

Amin: better than some

Why Kenya is easing up its attack on Amin

James Fox reports from Nairobi

RESIDENT Idi Amin has run out of petrol. Thus, the political crisis between Uganda and Kenya, which might have flared into a full scale East African confrontation, is over for the time being. Instead, Uganda is being quietly and swiftly destroyed.

Retaliation was still expected a week ago, and even wished for by many Kenyans in the bullish euphoria they felt for their own part in the Israeli raid at Entebbe and the humiliation of Amin.

This humiliation is doubled by the shortages which have brought the Ugandan army to a standstill since they began digging bunkers near the Kenya border a week ago, and by the obvious internal disarray of Uganda, foreign exchange, according to reports from the capital, Kampala, is almost non-existent, almost every vehicle has ground to a halt and where food supplies in the capital are expected to last less than one week more.

The Kenyans have played their cards more subtly than Amin, which is not difficult. They have been greatly helped by the US Navy's "routine exercise"—in reality an unmistakable flexing of the Americans' muscles from their new base at Diego Garcia, the island in the Indian Ocean about 2,200 miles from Mombasa.

As well as the presence of a frigate at Mombasa and the air-

craft carrier somewhere in the Indian Ocean, two US Navy planes have been on prominent display at Nairobi airport.

The Kenyans have strenuously avoided anything that can be considered by the over-sensitive Amin as a provocation, and have patiently avoided, on the other hand, the provocations of Amin himself, who seemed, until the middle of last week, to be desperate for a pretext for attacking his neighbour.

The Kenyan expedition has been a mixture of angry statements and refutations and in the meantime, the Kenyans have quietly withdrawn the co-operation on which Uganda depends.

For a week now the Kenyan trucks which carry the bulk of Uganda's fuel from Mombasa have not crossed into Amin's territory. This can only partly be put down to the drivers' fear.

Possibly because of Amin's behaviour the Kenyans are not going out of their way to make special diversions to Uganda. Amin may be right when he calls this a blockade, but it is hard to prove. On Friday he called on Zaire, Sudan and Ruanda to help him break it.

The Kenyan's mood of euphoria, however, is slowly being dampened by second thoughts about the consequences of their assistance to Israel during the raid.

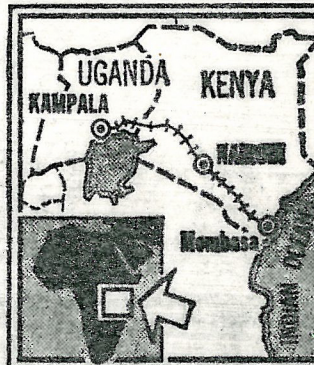
If Kenya's Attorney-General, Charles Njonjo, was the man the Israelis first approached with their plan to refuel at Nairobi Airport, it is exactly his and his Government's independent, pro-Western and pro-capitalist outlook that, because of this incident, has now isolated Kenya further from her neighbours in the Organisation of African Unity.

A typically outspoken newspaper editorial in the Nation in Nairobi echoed the Kenyan disregard for African sensibilities. To bring Amin to trial, it said, would show up "the manner in which the OAU has digressed from its initial aims . . . and become a pain in Arab petrodollars and big power rivalry."

However, many Kenyans I spoke to last week are beginning to thing the same way as the other OAU delegates who angrily condemned Israel at their Mauritius summit. However bad Amin may be, it was a shock to discover how easily black Africa could be penetrated by a well-armed western power.

The Ugandan army and air force was helpless.

It turned into a reminded of the white man's humiliation of the black man echoed in the Tanzanian government's statement after the raid: "Israel has not once mounted anything of this nature against those [other] countries. It is the contempt



	KENYA	UGANDA
FORCES	7,550	21,000
AIR FORCE	17 combat aircraft (inc. 4 Hunters)	48 combat aircraft (inc. 30 MiGs)
ARTILLERY	54 anti-tank rifles	24 mortars
TANKS	Nil	27
ARMOURD CARRIERS	13	267
		Unspecified no. of howitzers, mortars and anti-tank missiles

Israel has for the sovereignty of African states which has prompted her to act in an angry and lawless manner."

This in itself could force the Kenyans who, like other African states, were privately wondering how to re-establish relations with Israel, to take a more militant stand against the Zionists. Isolation for Kenya is not only a security risk, but is also a political risk to its credibility as a pro-Western capitalist state in the heart of black Africa.

It is, indeed, embarrassing for the Kenyans, most of whom believe that their collaboration with Israel was much greater than in fact it was, to hear their vice-president, Daniel Arap Moi, angrily attacking Israel for violating Kenya's airspace. A Kenyan told me last week: "It is only lucky for Kenya that in a war of lies, everyone is eclipsed by Amin."

If they feel vulnerable to the Western military Powers, the Kenyans also realise how weak they were compared with Uganda, at least on paper. The aftermath of the raid has dramatically changed the Kenya Government's attitude to the strategic threat from Uganda itself.

Until the raid Kenya's problems with Uganda were manageable. Kenyatta could still play the father figure and elder statesman with Amin.

The real worry was not the Ugandan leader but Somalia on the northern frontier, where the Soviet build-up of arms was causing deep alarm.

The raid at Entebbe airport changed all that. It was clear, first, that Amin could no longer be dealt with on the familiar basis, and the Kenyans began to realise, too, that he himself was not the only problem. If Amin disappeared, they began to see, the situation could be even worse.

For some time, the Kenyans have been noticing that Amin no longer has complete sway over his defence council. A group of his fellow officers have begun to talk back and to exert wide influence on policy.

There are two or three men in the line-up who particularly worry the Kenyans. All come from the exclusive Muslim background of Sudanese Nubians living in East Africa—the soldiers that formed the core of the King's African Rifles in colonial days.

Two stand out, Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Mabyamungu (which means Gift of God), the Director of Training of the Ugandan Army,

The other is Colonel Ali Towili, who, says Amin, joined the King's African Rifles before he did. It was Towili who formed the dreadful public safety unit and was its first director.

The chart above sets out the balance of military muscle between Uganda and Kenya—on the face of it, an equal balance heavily in Uganda's favour. However, two factors could easily tilt the scales, writes Tony Geraghty.

One is the uncertain state of President Amin's forces and their hardware; the second is the ease with which relatively modest arms from any of the west's major weapon-suppliers could boost Kenya's limited firepower.

For instance, Britain last week supplied anti-personnel "cluster bombs" to Kenya, an operation described in Kenyan circles as a "routine consignment." And last month Kenya ordered 10 Northrop F-5A fighter planes from the United States—a departure from its policy of buying British which may indicate a significant and growing dependence on America.

In any clash, therefore, the stage would be set for a confrontation between Uganda's Russian-maintained tanks and Kenya's western-supplied air power.

The Ugandans are equipped with the world's most ubiquitous tank, the Russian T 54/55, whose effective armour thickness is no more than 330 mm. The Kenyans have 50 Swedish recoilless anti-tank rifles able to penetrate 400 mm of armour plate.

In the air, the use of Palestinian pilots to fly Ugandan MiGs would seem to weigh heavily against the inferior Kenyan air force. However, the Entebbe airport raid proved that a comparative small, well-trained and motivated force can wreak havoc on a second-rate force equipped with sophisticated weapons which it does not know how to use.