



# **British Military Operations in Aden and Radfan: 100 Years of British Colonial Rule**

*Nick van der Bijl*

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The book examines the military history of Aden Colony from 1839 including the fractious turn of the century Border Commissions with Turkey and the defeat of British forces near Aden by the Turks in 1915. Great Britain successfully defended the base for the rest of The Great War and throughout the Second World War.

The period after 1945 was one of rising tension as Great Britain drew down its Imperial commitments from the Near and Middle East. Britain's intention to retain a military base in Aden was rejected by Egypt, who, having embarrassed Great Britain during the 1956 Suez Crisis, set about supporting Yemeni aspirations with subversion, in concert with the Soviet Union and China. This led to Aden coming under increasing pressure from Yemeni nationalism during the late 1950 and early 1960s. When an attempt was made to murder the British High Commissioner, a State Emergency was declared. Initially, while operations were confined to the mountainous Radfan region near the border, the internal security of Aden became increasingly fragile as nationalists escalated attacks on the Security Forces and Service dependents with grenade, shootings and bomb attacks in the narrow streets.

When the British declared that they would leave in 1967, the British forces were caught up in interfactional fighting with 20 June 1967 proving a black day with twenty British soldiers murdered. This led to the famous occupation of Crater district by Lt Col 'Mad Mitch' Mitchell and his Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. By November that year, after conducting a masterly withdrawal in contact, the British left Aden for good.

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