 of the Irish before their surrender. The total dead or wounded for the other side is not recorded, but this demonstrates the clear effectiveness of the mercenaries in command. While Manono had shown the mercenary effectiveness at soldering, Jadotville demonstrated that a mercenary commander was able to take men with “little training and less discipline”⁸³ and lead them successfully against proper professional soldiers. Additionally, the UN would later report that the failure of Operation Marthor was down in considerable part to Katanga Air Force, with one mercenary pilot in an old Fouga Magister Jet being able to inflict “enough damage and disruption to prevent the deployment of UN forces.”⁸⁴ These two factors again contribute to the evidence of Mercenary effectiveness, with the fact that the battle ended in a ceasefire further demonstrating this.

Further evidence of this can be seen during the defence of Elizabethville during UN Operation Unokat⁸⁵ between the 5th December 1961 and 21st December 1961. Even though the result would be a UN victory and ceasefire agreement,⁸⁶ the mercenaries would excel themselves in making the UN work for every piece of territory. The mercenaries were commanded by Jean Schramme,⁸⁷ a Belgian mercenary and plantation owner, and Bob Denard,⁸⁸ a French mercenary. As the UN forces advanced, the mercenaries fought hard, covering each other as they fell back and taking out several UN armoured cars. A final retreat order was given on the 16th December and it would be here that the mercenaries would prove their effectiveness again. Leading a small team, Bod Denard would cover the retreating Katanga forces while Schramme led it. Making use of mortar shells and bazooka rockets, Denard would send “UN scouts diving for cover”⁸⁹ repeating this across multiple streets. The actions of the mercenaries during that two-week battle had cost the UN 21 dead and 100

⁸⁰ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 75.

⁸¹ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 26.

⁸² Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 75.

⁸³ Othen, *Katanga*, 108.

⁸⁴ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 27.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 27.

⁸⁶ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 78. 79.

⁸⁷ Othen, *Katanga*. 158.

⁸⁸ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 79.

⁸⁹ Othen, *Katanga*, 176.

wounded, to a cost to Katanga of 141 dead and 401 wounded,⁹⁰ while allowing the Katanga forces to escape encirclement and regroup at Kipushni. Again, while this was a defeat for Katanga, the mercenary effectiveness is clearly shown, as even against “overwhelming numbers and equipment,”⁹¹ the mercenaries managed to hold their own.

The final piece of the mercenary saga in Katanga would take place between the 28th December 1962 and 21st January 1963,⁹² known by the UN as Operation Grandslam. It would be a series of skirmishes and retreats led by Denard and Schramme towards the Angolan border where those loyal to Tshombe were fleeing. On the 25th January 1963, the actions of the mercenaries would see 4,000 gendarme’s and 50 mercenary’s safety into Angola.⁹³ Accordingly, this is where the Katanga part of the mercenary story ends. But the exploits are compelling in their presentation of both the role and effectiveness of the mercenaries. Serving as soldiers, officers and commanders, the mercenaries were able to fight off a numerically and militarily superior force for almost two years, showing outstanding bravery and daring at the engagements they took part in. Given the evidence offered, it is possible that without the mercenary assistance, the Katanga succession would have ended a lot sooner than it began. And whether this was a good or not is another debate entirely, for Tshombe, the mercenaries were certainly an effective fighting force to him, as will be evidenced by his decision to hire them again during another section of the Congo Crisis.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 177.

⁹¹ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*. 79.

⁹² Ibid. 81.

⁹³ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 29. 30. – They, like Denard and Schramme, would reappear later during the Simba Revolt and be among the primary actors in the Mercenary Revolt of 1967.

Chapter Four: 5 Commando's Saga

Now, the role of the mercenaries within the Congo Crisis has been established: soldiers brought in to bolster the fighting capabilities of existing forces, providing training, leadership, and experience. Yet, the overall effectiveness of the Mercenaries thus far had been mixed. While they had managed to hold their own against both Baluba rebels and the ONUC forces, it was not enough to stave off the defeat of the Katanga Succession. But, the mercenaries of the Simba Revolt period would ultimately be successful, accomplishing the mission they were hired to do.

Nevertheless, firstly some context for the situation must be established. The Congo appeared to have stabilised: Tshombe was currently in exile in Spain and his supporters were either in a similar situation or had sworn loyalty to the Central government.⁹⁴ Yet militarily, the Congo remained weak. The ANC, under Major-General Mobutu, had managed to make some effort at unity, but the 30,000 strong force⁹⁵ was still a mostly ineffectual force in combat, having received little improvements in their training or leadership during or after the Katanga secession. It was this ineffectiveness of the ANC that had prompted Tshombe to recruit mercenaries during the Katanga succession, and it would be his motivation again when he returned to the Congo to deal with the Simba Revolt.⁹⁶

In the Kwilu province, a new threat arose to the central government's authority in the form of the Simba revolt. Led by former education minister Pierre Mulele,⁹⁷ the Simba Revolt would come to categorise both "decolonization in its purest form"⁹⁸ and the proxy nature of the wider Cold War. For the Simba Revolt was intensely ideological, arising from the beliefs of Patrice Lumumba, Mulele and the Marxism of the Eastern Bloc countries.⁹⁹ For as Mockler

⁹⁴ Ibid. 170. 171. - Schramme and his men for example, were hiding out in Angola, and Tshombe's military commander, Lieutenant General Norbert Muke, had taken an oath of allegiance to President Kasavubu on February 6th, 1963. He was demoted to Major but was kept in the ANC to begin reconciliation with the Katangese successionists.

⁹⁵ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 32.

⁹⁶ Mockler, *Mercenaries*. 171. – Tshombe was invited back to help deal with the situation and arrived on 26th June 1964. 4 days later, on 30th June 1964, as the last of the ONUC left the country, he was made Prime Minister, declared a new government, and sent for the mercenaries.

⁹⁷ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 85.

⁹⁸ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 171.

⁹⁹ L. Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in The Congo 1960-1965*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013). 199. 211. – The primary supporter of the rebels was the Chinese, who sent much aid to the rebels for ideological reasons and geopolitical influence, but the Soviets and other countries gave their support. This was primarily done in retaliation to the United States involvement in the Crisis, who were helping supply the Congo government and the mercenaries, but it was also a clear geopolitical move as well.

described it, the Simba Revolt was more than an uprising against the central government, but rather a desire to remove all traces of colonialism. Dubbed “The Africa Solution,”¹⁰⁰ this idea would see any one of European descent or having colonial influence, such as having an education, being sacrificed before shrines to both Mulele and the long-deceased Lumumba. The rebels terrified the ANC, and this, combined with the number of uprisings that occurred throughout the country, meant that the ANC was unable to deal with the revolt. Thus, when the mercenaries returned to the Congo in 1964, they were up against a huge, fanatical force that seemed unstoppable.

And now, the purview of this dissertation returns to the mercenary and once again their effectiveness. Their effectiveness can be judged based on how well they fulfilled their directive from Mobutu and how they handled the situation that they arrived to in the summer of 1964: as factors such as sustained losses, territory regained and force strength amongst others all can be used to judge the extent, or lack thereof, of the mercenaries effectiveness during the Simba Revolt portion of the Congo Crisis. The directive, recorded in Hoare’s ‘Mercenary’ memoir, states “MISSION – Retake Manono, Albertville, Fizi, Uvira”¹⁰¹ as well as “retake Stanleyville immediately.”¹⁰² Such a task would not be easy, and, consequently, it is important to mention what the military situation was. Three rebellions had sprung up across the Congo, the two larger ones in the east¹⁰³ and the Simba’s had inflicted heavy blows against the ANC. For, as mentioned, the ANC were terrified by the Simba and either abandoned their positions, outright surrendered, or joined up with the rebels.¹⁰⁴ By 5th August, Stanleyville had fallen to the Simba’s and a new breakaway government had been formed, with other places following soon after: Albertville in the South, to Kindu in the West, that was the extent of Simba controlled territory¹⁰⁵. With large portions of the country falling to the Simba’s, civilian lives were under threat. So, now the role and effectiveness of the mercenaries during the Simba Revolt can be judged on how well they handled all this.

The first major point of discussion should be what roles the mercenaries had and were to play during the Simba Revolt. The first role they would play would be officers and commanders,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 85. – The rebel’s fanaticism both terrified and inspired the ANC, causing them to either flee, surrender, or join the rebels.

¹⁰¹ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 29.

¹⁰² Ibid. 29.

¹⁰³ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 85.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 86.

as evidenced by Mike Hoare being given a commission by Tshombe and told to raise and command a mercenary force to help fight the Simba's,¹⁰⁶ for as Hoare puts it, Tshombe needed "white mercenary troops... to help the National Army put down the rebellion which was in danger of overwhelming the country."¹⁰⁷ Thus, the mercenaries had to shore things up. Aside from the average mercenary recruited on as soldiers, like Ivan Smith, there were more nuanced examples. Belgian mercenaries, hired as technical advisors, became the commanding officers and advisors within ANC battalions,¹⁰⁸ training and leading the men into battle against the Simba's. Additionally, the United States of America, operating through the CIA,¹⁰⁹ organised a mercenary air force to ferry supplies, troops, and air support to the fighting and around the Congo. The vast majority of these were Cuban, men who had either fled Castro's new government or left-over agents from the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion of 1961, but others such as Rwandans were hired.¹¹⁰

During the Mercenary segment in *Africa: Blood and Guts*, an interesting piece of information arises about the mercenary pilots. During the attack on Boende in late 1964, mercenary pilots took to the skies in "20 year-old American T-6's, held together by chewing gum and string"¹¹¹ and even though they had not been paid yet, they still flew for free.¹¹² The final part talks of the forms they fill out each day, "Destination: Hell. Reason for flight: Personal Business."¹¹³ While perhaps a bit of an exaggeration on the narrator's part, the implication that the mercenaries were using outdated or any equipment and fighting regardless of wage is one that is reflected in other sources. Hoare makes mention of the difficulties in getting both money and equipment, bluntly stating that "None of these were worth coming."¹¹⁴ In addition, Ivan Smith remarks how "The arms and ammunition question plagued every mercenary throughout the contract"¹¹⁵ due to the delicate nature of the Cold War¹¹⁶ and the inherent difficulties in keeping men supplied in the jungle. Therefore, as will be explored

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 84.

¹⁰⁷ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 86.

¹⁰⁹ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 32.

¹¹⁰ *Africa: Blood and Guts*. Directed by Gualtiero Jacopetti & Franco Prosperi. [Film] (Rizzoli, 1966)

¹¹¹ *Africa: Blood and Guts* – T-6 refers to North American Aviation Texan, a single engine aircraft. Used as a light attack aircraft in this case.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ *Africa: Blood and Guts*.

¹¹⁴ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 69.

¹¹⁵ Smith, *Mad Dog Killers*, 45. – The Americans could not be seen supplying arms due to it being perceived as escalating the conflict. They still did, but it made resupply unreliable at times.

¹¹⁶ Namikas, *Battleground Africa*, 212. – The American and Belgian backing of the Central Congolese Government was outrageous to the Eastern Bloc countries, even though they were backing the rebels.

further when the discussion turns to when considering the subsequent actions of the mercenaries, and weighing up their effectiveness, it is important to factor in logistical issues that they faced, and how they continued regardless.

As the directive stated, the most pressing issue was to liberate Stanleyville from the Simba's, who were using it as their rebel government capital. But between Leopoldville and Stanleyville lay several towns and villages under rebel control, as well as dense jungle inhabited by rebels. So, Hoare prepared a force, given the designation "5 Commando."¹¹⁷ Here a comment can be made on the strength, both in experience and size, and by extension, effectiveness of the mercenaries. Hoare writes that the initial recruits made him feel "disheartened"¹¹⁸ but through the reduction of numbers and discipline, he could "turn even the poorest material into professional soldiers."¹¹⁹ This was reflected by the eventually size of 5 Commando. The initial one thousand recruits were slowly dwindled down to three hundred, but never exceeded that number, staying between two hundred and three hundred: with Hoare dividing them into roughly 30 men units with two officers, designated 51 through to 58 Commando.¹²⁰ Therefore, the mercenary operation during the Simba revolt was to be like its spiritual predecessor in Katanga: small, versatile, and professional. In comparison, the size of the Simba's forces was and never has been established with any degree of certainty, but it was certainly greater than the few hundred mercenaries. But as Hoare puts it in the second chapter of his memoirs, hiring mercenaries would "finish whatever chances Tshombe may have had of ever getting along with other black African nations"¹²¹ but one did it anyway, a decision that would pay off.

Operation Watch-Chain,¹²² the codename chosen by Hoare for the mission to retake Albertville would mark the beginning of 5 Commando's campaign towards ending the Simba Revolt. Beginning on 24th August 1964 and concluding with the liberation of the city on 30th August 1964, the mercenaries saved the lives of 135 Belgian civilians.¹²³ It was a battle that Hoare and the mercenaries learnt from, as the enemy, as "pitifully armed"¹²⁴ as they were,

¹¹⁷ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 105 – other designations of Commando appeared, such as 10 Commando or 52 Commando, but the primary body was 5 Commando. As Hoare puts it "we closed ranks when danger threatened to become one unit, 5 Commando..."

¹¹⁸ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 44.

¹¹⁹ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 91.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 92.

¹²¹ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 35.

¹²² Ibid. 47.

¹²³ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*. 35.

¹²⁴ Hoare, *Mercenary*. 53.

were more of a threat than had initially been thought, as Hoare describes how if “a rebel was hit, he advanced regardless...”¹²⁵ As a result, the mercenaries developed new tactics, a doctrine reliant on “speed and firepower.”¹²⁶ Essentially, the mercenaries would approach an enemy position in vehicles, usually Jeeps,¹²⁷ at full speed and open fire with heavy machine guns and automatic rifles.¹²⁸ The effect was that the mercenaries “poured out a fantastic volume of fire”¹²⁹ which, according to Smith, made the jungle “vibrate and the air shudder to the thunder”¹³⁰ of gunfire. This turned out to be very effective against the Simba’s, who even when on drugs and under the impression of invulnerability, still were “demoralised and panicked”¹³¹ by these tactics. Further evidence of the effectiveness of this tactic can be seen in “Africa: Blood and Guts”¹³² during an ambush on the road to Boende. As the bullets start flying, two mercenary gunners, one cradling a light machine gun and another firing from the jeep, provide that “fantastic volume of fire”¹³³ that was able to suppress and give the upper hand to the mercenaries. Hence, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the mercenaries were effective during the Simba revolt, especially in their deployment of forces and equipment against a numerically and home-region army.

Overall, the most critical aspect of rating the mercenary’s success during the Simba revolt can be found in two key objectives: the retaking of Stanleyville and what they helped prevent. While as previously mentioned, the number of deployed forces, equipment and training did play a factor in effectiveness, the overall effectiveness can be determined more firmly by seeing how the crucial objectives occurred. Stemming from this, the mercenaries began their push towards Stanleyville on 1st November 1964,¹³⁴ making use of their vehicles to form a motorised column that would spearhead the advance towards Stanleyville. Once again, the effectiveness of the mercenary tactics was proved where “withering fire”¹³⁵ from machine guns, rifles and mortars helped clear the way across bridges and through ambushes.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 53.

¹²⁶ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 92.

¹²⁷ Smith, *Mad Dog Killers*, 44. – Sometimes surplus WW2 American “Willys” Jeeps as Smith calls them. This line again demonstrates the logistical issues that the Mercenaries and how they were able to still perform well with it.

¹²⁸ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 93.

¹²⁹ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 52.

¹³⁰ Smith, *Mad dog Killers*, 50.

¹³¹ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 93.

¹³² *Africa: Blood and Guts*. In addition to being an effective demonstration of the mercenary’s tactics, it again demonstrates the sort of conditions and enemy they were fighting; ambushes that required split second decision and action to navigate successfully.

¹³³ Smith, *Mad Dog Killers*, 50.

¹³⁴ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 37.

¹³⁵ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 105.

Additionally, Hudson remarks that this tactic was so effective that it enabled “the main force to move the 400 kilometres from Kongolo to Kindu in just seven days:”¹³⁶ a clear praise of the mercenary actions and a demonstration of the effectiveness of the mercenaries. But as the mercenaries pushed onwards towards Stanleyville, pushing the rebels out of towns and territory,¹³⁷ the rebels responded with atrocities. On 5th November, as the Mercenaries neared Kidnu, the Rebels attempted to execute 70 White hostages,¹³⁸ but thanks to the mercenary air force, the rebels fled, and the hostages were saved. This is what the mercenaries were trying to prevent. As was stated before, the Simba revolt had no qualms with killing innocents in the name of the revolution, with Christophe Gbenye, the president of the rebel government, stating that “We will make our fetishes out of the heart of Belgians and Americans and clothe ourselves in the skins of Belgians and Americans.”¹³⁹ Of course, this was of major concern to the international Western support and for the mercenaries. Hoare was aware of the white hostage situation, writing in his memoirs in 1967 about how “the entire staff of the American Consulate”¹⁴⁰ were being held captive in Stanleyville. To the Simba’s they were a “further bargaining counter”¹⁴¹ and Hoare seemed to view this as rather despicable. All the hostages held by the Simba were in danger, and it would be the effectiveness of the Mercenaries that would help save many.

It would be at Stanleyville that a culmination of the mercenary talent and effectiveness would be reached. The threatening by the Simba’s to kill all the whites in Stanleyville made time of the essence. Beginning on 17th November 1964, the mercenaries crossed over 370 kilometres by the 22nd November,¹⁴² an incredible feat considering the amount of enemy territory and ambushes they had fought off: a testament to the effectiveness of the mercenary troops under Hoare’s command. The taking of Stanleyville was to occur on the 23rd November, coinciding with Belgian paratroopers descending on the city to aid in rescuing the white hostages; it was entitled, “Operation Dragon Rouge”¹⁴³ and would be one of the major achievements of the mercenaries: a testament to their skill, effectiveness and courage. Consulting Hoare’s memoir, he opens the chapter on Stanleyville with the following: “It was obvious to

¹³⁶ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 37.

¹³⁷ *Africa Blood and Guts*. – There is a segment of the film where mercenaries liberate a mission from the rebels. It encapsulates the efforts of the mercenaries to rescue people held hostage by the Simba’s.

¹³⁸ Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 40.

¹³⁹ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 176.

¹⁴⁰ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 112.

¹⁴¹ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 113.

¹⁴² Hudson, *Congo Unravelling*, 38.

¹⁴³ Namikas, *Battleground Africa*, 204.

everyman in 5 Commando that it was going to be a hell of a night,”¹⁴⁴ a clear statement of his and the mercenaries feelings on the matter. Going against usual doctrine, the column of mercenaries drove through the night, fighting their way through five separate ambushes¹⁴⁵ before casualties sustained had to be accounted for. Described as “the most terrifying and harrowing experience of my life”¹⁴⁶ by Hoare, it did not deter the mercenaries from pushing onward, eventually reaching Stanleyville at exactly nine o’clock the following morning.¹⁴⁷ Throughout the day of the 24th November, the mercenaries would clear Stanleyville, routing the rebels and rescuing hostages where they could.¹⁴⁸ Now, the mercenary effectiveness can be seen in what they achieved. Militarily, driving through rebel infested territory at night through rain is an incredibly bad idea, one Hoare admits to,¹⁴⁹ but was done anyway to try and save the lives of the hostages. There were over three hundred white hostages¹⁵⁰ in Stanleyville, and it is without question that the mercenaries helped save lives that night and day with their action. The rebels had killed 22 hostages by the time the mercenaries and paratroopers arrived, and it would no doubt have been more had the mercenaries not fought as hard as they had to get to Stanleyville.

Overall, the liberation of Stanleyville was the tipping point of the Simba revolt. With their capital gone, the rebels held on for another year till October 1965, where after the capture of Baraka¹⁵¹ by the mercenaries, the rebellion collapsed. 5 Commando had excelled themselves, and many owed¹⁵² their lives to the mercenaries for what they did. But while the mercenary story in the Congo was far from over,¹⁵³ the Congo Crisis was. Tshombe, the man who had led and rebelled against the Congo, was overthrown on 5th November 1965, and returned to exile.¹⁵⁴ Hoare was dismissed on 26th November 1965, thus ending his story in the Congo, but not his legend.

¹⁴⁴ Hoare, *Mercenary*, 119

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 119. 120.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 120.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 121.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 126. - Hoare recounts the rescue of two American families from a rebel held residential area that he personally led. It is only a brief mention, but it is another example of the effectiveness of the mercenaries, for without them, it is probable that those American’s would have been killed.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 119.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 121.

¹⁵¹ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 110.

¹⁵² Ibid. 101.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 11. - 5 Commando, under a new commander, would continue to operate till February 1967. Jean Schramme and Bob Denard, the Katanga mercenaries who had also fought against the Simba’s, would attempt a revolt in 1967. While unsuccessful, it falls outside the window for this dissertation, but is a fascinating case study of mercenary work.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 110

Conclusion

The Congo Crisis ended on the 25th November 1965 when General Mobutu Sese Seko took power through another coup.¹⁵⁵ The mercenaries of 5 Commando would continue to operate till May 1967, when they were finally disbanded. And while mercenary activity continued till 1968, for the purposes of this dissertation, a conclusion must be drawn about the role and effectiveness of the mercenary during it all.

To begin, the mercenary always served in a military capacity during the Congo Crisis. Against the United Nations, ANC, or the Simba's and other enemies, the mercenary played a military role: operating as soldier, officer, and commander. During both the Katanga Secession and Simba Revolt, the mercenary made use of infantry, mechanised units, and air power. It was the mechanised units that would deliver the mercenary to the combat zone, with ground forces dismounting and fighting on, with air support being used as and when it could be. Yet, the mercenary would also serve the role of liberator and hero, helping to free the people of the Congo from the terror of the Simba's and become heroes to those hostages they rescued from places like Stanleyville. Moreover, it would be this heroism and military capacity that would factor into their overall effectiveness.

On the most superficial level, the mercenaries were not very effective at all; failing to protect Katanga. Yet, that is the kind of conclusion one makes to allow a complete dismissal of the mercenary. The evidence presented throughout this dissertation tells a different story. To start, the few hundred mercenaries of Katanga were up against massive odds: the force of the United Nations and the ANC. Despite the seemingly substantial disadvantage, the mercenaries held out. At Jadotville, they captured an entire battalion of Irish UN soldiers, levelling a humiliating impact against the UN. At Elizabethville, they made it difficult for the UN, and finally, Schramme would lead over 4000 Katanga forces to safety in Angola following Katanga's final defeat. An ineffectual force would have capitulated in 1961 when faced with the international power reserves of the UN, but instead, they did not back down and did their employer proud.

Following this, the mercenary effectiveness during the Simba revolt is far clearer. The mercenaries succeeded in doing what they were hired to do: putting down the Simba revolt and returning the country to the control of the government. This they succeed at doing, there

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 110.

is little debate about that. The rebellion had effectively been crushed by October 1965, with 5 Commando kept on by Mobutu¹⁵⁶ as garrison forces to ensure any final embers were put down. The mercenary's military tactics and bravado, evidenced in their "wall of fire and noise" tactics and the desperate dash to Stanleyville on the night of the 23rd November and dawn of 24th November, exemplifies the effectiveness of the mercenaries. And again, like Katanga, the mercenaries often had to deal with logistical or related issues and were often heavily outnumbered. Yet they performed remarkably well, and with this, it cements the claim of this dissertation that the mercenaries were an effective fighting force.

Now, the final answer becomes clear: during the Congo Crisis, the mercenaries, who operated in the role of soldiers, pilots, officers and advisors, were remarkably effective in their respective contracts: with Katanga in helping extend her survival, and with the Congo in putting down the Simba Revolt and saving many lives.

And as the mercenary story in the Congo came to an end, the turbulent five years had lit a spark that would see an even further re-emergence of the mercenary tradition. In Africa¹⁵⁷ and beyond; the mercenary had returned to the modern world. The trade has evolved since then, refining itself into the "Private Military Companies"¹⁵⁸ like Blackwater as the new millennia dawned. To end, it is perhaps best to consider the mercenary spirit. In a way, the mercenaries of the Congo had a spirit of their own; a spirit that stood outside of time, and it is encapsulated by Jacopetti in these lines:¹⁵⁹

"They are the world's last soldiers of fortune, outdated relics of the past. They are outcasts from the modern world which expelled them or from which they fled - on the lamb from an infamous past pursuing a restless present, a burnt-out adventure, a dead faith. They are all ex-something: ex-anti-guerrilla fighters from French Algeria, British Malaysia, Borneo, or Kenya. Ex-SS officers from Germany; ex-CIA pilots from Cuba; ex-farmers from Kenya; ex-residents of the Sudan, Egypt, Tanganyika; ex-students from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Some follow a macabre ideal of glory and adventure. Some believe they are

¹⁵⁶ Mockler, *The New Mercenaries*, 115. – Mockler postulates that the mercenaries were kept on as force that Mobutu could rely on for loyalty to him. He was paying their wages and if his political enemies attempted anything, he could use the mercenaries against them. But he did not trust them completely, creating an atmosphere of tension that boiled over in 1967 into the Mercenary revolt. But that is a story for another day.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 162. 203.

¹⁵⁸ P. W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatised Military Industry*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008).

¹⁵⁹ Mockler, *Mercenaries*, 145. – it seems that Mockler saw, and approved of the Jacopetti's words, recording them in his 1970 work. As he was there in 1964, perhaps he said them first. But either way, they are a good summary for the mercenary of the Congo.

fighting a last-ditch battle against communism. Some are known as Les Affreux, the Horrors, who just love war."¹⁶⁰

And it is for better or worse, that the Congo mercenary serves as both a lesson and an inspiration.

¹⁶⁰ *Africa: Blood & Guts.*

Appendix

Figure 1.



'The 'mad dog killer' posse outside Lisala. The author is third from left. (Author's Collection).'

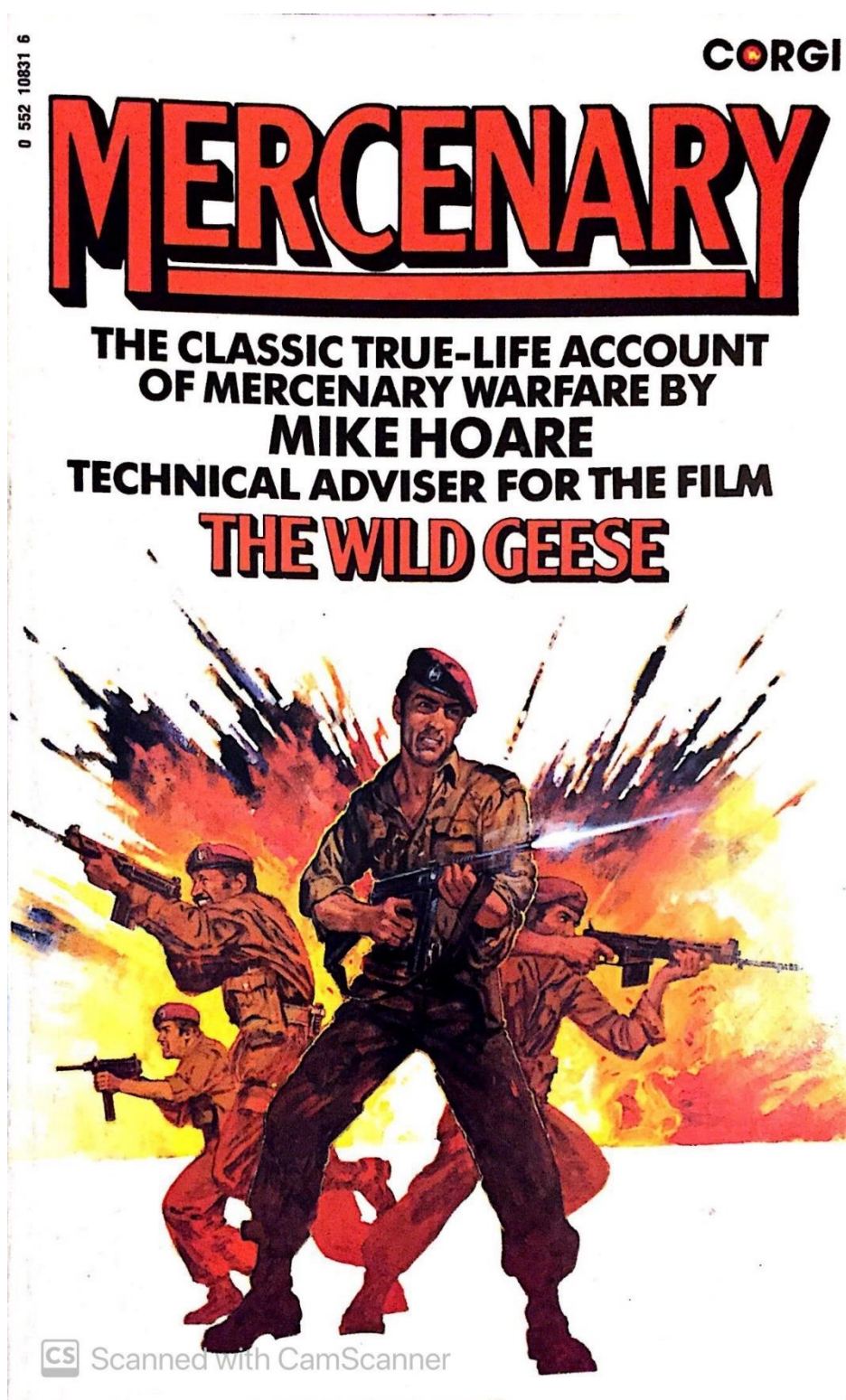
I. Smith. *Mad dog killers: The Story of a Congo mercenary*. (Solihull: Helion & Company Ltd. 2012). 59.

Figure 2.



*'The Congo, June 30, 1960'. E. Gerard & B. Kuklick, *Death in the Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba*. (London: Harvard University Press, 2015). XVI.*

Figure 3.



The front cover of the 1978 Corgi Books publication of Mike Hoare's memoir, *Mercenary*. Image scanned by dissertation author.

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