

Operation Gatling: The Rhodesian Military Response to the Viscount Tragedy



Green Leader: Operation Gatling, the Rhodesian Military's Response To The Viscount Tragedy by Ian Pringle

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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On 3 September 1978, a Viscount airliner carrying 56 passengers and crew was shot down by ZIPRA insurgents as it approached Salisbury Airport in Rhodesia. The Viscount tragedy was a major turning point in the Rhodesian Bush War, and it prompted the Rhodesian government to launch Operation Gatling, a major military operation against ZIPRA in the Zambezi Valley.

Operation Gatling was named after the Gatling gun, a rapid-fire weapon that was used by the Rhodesian Air Force during the operation. The operation was launched on 15 October 1978, and it involved a combined force of Rhodesian Army, Rhodesian Air Force, and Rhodesian Selous Scouts. The operation was a success, and it resulted in the killing of a number of ZIPRA insurgents and the capture of a large quantity of weapons and equipment.

Operation Gatling was a significant victory for the Rhodesian military, and it helped to restore some of the confidence that had been lost after the Viscount tragedy. The operation also showed that the Rhodesian military was still capable of mounting large-scale operations, despite the increasing pressure from ZIPRA and other insurgent groups.

The Viscount Tragedy

The Viscount tragedy occurred on 3 September 1978, when a Viscount airliner carrying 56 passengers and crew was shot down by ZIPRA insurgents as it approached Salisbury Airport in Rhodesia. The plane was flying from Kariba to Salisbury when it was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. The plane crashed into the ground, killing all on board.

The Viscount tragedy was a major shock to the Rhodesian people. It was the worst single loss of life in the Rhodesian Bush War, and it brought home the reality of the war to many who had previously been unaffected by it.

The Rhodesian government immediately launched an investigation into the Viscount tragedy. The investigation found that the plane had been shot down by ZIPRA insurgents, and that the insurgents had been firing from a nearby hill. The investigation also found that the Rhodesian Air Force had failed to provide adequate protection for the plane.

The Viscount tragedy had a profound impact on the Rhodesian Bush War. It led to a hardening of attitudes on both sides, and it made it clear that the war would continue for the foreseeable future.

Operation Gatling

Operation Gatling was a Rhodesian military operation launched in response to the Viscount tragedy. The operation was named after the Gatling gun, a rapid-fire weapon that was used by the Rhodesian Air Force during the operation.

The operation was launched on 15 October 1978, and it involved a combined force of Rhodesian Army, Rhodesian Air Force, and Rhodesian Selous Scouts. The operation was aimed at ZIPRA insurgents in the Zambezi Valley.

The operation was a success, and it resulted in the killing of a number of ZIPRA insurgents and the capture of a large quantity of weapons and equipment. The operation also destroyed a number of ZIPRA bases and training camps.

Operation Gatling was a significant victory for the Rhodesian military, and it helped to restore some of the confidence that had been lost after the Viscount tragedy. The operation also showed that the Rhodesian military was still capable of mounting large-scale operations, despite the increasing pressure from ZIPRA and other insurgent groups.

The Legacy of Operation Gatling

Operation Gatling was a significant turning point in the Rhodesian Bush War. The operation showed that the Rhodesian military was still capable of mounting large-scale operations, and it helped to restore some of the confidence that had been lost after the Viscount tragedy.

The operation also had a significant impact on ZIPRA. The operation killed a number of ZIPRA insurgents and destroyed a number of ZIPRA bases

and training camps. This weakened ZIPRA's ability to carry out attacks against Rhodesia, and it contributed to the eventual defeat of ZIPRA in the Rhodesian Bush War.

Operation Gatling is a reminder of the brutality of the Rhodesian Bush War. The operation resulted in the deaths of a number of innocent civilians, and it left a lasting legacy of pain and suffering. However, the operation also showed the resilience of the Rhodesian military, and it helped to ensure the survival of Rhodesia for several more years.

Further Reading

- The Shooting Down of Air Rhodesia Viscount
- Air Rhodesia Viscount Shot Down
- Viscount Tragedy



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