

BOOK REVIEW
OPERATION LINDA NCHI
An insight into the art of modern warfare

Kenya Defence Forces

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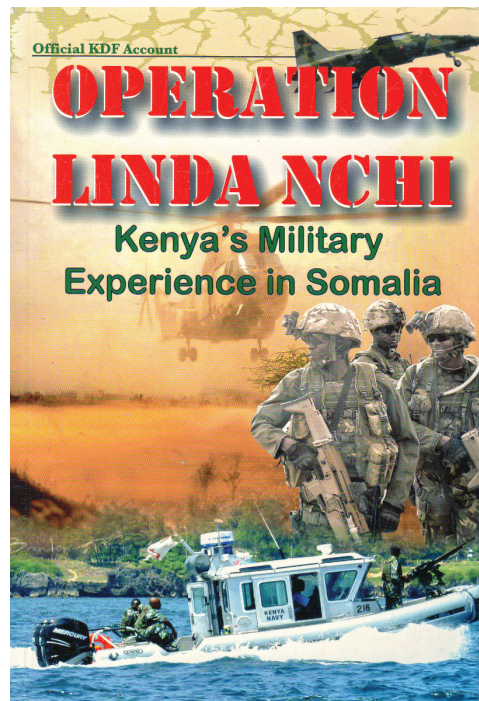
REVIEWER:

SGT (REV) ELIJAH ONYANGO STANDSLAUSE ODHIAMBO

Kenya Military Academy (KMA), Ministry of State for Defence (MOSD)
and Dept. of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) Masinde Muliro University
of Science and Technology

The Operation Linda Nchi conducted by Kenya Defence Force (KDF) in 2011 resonates as one of the landmarks in the fight against global terrorism. Advocates of the statist approach to war would applaud this event. They argue that terrorist acts by Al-Shabab constitute acts of war since they violate domestic and international law. The cosmopolitan approach in addressing terrorism subscribes to the view that terrorism is a criminal act that requires a multilateral and multifaceted approach within the tenets of International Law. Operation Linda Nchi is documented in a 16 chapter book that is described as “a systematic and holistic account of the KDF operation in Somalia starting from the entry into Somalia on 14 October 2011 up to the rehatting of Kenyan troops to be part of the Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).”

This book, the first one of its kind in Kenya, not only provides a clear account of how KDF carried out its war in Somalia, but also provides detailed perspectives into the art of modern warfare. It resonates well with the current times and provides “valuable and unique lessons for world militaries



fighting against “faceless enemies” waging asymmetrical wars across the globe.” The book offers an in-depth insight into how KDF responded to the violation of Kenya’s sovereignty through employing both the

statist and cosmopolitan approaches in the fight against terrorism.

Described as one of its kind in Kenya, the book “gives a unique, inside view of KDF and what they are capable of doing”. It provides clear lens through which security analysts, scholars, and the general public may understand the events that unfolded in the fight against Al-Shabab. The strategies used and *modus operandi* have been well articulated, making it suitable as a handbook or manual for use in training on how to deal with non-traditional security threats. As one delves into the book, it is apparent that the triumphal note which pervades its pages is justified. KDF succeeded in the harsh, uncertain, highly volatile and dangerous Somalia context, a country which has been without a central government since the fall of the Siad Barre government in 1991. This unexpected success astounded the world and established KDF as a highly effective war machine.

Terrorism has emerged at a time when society is characterized by increased complexities and rapid change. In the first part of the book, the reader is introduced to the concept of “a just war”, more specifically *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. It provides historical and security reasons to demonstrate that Kenya did not enter Somalia as an occupational force. A holistic account of the events leading to the operation is given and justifications for intervention are discussed. Under International Law, states are accorded the right to use military force in self-defense when all other efforts have failed. In the contemporary international system, state survival has been threatened by emerging terrorist organizations (non-state actors). The authors show how Kenya fell victim to Al-Shabaab attacks that threatened state integrity and sovereignty. KDF makes a strong and credible case backed by international law and practice to justify its entry into Somalia. Due to the porous nature

of the Kenyan border, Somali-based bandits and Al-Shabaab sympathizers carried out numerous incursions and precipitated a reign of terror in the country, particularly targeting its tourism industry and international NGOs. In addition, over half a million Somali refugees, with close family and clan affiliations to the Al Shabaab militia, provided a foothold for the terror group to operate easily within the country. The book cites numerous and escalating cases of attacks on tourists and humanitarian workers which adversely affected Kenya’s economy and threatened her sovereignty.

The KDF war was a culmination of more than 20 unsuccessful attempts by the United Nations (UN), the regional leaders and the African Union (AU) to use political means through negotiation, to bring peace to Somalia. These efforts finally resulted in the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2014, which failed to establish a functioning government giving rise to diverse clan-based militia groups controlling various parts of Somalia and its economic resources and making it extremely insecure. In this scenario, the militia groups benefited economically from the protracted conflict and were instrumental in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Kenya and the region. The authors go further to inform the reader that KDF acted in accordance to Article 51 of the UN Charter, which “reaffirms a state’s right to self-defence” since the lives of its citizen were threatened. Kenya reacted to the growing threat of Al Shabaab’s terror activities that threatened its security and made KDF respond to armed attacks with force.

In the Second and Third parts of the book, the reader is taken through the dynamics of asymmetric warfare that terrorist organizations use to render the use of conventional methods of warfare less effective. The Second Part specifically

identifies the key ingredients that are necessary in planning and executing military operations against terrorist fighters, who have no military insignia and are known to melt into the society almost at will. The book reveals that KDF had done extensive research and gathered sufficient intelligence through diverse means which was critical to reveal the enemy's capability and future direction. In the course of the war, KDF mobilized and released information on the campaign through the print and electronic media to enhance national and international support for its campaign. KDF used counterterrorism tactics including deception, propaganda, misinformation, and "soft power" in Kenya and Somalia to garner public support for its mission.

The reader will become familiar with KDF, a well-oiled war machine, with highly trained and motivated personnel; an organization that is well equipped militarily, highly organized and coordinated, and extremely effective both at the Command and Control level and in the battlefield. The book reveals the military precision and technical superiority of KDF with exceptionally effective planning, reconnaissance, coordination, control, and implementation capabilities. In reading the book, the reader is informed that KDF were extremely familiar with the nature of the terrain, the enemy's strengths and weaknesses. The reader is informed of the meticulous planning and superior logistical preparations prior to entering Somalia and as the war unfolded. The authors state that the KDF were prepared for the long haul, if necessary, and made extensive efforts to ensure that their troops were taken care of materially and psychologically throughout and after the campaign.

The final part of the book examines the application of the concept of "soft power" through looking at the humanitarian aspect of the war. This provides great insight into

the diplomatic aspect of war that is aimed at "winning the hearts and minds" of the civilian population. It is in this final part that the reader appreciates the effective use of smart power, which involves a combination of hard and soft power arsenals in the battlefield. By reading this book, the reader travels with the KDF, as it were, witnessing first-hand, all its engagements, and the successes it meets with.

KDF learned some lessons too, including the fact that the enemy they were challenging was strong and highly organized but were weakened by the intractable clan affiliations that rendered them incapable of working in the spirit of togetherness that worked so well for KDF.

So what does the reader take away from reading this book? Overall, this book is rich in descriptions, enabling the reader to have in-depth knowledge of the art of modern war, the principles of a just war, and the legal frameworks that relate to war. The book highlights the changing nature of modern war, especially in dealing with the invisible, insidious "faceless enemies", who would also be described as "terrorists without borders". This book is particularly relevant at this time in history and it has many lessons that can be learned especially in "asymmetric warfare" where the opponents are unequal.

This being a book produced by Kenya Defence Forces, some readers may look at it as being a subjective account of the events. In the world of academia, this is normal. It provides an opportunity for others to respond by providing an academic critique of the book. The book also provides an example that other militaries can follow. They should also pick up the cue and document their events, more so on security matters.

This book, produced by Kenya Defence Forces, meets its objective of being a handbook and training manual. It is also a Kenya classic, being the first such book to discuss military operations in such great

detail, and KDF is to be commended for such a feat. Every soldier would find a lot of useful practical information to hone his/her military acumen. It would be useful for other non-military security forces, security training institutions, and policy makers who are involved in governance. International relations scholars and researchers, policy makers and implementers, as well as the general public will find this book interesting and highly enlightening. The principles used by KDF as described in the book can be applied in other non-military institutions as well. Kenyans will be proud to know that they have well-trained, equipped and committed security forces that are able to use the entire arsenal at their disposal to successfully plan and execute operations against any threats to national security. This is a must-have book that is applicable in this era of global terrorism and the emergence of non-state actors in war, who have the

capacity to threaten the survival of the state.

The strength of this book is that it is the first of its kind on Military in Kenya. It details discussion on military strategies and warfare. This is elucidated by citation of several and relevant examples and makes it interesting to those who want varified facts. Pictorial section in the book adds flavour to the reader in the sense that it encourages the reader to follow systematically Kenya Defence Forces movement from Kenya to capturing Mogadishu.

The book is well researched and written in understandable English, and arranged thematically. This is a must read book for all persons interested or already involved in Military Science, International relations, Diplomacy, history and political Science should be a reference book to scholars, lecturers and students of graduate and undergraduate of the above named areas of specializations.