

THE BATTLE OF TANGA, GERMAN EAST AFRICA
1914

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Military History

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ABSTRACT

THE BATTLE OF TANGA, GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1914, Major Kenneth J. Harvey, 98 pages.

In November 1914, British Indian Expeditionary Force "B" conducted an amphibious assault on the Port of Tanga in German East Africa. The British possessed all the tools required for success; they outnumbered the defenders almost eight to one, they possessed the only artillery and naval guns available for the battle, and they landed where the Germans were weak. Despite these factors, a hastily organized German defense force of 1,100 soldiers not only defeated the 8,000 British soldiers, but also compelled Indian Expeditionary Force "B" to retreat to Mombasa.

This thesis examines the manner in which German and British forces were organized, trained, equipped, and led. Additionally, it identifies the critical factors that together led to British defeat at Tanga.

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ACRONYMS

Askari	African soldiers serving in a colonial army
GEA	German East Africa
FK	German Field Company
IEF “B”	Indian Expeditionary Force “B”
IEF “C”	Indian Expeditionary Force “C”
ISB	Imperial Service Brigade
KAR	King’s African Rifles
SchK	German Field Company with all German Soldiers, no Askari
101 G	101st Grenadiers
63 PLI	63rd Palmacotta Light Infantry
13 R	13th Rajputs
2 KR	2nd Kashmir Rifles
3 KR	3rd Kashmir Rifles
3 GR	3rd Gwalior Infantry
61 KGOP	61st King George’s Own Pioneers
98 I	98th Infantry
2 LNL	2nd Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire’s
28 MB	28th Mountain Battery

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Gun crews wrestled their old cannons into position on the ocean's edge of German East Africa. With the sun beginning to appear over the Indian Ocean, German gunners raced to fire their guns before it was too late. They worked with the desperation of men who knew this was their last chance to take part in battle. Finally in position, the two crews began to fire their obsolete cannons at the collection of British ships in the port of Tanga's harbor. The British ships broke into a frenzy of activity to escape as the shells of the old cannons began splashing around them. As if outraged by the feeble bombardment, the *H.M.S. Fox* lobbed large six-inch shells into the port city as the British force slowly finished raising anchor and gathered steam to escape the nightmare of Tanga. Chased by waterspouts from the shells of the smoke wreathed, obsolete Model 1873 cannons, Indian Expeditionary Force "B" left Tanga to the control of Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck and his *Schutztruppe*.¹ The roar of the German cannons marked the end of British plans for a rapid conquest of German East Africa, and the defeat of the 8,000 men of Indian Expeditionary Force "B" by 1,100 German and native African troops in November 1914 was so shocking that the British government withheld all information from the public for several months.² Questions of how the meager forces of Lieutenant Colonel Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck defeated Major General Richard Aitken's Indian Expeditionary Force "B" have raged since the last echoes of the ancient German cannons rolled across the ocean toward the fleeing British ships.

Watching the departing British ships, Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck also observed his native Askari troops excitedly talk amongst themselves about the

unexpected mounds of British equipment captured on the beach. As his officers accounted for the *Schutztruppe* soldiers and inventoried the captured equipment of Indian Expeditionary Force “B,” he basked in the glow of desperate decisions that had more than paid off.³ His troops were swaggering through Tanga with a confidence only the victorious possess.⁴

The mood on the transports of Indian Expeditionary Force “B” was not the same at all. Major General Aitken reviewed the messages prepared the night before for his various headquarters in India and England. They all began with the words “Deeply Regret”⁵ and then went into the details of the Force’s failure to secure Tanga and plans to return to Mombasa. Major General Aitken was faced with the end of his career, but was determined to protect his subordinates by praising their efforts and abilities while accepting full responsibility for the failure at Tanga.⁶ Below decks, Captain Richard Meinertzhagen, the Expeditionary Force Intelligence Officer, contemplated the unexpected defeat and tried to understand what had happened. He wondered what the outcome at Tanga would have been with just a few different decisions. Should they have so carelessly turned down British East Africa’s King’s African Rifles Askari offered in Kenya as scouts? Would they have made a difference?⁷ He wondered, having seen the *Schutztruppe* first hand, how many leaders of Indian Expeditionary Force “B” still maintained the assumption the Indian colonial troops were superior to African Askari in the wilds of East Africa? The Navy contribution to the land battle increased his despondency; he was recovering from the effects of shellfire courtesy of the Royal Navy. One of the only two shells fired by *H.M.S. Fox* during the battle had landed close enough to knock him out,⁸ but at least he was better off than the troops in the hold. The crowded,

fetid holds were packed with Indian troops in shock. Most were amazed that they had survived, loaded onto the miserable ships almost thirty days before in India, none of them ever thought they would be happy to be back aboard, but they were. They struggled through the crowded holds searching for missing companions and friends amidst the cries of the wounded and rejoiced when they found them, but few found reason to rejoice. As bad as the holds were, none of them would hesitate to spend another thirty days cramped aboard these reeking ships if that was the price to escape German East Africa.

Colonial forces in British East Africa and Indian Expeditionary Force “B” were to be the final blow in a coordinated campaign to end German influence in Africa. The failed invasion of German East Africa was not a learning experience for a young, blundering Empire. The British Empire had long considered German African colonies as potential threats, either directly to British colonies or as havens for German commerce raiders. The British Lion was determined that German warships would have no sanctuary in Africa.⁹ The attempted invasion of German East Africa in November 1914 was to be the final act of a campaign designed to conquer all of the German African colonies.

After a three-week campaign, the German colony of Togoland fell to British and French forces on 26 August 1914. British, French, and Belgian forces began attacks against the German colony of Cameroon in August 1914, and by November, the Allied forces had captured the colony’s capital, Douala, and were forcing the Cameroon *Schutztruppe* into the wilds of the interior. The third target, German South West Africa, reeled from multiple British South African attacks beginning on 19 September 1914. One of the British Empires staunchest opponents from the Boer War, General Botha, led

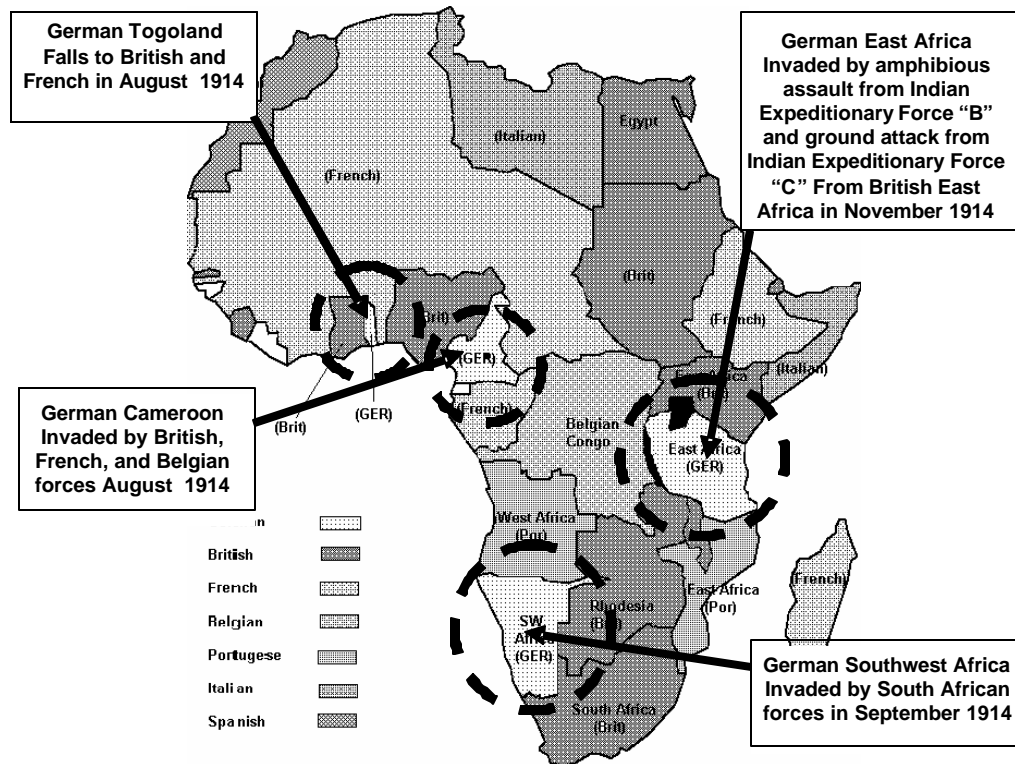


Figure 1. Operational Situation in Africa 1914

the South African forces invading German South West Africa as directed by the British Empire.¹⁰ Luckily, for the German South West Africa *Schutztruppe*, the British offensive ground to a halt in October when General Botha was forced to crush a new Boer rebellion in South Africa.

As with other ventures in Africa, planners in London felt fully confident that African colonial operations required few resources, and that whatever British or Colonial troops were available would easily accomplish their task.¹¹ In Europe, the German offensive in France ground towards Paris and the British Government deployed every fully trained unit it could gather to France to replace the staggering losses suffered by the

British Expeditionary Force. Major General Aitken, the commander of Indian Expeditionary Force “B,” viewed his task to conquer the largest German colony in the world as a simple affair. Despite his initial force being deployed to Europe, Major General Aitken, a long serving officer of the British Army in India, felt that even his second rate troops from India were completely capable of winning. He claimed, “The Indian Army will make short work of a lot of niggers.”¹² The long trip back to Mombasa argued against that claim.

¹Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (Nashville Battery Classics, 1989), 47.

²Charles Horden and H. Fritz M. Stack, eds., *Military Operations East Africa Volume I August 1914- September 1916* (London, His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1941), 100.

³Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (Nashville Battery Classics, 1989), 51.

⁴*Ibid.*, 45.

⁵W.E. Wynn, *Ambush* (London, Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 67.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa (1914-1918)* (New York, W.W Norton & Co., 1986), 165.

⁸*Ibid.*, 170.

⁹David French, *British Strategy & War Aims 1914-1916* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1986), 27.

¹⁰Farwell, 77.

¹¹Horden and Stack, 61.

¹²Farwell, 163.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

In the twilight of the 19th Century, East Africa was one of few regions of the world that remained free of European colonization. Few had ever ventured into the wilderness beyond the East African coastline and fewer thought the region would ever be worthy of colonizing. Men from a dynamic, young German Empire changed that. Filled with dreams of its own potential Germany entered the race for those crown jewels of a great power, colonies. The Great Powers of Europe; France, Britain, Germany and Russia, were those nations that possessed enough economic and military power to ensure their view was heeded on events on the international stage, had no interest in East Africa as there seemed to be nothing in the region to justify an effort to colonize it. The attitudes of the Great Powers remained unchanged about East Africa until a German citizen and his privately funded group made new rules. Dr. Carl Peters was an extremely patriotic German with an absolute belief in Germany's right to occupy the center stage with the other Great Powers. In 1884, Dr. Peters emerged from the East African wilds with treaties granting settlement and control rights to Germany for an area almost twice the size of Germany itself.¹ He and members of his private organization, the Society for German Colonization, had journeyed for three months throughout East Africa and had impressed, threatened, bribed, and cajoled tribal chieftains into signing treaties.² Dr. Peters treaties provided a legal foundation for the German claims in East Africa. The German Chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck, despite disliking Dr. Peters, used his group's empire building efforts in the African wild as a means to disturb the orderly world view of the British. Even though Bismarck tried to prevent the venture by sending a telegram

to Dr. Peters in Zanzibar informing him that his actions would be done without the protection of Imperial Germany³, Bismarck realized the presence of a German colony in the region could become a card to play against the English.⁴ As the 19th century ended, the region became enmeshed in the dance between the Great Powers. Having never had an interest in colonizing the region, Great Britain suddenly developed one, and rapidly organized the colony of British East Africa to prevent German influence from expanding to the north. Fearing that the German overtures towards Uganda might pose a threat to the Nile, Great Britain continued the dance there, and soon acquired Uganda as a colony. As the region began to give rise to competing claims as to who actually controlled what, in 1890 a British, French, and German survey commission mapped boundaries for the various colonies in the region. The agreement finalized the territory that became known as German East Africa as shown in the map.



Figure 2. Pre-War Colonies in Africa

By 1914, the 384,000 square mile colony of German East Africa had grown until there were a little over 5,000 Europeans and over eight million natives living in the colony.⁵ There were few roads and only two rail lines. Most transportation routes ran from the interior to the coastal ports. The terrain varied from low-lying coastal areas to the central plateau that dominates the region. Mount Kilimanjaro and rough, barren, mountain ranges marks the northern border of German East Africa. The German perimeter was broken by the great lakes of the region; Lake Tanganyika to the west, Lake Victoria to the North West, Lake Nyasa to the southwest. Most of East Africa was referred to as “bush” country. Bush country varies from open savanna type vegetation in the central plateau to impenetrable forest, especially in the lake regions and in the southern portion of the colony. Broad areas are barren and almost waterless. The climate was extremely unforgiving with its tropical heat and humidity. Numerous rivers, lakes, and swamps made movement through the southern portion difficult. German East Africa presented difficulties for military operations. It was a vast area with rough terrain, numerous barren and waterless areas, limited transportation networks, and large belts riddled with malaria and other diseases.⁶

The European colonies in sub-Saharan Africa possessed limited industrial capacity. The great powers measured their colonies productiveness in two areas, what the raw goods and resources the colony exported to the home country, and how the size of the market the colony created for goods imported from the home country. German East Africa was a thriving colony in both areas. The colonist owned large farms and ranches maintained by native labor.⁷ German East Africa was a thriving colony, possessing one of the healthiest climates for European colonist in the entire region. Investments were also

extremely productive; the industrial capacity of the colony's capital, Dar-es-Salaam, was continuously growing, and the second major rail line in the colony was completed in 1914.⁸

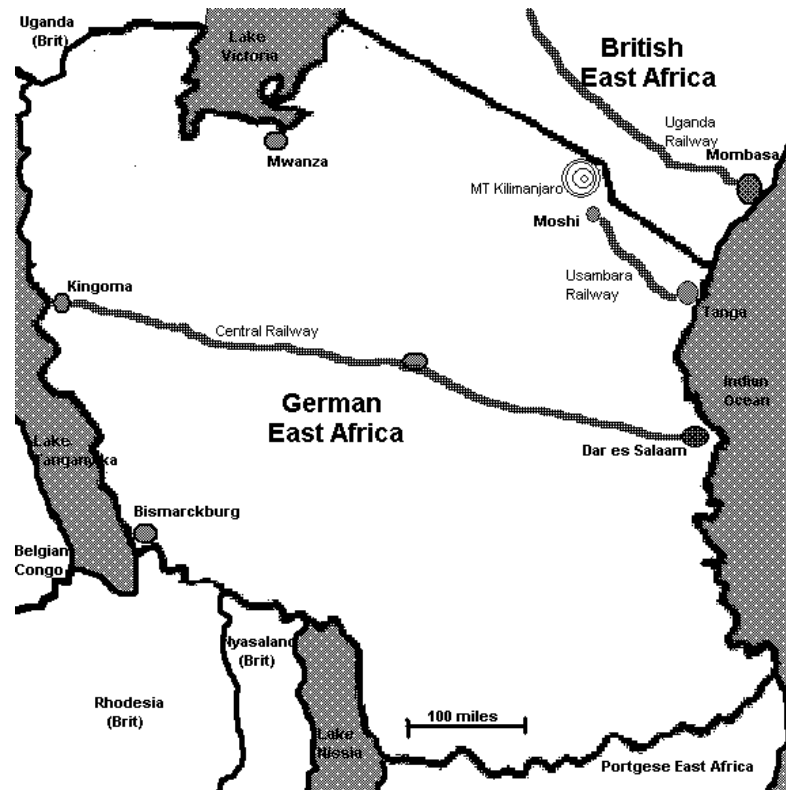


Figure 3. German East Africa in 1912.

Prior to World War I, European powers never envisioned their African colonies becoming involved during a European war between the Great powers. The Berlin Act of 1885 included neutrality clauses for the various colonies in sub-Saharan Africa.⁹ Thus, the military forces within the African colonies were developed to maintain order only. The ground forces stationed in the African colonies were normally not regular army units,

but instead most were colonial defense or protective forces operating under some form of Colonial Office chain of command. These defensive, or protective, forces easily maintained the colonist position of dominance over the native populations¹⁰; most of these organizations were too limited in size, organization, or equipment to attempt to conquer a neighboring colony. German East Africa and British East Africa provide two examples of these colonial forces. The German East Africa Protective Force, or *Schutztruppe*, prior to the war consisted of 216 Europeans and 2,540 Askari.¹¹ Askari are native soldiers in the colony's service. The typical *Schutztruppe* Field Company consisted of sixteen Europeans, 160 Askari, two machine guns, and was supported by an average of 200 natives employed as carriers.¹² The colonial government positioned *Schutztruppe* Field Companies throughout the colony to maintain control of the native population. The British military force in Eastern Africa was the King's African Rifles (KAR). The KAR was organized very similarly to the German East African Protective Force, with sixty-two British officers and 2,319 native Askari divided among three battalions.¹³ However, unlike the German East Africa *Schutztruppe*, the units of the KAR were deployed throughout not one, but instead three colonies; British East Africa, Nyasaland, and Uganda. The number of European officers in both organizations was similar, but the German *Schutztruppe* contained European non-commissioned officers, the KAR did not. The British and German colonial forces were closely matched in numbers in 1914, but the German forces were concentrated and the British forces were widely spread and in little position to defend their territory.

With the building of international tension prior to war in 1914, the various future combatants visualized the strategic situation in Africa in a far different manner than the

other. The conflicting view of the two most powerful men in German East Africa divided the colony's view of its role in a European war. The Governor, Dr. Heinrich Schnee, a long serving member of the German colonial service, felt an intense personal responsibility to improve German East Africa. While few doubted his dedication to the colony, many almost viewed him as untrustworthy. A British General, Brigadier General Fendall, made this observation of him following the surrender of the *Schutztruppe* "a man of the less presentable lawyer class, full of cunning, by no means a fool, but not a gentleman."¹⁴ Dr. Schnee, the second civilian Governor of the colony, viewed the German presence in Africa over the long term. Assuming the position as Governor in 1912, Dr. Schnee worked tirelessly to improve the economic and infrastructure of the colony and spur continued growth. The initial growth of the colony had been a painful time of, native revolts, unworkable policies, and European excesses. The reform of the German Colonial Office in 1906 realigned the power base for colonial affairs. The military personnel in the colonies were now subordinate to the colonial governor. With the appointment of the colonial service members as Governors, many policies were reversed. Colonial rule now began to curb racial oppression and promote the welfare of the natives.¹⁵ The changes in policy and the brutal repression of earlier revolts stabilized the colony and inspired new economic development. In 1907, German East Africa's trade with Germany was valued at twelve million marks.¹⁶ By 1913, the economic development and investment in infrastructure had raised the trade value of German East Africa to eighty nine million marks.¹⁷ Dr. Schnee felt that "The dominant feature of his administration" was to be "the welfare of the natives entrusted to my care."¹⁸ German East Africa in 1914 was growing due to continued investment, increased production,

improved infrastructure, and a calm populace. Dr. Schnee was very thorough in his reasoning on why the colony should attempt to stay out of a war. The colony was becoming a significant asset to the German Empire; most of its vast potential had yet to be tapped. Involving the colony in a general European war had numerous pitfalls. Combat between Askari led forces meant Askaris would kill other Askaris and Europeans. Every European killed in the war had the potential to unravel the racial superiority required to operate the colony.¹⁹ Schnee was concerned that the natives would revolt if the Royal Navy bombarded the port cities and the Germans appeared powerless to protect their own towns. Dr. Schnee believed that to threaten British East Africa or defend the perimeter of the colony require the *Schutztruppe* to be concentrated in the north; the required concentration of forces meant vast areas of the colony would be unoccupied and ripe for a native uprising.²⁰ Potential enemies surrounded the colony and Dr. Schnee had no desire to create an excuse for an enemy to violate the Neutrality Clauses of the Berlin Act and to jeopardize the colony.

The German East Africa Commander-in-Chief of the *Schutztruppe*, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck did not share the same view as the Governor. Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck arrived in East Africa in January 1914. He brought with him a new view on the colony's role in a war. Von Lettow-Vorbeck had distinguished himself throughout his career as a member of the German Army, serving in conventional roles and various assignments in colonial postings. While this background prepared him for his upcoming task in Africa, it also formed in him the opinion that "In the colony it was our duty, in case of universal war, to do all in our power for our country."²¹ Von Lettow-Vorbeck believed that offensive operations by the German East

African *Schutztruppe* would draw valuable troops and resources away from the European theater.²² During the time from his arrival until the outbreak of war, Von Lettow-Vorbeck took numerous trips throughout the region to understand the land in which he might fight as well as to discover the quality of the members of the *Schutztruppe*. It was during this time before the war that he discovered the object to threaten in the case of war with England, "One thought at once of the frontier between German, and British East Africa. Parallel with it, at a distance of a few marches, runs the main artery of the British territory, the Uganda railway."²³ In his estimate, German East Africa did not share any common borders with another friendly region; it was isolated and surrounded. To the west was the Indian Ocean controlled by the warships of Great Britain. The southern border of the colony met with Portuguese East Africa and the British colony of Rhodesia. Lake Tanganyika ran most of the length of the western border, with the Belgian Congo on the far side of the lake. The northern end of the colony bordered the British colonies of Uganda and British East Africa. From his perspective, they were beset by threats from every side, and were unlikely to receive help from Germany. Moreover, to support his country he needed to determine how to draw enemy troops to the colony.

As war became imminent, Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck prepared to mobilize German East Africa. These preparations included expanding the Protective Force, integrating the German East African police forces into the Protective Force, selecting areas for immediate occupation to prevent their seizure by an enemy force, and plans to develop internal methods of supplying war materials. The increased military efforts as well as the fact that Dar-es-Salaam was the *Konigsberg's* homeport did not escape the attention of the British Lion.²⁴

The British government viewed the German African colonies and German East Africa in particular, as a strategic threat. Forces operating from German East Africa could threaten British East Africa, other British and allied colonies, and more importantly, Indian Ocean trade routes. The basing of the German cruiser *Konigsberg* in Dar-es-Salaam particularly worried the British. The British believed that German East Africa's role as an operational base for German Naval forces was an unacceptable threat to British control of the Indian Ocean.²⁵ The British did not view German East Africa as an isolated colony that could be ignored until a convenient time was found to take it; they saw it as an immediate threat. The British government perceived German East Africa as a springboard for ground attacks against British and allied colonies aimed to disrupt the flow of resources needed by the British Empire.²⁶ The most dangerous threat, were the ports of German East Africa.²⁷ The ports were havens for the German cruisers designed to raid British controlled sea-lanes. With German East Africa as a base, the German Navy threatened to disrupt the trade lifeline of the British Empire. The British colonies in Africa were unprepared for war. Yet, the difficulty of the terrain on the southern end of German East Africa allowed them to feel secure that German offensive operations against Rhodesia were unlikely. However, British East Africa was a different story.

The outbreak of World War I caught many of the European colonists in Africa by surprise. While some had considered the threat of war, few believed it would actually occur.²⁸ Just prior to the commencement of hostilities the German cruiser *Konigsberg* sailed from Dar-es-Salaam and evaded the British Cape Squadron responsible for maintaining contact with it. In the colony, Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck immediately began to mobilize resources and gather the Protective Force near Dar-es-

Salaam. The Protective Force focused on integrating the police forces and the mobilization of new field companies that were being created from activated reservists and volunteers.²⁹ Von Lettow-Vorbeck had one slight problem with his military plans, Heinrich Schnee, the Governor of German East Africa, held supreme power in the colony in time of war and did not want the colony actively involved in the war.³⁰ Governor Schnee felt strongly enough about remaining neutral, that on August 8, 1914, when part of the British Cape Squadron entered Dar-es-Salaam harbor and began bombarding the wireless transmitter; the Governor signed an agreement of neutrality for the city with the commander of *H.M.S. Astrea*.³¹ A neutrality agreement was signed for the port of Tanga when the commander of the *H.M.S. Fox* presented a similar agreement to the local German authorities. Von Lettow-Vorbeck refused to admit the legality of the Governor's actions and never attempted to comply with the neutrality agreements.³² He continued to mobilize the resources at his disposal, and began to marshal the Protective Force in the northern part of the colony to threaten British East Africa and to divert enemy resources to Africa. With the outbreak of war, the cruiser *Emden* left the German Asiatic Squadron in China and began commerce raiding in the Indian Ocean as well. With multiple German cruisers raiding the Indian Ocean, the British decided to take action and eliminate the threat to its colonial possessions and trade routes posed by the German colonies.³³ At the war's onset, the majority of the KAR battalion stationed in British East Africa was involved in the western portion of the colony dealing with native revolts and only two companies were available to protect the border with German East Africa and the 440 miles of the Uganda railway.³⁴ The proximity of the vital Uganda Rail line to the Kilimanjaro region, and the lack of troops to protect the border worried the British. The

British Colonial Office ordered the British Army Headquarters in India to dispatch reinforcements from India on 8 August 1914.³⁵ British Army Headquarters in India formed Indian Expeditionary Force “C,” an ad hoc brigade size formation, which began its deployment to British East Africa on 19 August 1914. British Army Headquarters in India also received another mission from the Colonial Office to prepare another force to seize German East Africa.³⁶ On 17 August 1914, the British Army Headquarters in India began the process of forming Indian Expeditionary Force “B.”

¹Charles Miller, *Battle for the Bundu* (New York, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), 6.

²Ibid.

³Mary Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire 1884-1918*, (New York, Macmillan Company, 1930), 132.

⁴Miller, 6.

⁵Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa (1914-1918)* (New York, W.W Norton & Co., 1986), 109.

⁶Charles Horden and H. Fritz M. Stack, eds., *Military Operations East Africa Volume I August 1914-September 1916* (London, His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1941), 13.

⁷Farwell, 112.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Horden and Stack, 525.

¹⁰Miller, 10.

¹¹Farwell, 109

¹²Ibid., 110.

¹³Horden and Stack, 15.

¹⁴Brigadier C. P. Fendall, *The East African Force 1915-1919* (Nashville, Battery Press, 1992), 129.

¹⁵Miller, 20.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (Oxford, University Press, 2001), 574.

¹⁸Miller, 21

¹⁹Strachan, 575.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (Nashville Battery Classics, 1989), 3

²²*Ibid.*, 19.

²³*Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴French, 27.

²⁵David French, *British Strategy & War Aims 1914-1916* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1986), 27.

²⁶Horden and Stack, 16.

²⁷French, 27.

²⁸Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Germans Who Never Lost* (London, W. H. Allen & Co., 1977), 19.

²⁹Lettow-Vorbeck, 25.

³⁰Farwell, 109.

³¹Lettow-Vorbeck, 27.

³²*Ibid.*, 28.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Ibid., 21.

³⁵Ibid., 31.

³⁶Ibid., 32.

CHAPTER 3

THE *SCHUTZTRUPPE*

After Dr. Carl Peters emerged from the African wilds with his treaties for the East African interior, Germany formally acknowledged this territory by issuing a *Schutzbrief* from the Kaiser in 1885,¹ which offered Imperial protection for the *Deutch Ost-Afrika Gesellschaft*'s (German East Africa Company, or DAOG) territory. With the public backing an Imperial Germany, the DAOG lost no time in consolidating power in East Africa. The tool the DAOG had to develop to consolidate power was the German East African Protective Force, or *Schutztruppe*, was formed after native hostility against German consolidation attempts flared into revolt in 1888.² Dr. Peters, realizing the revolt was placing his venture in jeopardy, appealed to Berlin for help. The Chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck, was more than happy to let Dr. Peters twist in the wind, but could not allow the first German colony to fail.³ The *Schutzbrief* authorized German naval and marine support, but the scope of the mission required substantial ground forces. The German *Reichstag* was hesitant to support the DAOG's operations because Dr. Peters, and the DAOG, had already raised tensions with the British for his exploits while trying to expand the colony into British territory and Uganda. The *Reichstag* had, however, no reservations in providing funds to the DAOG for antislavery operations on the African coast.⁴ The *Reichstag* provided 100,000 *deutch mark* for an East African Expeditionary Force (EAEF) to destroy the slave trade on the East African coast,⁵ although 100,000 *deutch mark* was not enough to deploy German units to Africa, nor was it enough to raise formations of Europeans. However, the money was adequate for a native force with German leaders. The German Army realized that there was valuable colonial experience

to be gained from the war in Africa and allowed active Army personnel to serve for a three-year period in the African colonies and then return to the Army with no loss of seniority.⁶ This policy was more than enough incentive to ensure that German forces in Africa were not composed of continental army rejects.

The initial commander of the EAEF was the noted African explorer, Hermann Wissmann. Wissmann fully believed in the British ideas on native troops in Africa. The idea at the time was native troops were more suitable for service in the African tropics than European soldiers due to acclimatization and resistance to local diseases.⁷ Additionally, native revolts in East Africa were a concern to all the colonial powers due fears that a successful revolt could spark a larger and wider revolt. Wissmann capitalized on this universal concern and received permission from the British to recruit the initial expeditionary force from recently demobilized Sudanese soldiers in Cairo and Zulu warriors from Mozambique.⁸ Wissmann recruited German officers and non-commissioned officers from the German Army to lead the Sudanese.

The initial expeditionary force laid the foundation of loyalty that became the hallmark of the East African Askari. The EAEF Askari and their families were transported to East Africa in 1889 to begin operations in the coastal areas. The Germans benefited greatly from the use of the Sudanese and Zulus in the expeditionary force. As they were not local natives, they brought no personal ties to the local communities. The presence of the Askari's families at each company's colonial station developed a native force that became a separate society from the native population. By circumstance and lack of local ties, the Askari became extremely loyal to one another, their organization, and by default, the German colonial government.⁹ The expeditionary force conducted

continuous campaigns from 1889-1890 against the coastal Arabs and tribes in the interior. As the campaigns transitioned from securing the coastal areas to securing the caravan routes on the interior, the expeditionary forces established company-sized stations. These stations became the focal point of the Askari and their families.¹⁰

In January 1891, Germany declared that German East Africa was a Crown Colony and placed it under the control of the newly created Imperial Colonial Office. The failures of the DOAG overshadowed the gradual success of the EAEF; the DOAG created constant native unrest and growing debt by its actions in East Africa. The DAOG had been in the same situation as the other territories controlled by the Germans; rising debt, international complications from other colonial territories, and continued internal unrest. The DOAGs problems dampened public willingness to invest or immigrate to the colony. By placing East Africa under Imperial control as had happened in Cameroon and Togoland, Berlin hoped to stabilize the colony and renew the German public's willingness to invest and relocate there.¹¹ The first change for the colony was that an Imperial Governor replaced the DAOG administrators; Governor Baron Von Soden, a military officer selected by the Colonial Office, was vested with executive power in all military and civil matters in the colony. The EAEF was transformed into the German East African Protective Force, or *Schutztruppe*. German Officers and non commissioned officers reverted to active German Army status, and the Askari became part of the Imperial German military. Initially the colonial governors selected by Berlin were all military men. They secured the interior and expanded settled areas. As time passed the *Schutztruppe* required additional personnel as it expanded, and to replace losses from

those who had died or grown too old for active service. The German colonists began recruiting local natives from tribes they believed had a more martial spirit.¹²

The status of those serving in the *Schutztruppe* had grown with every victory in the colony. The Askari were well paid, well cared for, and well armed. Their social structure was tied to their families and homes, which meant they had no bonds with the local populations. By 1900, the *Schutztruppe* had grown from 900 to over 1700,¹³ and the continuous campaigns caused by unrest in East Africa honed the skills of the growing force. The officers and non-commissioned officers selected for service in the *Schutztruppe* underwent a rigorous screening process in Germany. The policy of not losing seniority was replaced by incentives; German soldiers selected for a two and a half year tour in Africa received five years toward their pension.¹⁴ To even apply for service in the *Schutztruppe*, candidates were required to have at least three years on active duty, an unblemished military record, and exhaustive medical screenings.¹⁵ The Askari selected for service underwent rigorous training and indoctrination. The initial training period for the Askari was intended to root out all those who were unsuited to Army discipline.¹⁶ Training was reinforced at each colonial station, and continuous training in weapons, tactics, and extended field exercises melded the new recruits into their Field Companies. The early days of the EAEF had required translators to allow the Germans to communicate with their soldiers. Over time, this obstacle was overcome by training the natives in German commands, specific bugle calls, and the growing ability of the Germans to speak Swahili.

Between 1889 and 1904 there were seventy-five punitive expeditions mounted by the *Schutztruppe*,¹⁷ the majority of these campaigns were conducted in order to suppress

native disputes, revolts, or banditry. The continuous campaigning created an organization ideally suited for operations in bush country. The *Schutztruppe* operated in company-sized elements known as Field Companies (or FKs) and these mobile units gained intimate familiarity with the terrain and combat in Africa.

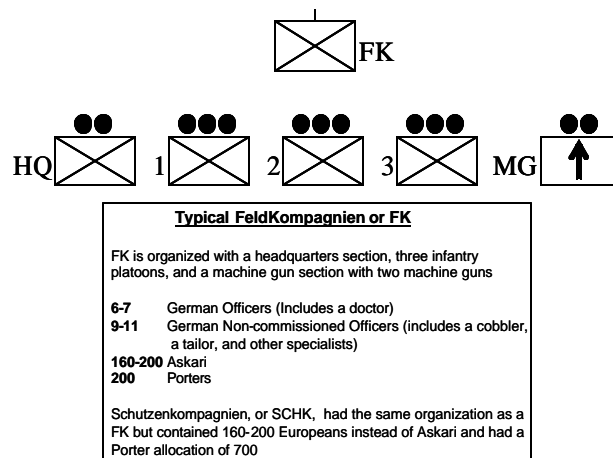


Figure 4. Field Company Organization

The campaigns continued to grow in duration and intensity until 1900. As more and more of the administration of the colony fell under civil control, the frequency of campaigns dropped. The development of a native police force, also under white supervision, removed many of the more mundane tasks of the *Schutztruppe* and allowed them to focus on military operations and training. The change of control in East Africa from the DOAG to an Imperial Colony had benefited the *Schutztruppe*, but had not improved relations between the colonists and the native populace.

Following the relatively calm years of 1900-1904, the Maji-Maji revolt in July 1905 took the colonial government by complete surprise.¹⁸ Tribes in the southern portion

of the colony had grown increasingly restless over taxes, forced labor, and poor compensation,¹⁹ and they fell under the influence of medicine men who convinced them that magic Maji, the Swahili word for water, would protect them from German bullets.²⁰ The revolt grew like a brush fire and the rebels were able to clear the southern one third of the colony of Europeans, Arabs, and Indians. The German response was immediate; the 1700 members of the *Schutztruppe* and 600 police auxiliaries fought containment battles until reinforcements arrived from Germany.²¹ The German forces then crushed the revolt with unmitigated brutality. By 1907, continuous campaigning and a scorched earth policy had destroyed almost every village and cultivated plot in an area larger than Germany.²² Over 100,000 natives died in the fighting as well as the famine that followed. There were two impacts from the Maji-Maji rebellion, the first was that natives accepted the *Schutztruppe* as the dominant force in the region, and the second was a backlash in Germany from the brutal methods used against the natives.

The uproar over the brutal methods used against the Maji-Maji in German East Africa and similar actions conducted against the Herero in German South West Africa in 1904 resulted in changes to German colonial policy. Civilian Colonial Service personnel were selected as Governors instead of military personnel, and the change to civilian control brought a new direction. The civilian Governors wielded the same executive power as the military Governors had, but their focus was on economic growth rather than administration. The focus on economic growth and infrastructure slowly allowed the colony to grow, and as the colony improved economically the German public was further encouraged, resulting in increased settlement and financial investment.

The period of 1907-1914 was a relatively calm time for the colony. The colonial governors, with Dr. Heinrich Schnee serving as the last one from 1912-1918, eased the native policy and increased the size and responsibility of the police force. These changes resulted in more training time for the *Schutztruppe*. Daily events of colonial life kept the Field Companies busy, but the hard fought campaigns of twenty years had created well-trained combat organizations. The units were fully proficient in warfare in the African wilds. The soldiers were well disciplined, fully competent, and extremely loyal to their officers and non-commissioned officers. The *Schutztruppe* was a well-oiled machine.

In 1912, Dr. Schnee and the commander of the *Schutztruppe*, Colonel Von Schleinitz, agreed with the East African defense plan submitted by the German General Staff.²³ The plan recognized the precarious position of the colony, as completely isolated and unlikely to receive reinforcements from Europe if Germany was conducting a protracted war. Dr. Schnee's initial instructions were to attempt to keep the colony neutral in accordance with the Berlin Treaty of 1885,²⁴ but the Neutrality Clause was only effective if all the combatants agreed.²⁵ Assuming that war with the British would result in the British not accepting East Africa's neutrality, the plan attempted to incorporate the dual objectives of preventing external conquest as well as internal revolt.²⁶ Additionally, the defense plan focused on evacuating the coastline and establishing the defense within the interior of the colony.²⁷ The pattern of interior defense would maintain full military presence among the native population in the interior as well as prevent British Naval and Marine forces from easily conquering the colony. This plan required the enemy to commit significant ground forces to seize the colony. With all the ramifications that a European war would entail, the implied thought was that other

nations would not commit the forces required to conquer the colony rather than using those forces in Europe. There were also other components of the plan. The majority of the colonists of military age were either members of the reserve, or members of paramilitary organizations called shooting clubs. Upon commencement of hostilities, these civilians, along with the colony's police, postal workers, and railway personnel were to be immediately inducted into the *Schutztruppe*. The positioning of the colonial stations throughout the colony also supported the plan. The interior defense plan was the accepted defensive scheme until 1914 and the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck.

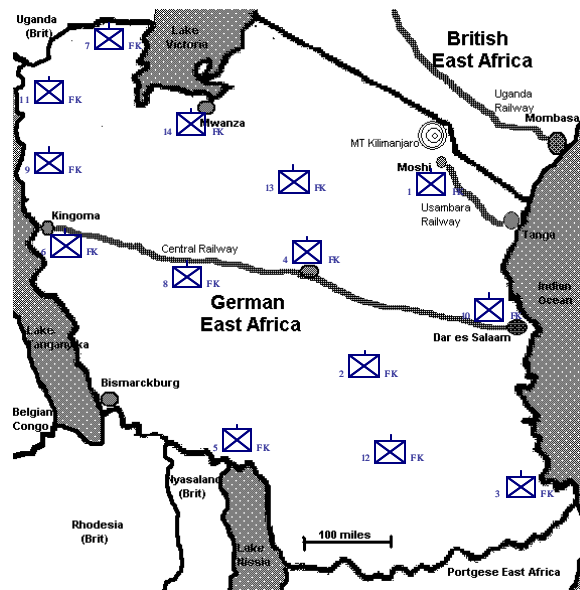


Figure 5. *Schutztruppe* Dispositions August 1914

Von Lettow-Vorbeck assumed command of the *Schutztruppe* in January 1914. He was an extremely experienced officer, having been selected to serve on the Great General Staff in 1899-1900, campaigned in the Boxer Rebellion in China from 1900-1901, served

on General Von Trotha's staff and as a company commander during the Herero revolt in south West Africa in 1904-1906, and commanded a marine battalion from 1911-1913.²⁸ Von Lettow-Vorbeck immediately began assessing his command, the colony, and his options in the event of conflict. His view on the colony's role in a war was the complete opposite of Governor Schnee's and the General Staff Defense Plan. Von Lettow-Vorbeck believed "it our military object to detain the enemy, that is English, forces, if it could by any means be accomplished. This however, was impossible if we remained neutral."²⁹ During his travels throughout the colony, Von Lettow-Vorbeck made several observations: he was extremely pleased that there were almost 2,700 European military age males residing in the colony³⁰ with a great number of retired military members among them. He also noted that most of them were members of the reserves or the shooting clubs.³¹ He was not sure how to create a military organization from the shooting clubs, but he did secure their agreement to join the *Schutztruppe* in the event of war.³² Another strength within the colony was the police force under the control of each District Commissioner. While resenting the loss of the non-commissioned officers drawn from the *Schutztruppe* to serve in "an undisciplined second-rate" police force, Lettow-Vorbeck also realized that the *ex-Schutztruppe* members on the police force would ease the integration of the police force into the *Schutztruppe* in time of war.³³

Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck observed one of his Field Companies, the 4th Field Company, or 4 FK, for the first time at Arusha. He realized that the Companies were extremely well disciplined and adapted to native warfare, but their equipment and training required adjustment. The majority of the FKs were equipped with 1871 black powder rifles. He felt "Against an enemy provided with modern smokeless

equipment, the smokey rifle was, not only in the long ranges obtaining in the open plain, but also in bush-fighting, where the combatants are often a few paces apart, decidedly inferior.”³⁴ Neither was Askari marksmanship to his standard and he planned to implement a training program to rectify this shortfall.³⁵ He also noted a deficiency in the native training with the machine gun, but the German members of the *Schutztruppe* had a complete understanding of machine gun operation and employment.³⁶ The other area he noted for improvement was tactical maneuver. The native method of warfare was based on surprise and ambush. To counter that the FKs were trained to “rally around their leader and rush the enemy.”³⁷ His concern for this tactic against a modern opponent also required new training for the FKs. Upon his return from his first inspection trip, Lettow-Vorbeck arranged to re-equip three more FKs with more modern Model 1898 rifles, making six FKs equipped with smokeless powder rifles, and issuing new training instructions.³⁸

Between May and August 1914, Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck continued his inspections and monitored the new training of the FKs. He also briefed Governor Schnee on *Schutztruppe* plans in case of war. Lettow-Vorbeck intended to secure the colony by attacking British East Africa, as this action would also force the British to commit forces against them and draw those forces away from use against Germany in Europe.³⁹ To do this, Lettow-Vorbeck wanted to concentrate the majority of the *Schutztruppe* near Kilimanjaro to seize Mombasa and cut the Uganda Railway.⁴⁰ Governor Schnee, as holder of supreme military and civil power in the colony, refused permission for this concentration, fearing that absence of the FKs from the interior could encourage a revolt.⁴¹ Governor Schnee approved Lettow-Vorbeck’s alternate plan, which

was to concentrate the *Schutztruppe* a days march inland from Dar-es-Salaam (at Pugu) in the event of war. Governor Schnee also coordinated with the Captain of the *SMS Konigsberg*, Max Loof, to depart Dar-es-Salaam in case of war. Once the *SMS Konigsberg* was at sea, Schnee would be able to sink the floating dock and block the port, thereby discouraging British occupation.⁴² Captain Loof was more than happy with the plan to escape the harbor before the British could arrive and trap him in the port. Loof's mission had nothing to do with protecting Dar-es-Salaam; his mission was to reach the open sea and begin commerce raiding.

News of the beginning of the First World War arrived in Dar-es-Salaam on 3 August 1914, amidst the celebrations of the opening of the Tanganyika Central Railway. Governor Schnee and Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck both began transitioning the colony to a war footing. Governor Schnee attempted to secure agreements of neutrality with neighboring colonies, but they deferred on guidance from their governments. He also declared martial law, called up the reserves, and began the transfer of police, railway workers, and postal employees for service in the *Schutztruppe*.⁴³ Schnee did not relinquish authority over the military and still intended to execute the 1912 defense plan. He authorized officials in Dar-es-Salaam and Tanga to conclude neutrality agreements for the ports when British warships arrived. Dar-es-Salaam's neutrality agreement was signed on 8 August 1914 when the commander of the *H.M.S. Astrea* concluded the agreement after a short bombardment. On 17 August, the commander of *H.M.S. Fox*, Captain Caulfeild, concluded another neutrality agreement with the German District Commissioner in Tanga. On both occasions British Officers informed German Officials that the neutrality agreements were not ratified until the

British Government had approved them.⁴⁴ These agreements fit into Governor Schnee's intent to execute the 1912 interior defense plan; the neutrality of the coastal ports would prevent British bombardment and negate the risk of the natives believing the Germans were not all powerful.

Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck was also immersed in war preparations. At Pugu the *Schutztruppe* began the process of absorbing the reserves, civilian, volunteers, police, and other personnel by forming four more FKs (15-18). Lettow-Vorbeck also began creating *Schutzkompanien* (SCHK), the SCHK were all European companies without Askari. The SCHK were formed from the reserves, shooting clubs, and several hundred naval personnel who were now stranded in the colony.⁴⁵ Von Lettow-Vorbeck fought with Governor Schnee over the neutrality agreements and declared them illegal.⁴⁶ After continuous pressure upon Governor Schnee, he finally received permission to concentrate the *Schutztruppe* in the Kilimanjaro region. Between August and November he also continued to expand the *Schutztruppe* and by November 1 he fielded a force of twenty FKs and SCHKs. Lettow-Vorbeck also reorganized the *Schutztruppe* from independent companies into battalion size detachments. The majority of his combat power, four of the detachments comprising fourteen of the twenty companies, he deployed in the Kilimanjaro region. The concentration of forces in Kilimanjaro threatened the Uganda Railway and Mombasa in British East Africa.⁴⁷ The fifth detachment, Baumstark's, was responsible for defense of the coastline. One of Baumstark's companies was in Dar-es-Salaam, but the remainder of his detachment was concentrated in the north to prevent the British from moving south

along the coast to Tanga. Two independent companies were positioned along the central railway to maintain internal order.

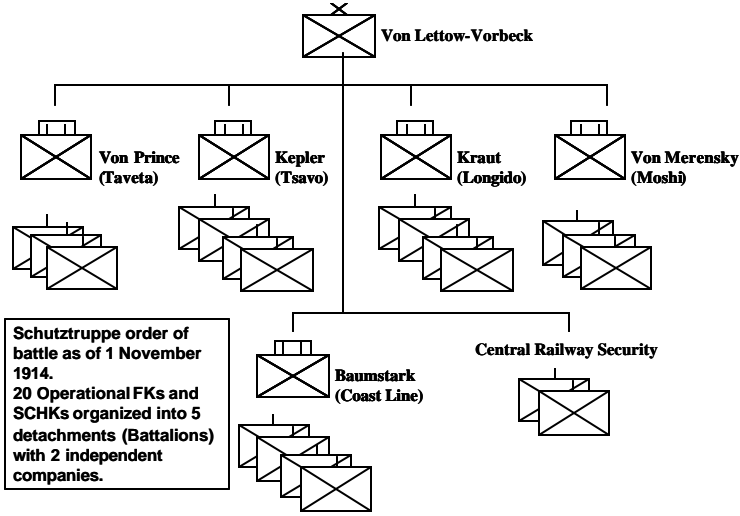


Figure 6. Schutztruppe Organization

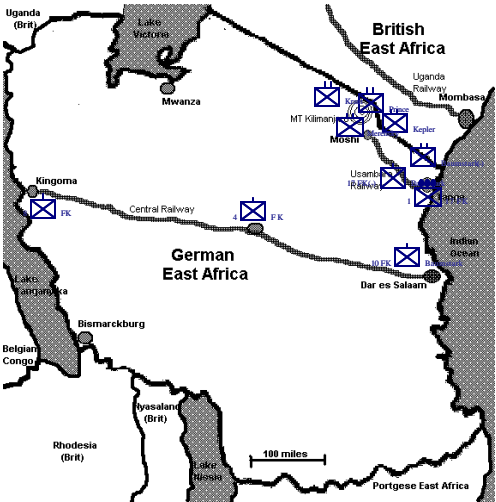


Figure 7. Schutztruppe Concentration in Kilimanjaro

Von Lettow-Vorbeck received advanced warning of an Indian force heading for the colony from captured letters and reports from British East Africa. On 22 October, the commander of the Coastal detachment, Baumstark, received word that the Indian force would land at Tanga.⁴⁸ The information was reliable enough that from 28-30 October, Von Lettow-Vorbeck held a defensive planning conference with Baumstark and Dr. Aucher, the Tanga District Commissioner.⁴⁹ Von Lettow-Vorbeck was confident that Baumstark could hold Tanga long enough for the *Schutztruppe* to redeploy via the Usambara Railway and prevent an enemy landing.

¹Mary Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire 1884-1918*, (New York, Macmillan Company, 1930), 133.

²Michael Von Herff, *They Walk Through the Fire Like the Blondest German: African Serving the Kaiser in German East Africa (1888-1914)*, (Ann Arbor, Bell & Howell Company, 1991), 8.

³*Ibid.*, 9.

⁴Townsend, 139.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Von Herff, 50.

⁷*Ibid.*, 10.

⁸W. O. Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire 1884-1919*, (Bath, Bookcraft, 1993), 63.

⁹Von Herff, 79.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Townsend, 155.

¹²Charles Miller, *Battle for the Bundu* (New York, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), 16.

¹³Von Herff, 32.

¹⁴Miller, 17.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Von Herff, 75.

¹⁷Miller, 13.

¹⁸Henderson, 82.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Miller, 13.

²¹Henderson, 83.

²²Miller, 14.

²³Ross Anderson, *The Battle of Tanga 1914*, (Gloucestershire, Tempus, 2002), 25.

²⁴Miller, 40.

²⁵Charles Horden and H. Fritz M. Stack, eds., *Military Operations East Africa Volume I August 1914-September 1916* (London, His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1941), 527.

²⁶Anderson, 25.

²⁷Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (Oxford, University Press, 2001), 576.

²⁸Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (Nashville Battery Classics, 1989), 16.

²⁹Ibid., 18-19.

³⁰Anderson, 30.

³¹Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 6.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., 7.

³⁴Ibid., 8.

³⁵Ibid., 9.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 13.

³⁹Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Anderson, 17.

⁴³Ibid., 25.

⁴⁴Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa (1914-1918)* (New York, W.W Norton & Co., 1986), 123.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 29.

⁴⁷Anderson, 46.

⁴⁸Ibid., 61.

⁴⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

INDIAN EXPEDITONARY FORCE “B”

Great Britain’s colonial Empire spanned the globe by the end of the 19th century. The economic benefit the colonies provided to the British was the lynchpin of their Great Power status. The colonies provided the British Empire with raw materials for the factories in Britain, markets for goods from British factories, and revenue from colonial populations. The Empire also provided a worldwide network of military bases and large sources for military man-power. The crown jewel of the British Empire was the sub-continent, India, and British colonization in Africa demonstrates the importance of India to the Empire. The colonization of South Africa was to secure the halfway point to India.¹ Further British control in Zanzibar provided a naval base for protection of Indian Ocean trade routes.² Upon completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, British focus shifted to Egypt and the Red Sea as a quicker route for British-India commerce.³ Britain expressed little interest in Africa between Egypt and South Africa, which appeared to offer nothing to the Empire. In 1877, the Sultan of Zanzibar offered his territory in East Africa to the British as a protectorate, seven years prior to German claims in the region.⁴ East Africa appeared to offer the British nothing to offset the resources needed to colonize the region and they declined the offer.⁵ The British lack of interest in East Africa radically changed in 1884 with the sudden appearance of Dr. Carl Peters and the DAOG onto the African scene.

The British did not attempt to hinder initial German territorial acquisitions in Africa. In fact, there were several instances where the British actively supported German efforts. In 1889, Britain allowed Germany to recruit Sudanese and Zulu Askari for the East African Expeditionary Force.⁶ Britain also applied pressure on the Sultan of

Zanzibar in 1886 to acquiesce to German demands in East Africa.⁷ Strategically the new German colonies appeared to threaten South Africa and provided Germany with ports that could allow the German Navy to threaten British control of Indian Ocean trade routes. The aggressive attempts by Dr. Peters to expand German East Africa prompted Britain to begin acquiring additional African colonies. The British began efforts to control part of East Africa, and by October 1885 had secured concessions from the Sultan of Zanzibar that effectively divided his mainland territory into two spheres of influence German East Africa and British East Africa.⁸ British East Africa prevented the Germans from expanding to the north, thus protecting the Red sea and the vital Suez Canal trade route. When Dr. Carl Peters and his DAOG began trying to gain territorial concessions in Uganda, the British blocked the attempt, gained controlling concessions from the main Ugandan tribes, and established the new colony of Uganda.⁹ By 1895, the dance for colonial acquisitions in Central Africa was finished, but the strategic picture had changed greatly. In any British-German war, Germany was in a position to threaten British colonies in Africa as well as the all-important trade routes to India. German naval forces possessed bases in the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans as well as wireless transmission stations to provide information to German warships at sea. In the event of a war, the British knew those issues must be dealt with rapidly.

The British ground force in East Africa was the King's African Rifles, or KAR. The KAR was organized similarly to the German East Africa *Schutztruppe*. The main difference between the two was that the KAR was not concentrated in one colony; it was dispersed in company size elements in three colonies; British East Africa, Uganda, and Nyasaland. Therefore, despite the parity in ground forces available in the region, the

Schutztruppe was positioned to operate on interior lines with a force that was up to three times stronger than the British could muster. The impact of the *Schutztruppe*'s advantage was that the British government would be forced to examine external forces available in case of war with Germany. The imbalance between the *Schutztruppe* and the KAR would make German East Africa a substantially different problem than the other German colonies in Africa. Once the war began, British operations in German Togoland and Cameroon were conducted with minimal units gathered from available Allied colonial protective forces. The British invasion of German South West Africa relied upon South African forces that spearheaded the invasion at Britain's behest. German East Africa required an altogether different concept: the KAR could not conquer German East Africa; in fact, the disparity in forces caused by the KAR's disposition and Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck concentration of forces near Kilimanjaro meant that British East Africa was actually in jeopardy.

On 4 August 1914, Sir Henry Belfield, the Governor of British East Africa, sent a message to the Colonial Office in London that outlined the colony's status.¹⁰ The Governor had declared emergency measures and begun mobilization of the 3,000 European military age males who were living in Uganda and British East Africa.¹¹ With the majority of the KAR conducting operations against Somali tribesmen in the northern part of the colony, only two KAR companies were available to defend the frontier with German East Africa. The Governor's telegram outlined the near defenselessness of the colony and began a round of bureaucratic squabbling in London.

The Colonial Office viewed the British East Africa situation as an impending crisis. They immediately requested a brigade of troops from the Indian Office to defend

British East Africa.¹² The India Office, having already been ordered to provide a large force for operations in Europe, referred the request to the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID).¹³ On 5 August Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith approved the formation of an Offensive Sub-Committee (OSC) to the CID to plan for overseas operations. The new OSC, entitled “The Joint Naval and Military Committee for the Consideration of Combined Operations in Foreign Territory,”¹⁴ was charged with deciding what objectives could be assigned to joint operations to produce a definite effect on the result of the war.¹⁵ The same day that it was created, the OSC submitted numerous recommendations to the CID including that “an expedition should be sent from India against Dar-es-Salaam” to protect commerce by “the reduction of the *point d’appui* of the German Naval forces off the coast of East Africa.”¹⁶ The initial recommendation was refined on 6 August when the OSC recommended that four battalions from India would be sufficient for operations against Dar-es-Salaam and that a further two battalions be sent from India to protect British East Africa.¹⁷ The CID accepted the OSC recommendations at face value and delegated the recommendations to the various ministries for planning.¹⁸ The War Office was not involved in the planning for the expeditionary force to Dar-es-Salaam; as a colonial matter it was delegated by the CID to the Colonial Office and from there to the India Office with support from the Admiralty.¹⁹ The India Office did not delegate the planning for the Dar-es-Salaam expedition to the Commander-In-Chief of the Indian Army, rather it was conducted in London by Sir George Barrow, a retired General of the Indian Army and Military Secretary to the India Office.²⁰

India Army Headquarters received the Dar-es Salaam mission on 8 August and the British East Africa reinforcement mission on 9 August. The Indian Army

Headquarters was already juggling requirements when these missions arrived. These requirements included maintaining the defensive forces on the North West frontier and fielding Indian Expeditionary Force “A” (IEF “A”) for employment in Europe. They had to scramble to identify forces for Indian Expeditionary Force “B” (IEF “B”) for operations against Dar-es-Salaam and Indian Expeditionary Force “C” (IEF “C”) for the reinforcement of British East Africa. The best-trained units in India had already been tasked to form IEF “A” and the remaining frontier forces were viewed as barely adequate to ensure the security of India.²¹ Army Headquarters selected Brigadier General Arthur Aitken and his 16th Poona Brigade as IEF “B” for the Dar-es-Salaam mission and Brigadier J.M. Stewart with the 29th Punjabi Battalion and two Imperial Service Battalions for IEF “C.” Brigadier General Aitken was an officer with a long, if undistinguished service record in the Indian Army. Aitken had never actually led troops in combat, and his only campaign had been in the Sudan in 1885 as a young officer.²² Army Headquarters prioritized the IEF “C” reinforcement mission over IEF “B” and the lead elements of IEF “C” sailed for Mombasa on 19 August.²³ As the 16th Poona Brigade prepared, the British Government was faced with a new issue. The Ottoman Empire was mobilizing troops, and the War Office believed the Ottoman Empire would enter the war as British opponents.²⁴ The Colonial Office immediately realized the threat posed to Egypt and Mesopotamia, and viewed the threat to the Middle East colonies as more vital to the Empire than the planned operation against Dar-es-Salaam. The Colonial Office revised its order to the India Office and on 28 August, the India Office passed word to Army Headquarters in India that IEF “B” be postponed indefinitely.²⁵ As the Dar-es-Salaam mission had been postponed but not canceled Brigadier General Aitken was

retained in India as the IEF “B” Commander, however on 30 August the 16th Poona Brigade was detached from IEF “B” and ordered to join Indian Expeditionary Force “D” (IEF “D”) for operations in the Middle East.

Despite the postponement of its mission, IEF “B” still received staff members for its headquarters and was told to continue to plan for the expedition to Dar-es-Salaam. India was given no definitive date when IEF “B” would be revitalized. The various offices and headquarters allowed IEF “B” to lie dormant through the middle of September. India Army Headquarters was consumed with the deployment of IEFs “A” and “C” and London was focused on the German drive towards the Marne in France. By the second week of September, London refocused momentarily on German East Africa. The *S.M.S. Konigsberg* was at large in the India Ocean and the German Asiatic squadron of six other cruisers was at sea and might appear at any time in the India Ocean. The threat to the Indian Ocean sea-lanes prompted the India Office to inform Indian Army Headquarters that IEF “B” was to “be held intact and ready for employment.”²⁶

The initial mission for IEF “B” was to seize Dar-es-Salaam to deny the port and wireless station to the German Navy. In September, Sir George Barrow, Military Secretary to the India Office, received approval in London to modify the original concept. The initial mission to deny the German Navy the use of Dar-es-Salaam was modified by ordering IEF “B” to seize all of German East Africa. Sir George Barrow also received authorization to expand IEF “B” to two brigades to accomplish the new mission. The new orders arrived via cable at the end of the first week in September. The important highlights of the new orders for IEF “B” were:

- (1) The object of the expedition under your command is to bring the whole of German East Africa under British authority.²⁷
- (2) On arrival at Mombasa you will after conferring with the General Officer Commanding Force “C” [Who was Commanded by the Governor of British East Africa]. [and] The Governor will be instructed to put at your disposal for this purpose such of the forces in British East Africa, including those in Force “C”, as can be spared.²⁸
- (3) His Majesty’s Government desire that you should first secure the safety of British East Africa by occupying country between Tanga and Kilimanjaro. For this purpose suggest you should first occupy Tanga with “B” Force. When this move has had its due moral effect on the Germans occupying the hinterland of Tanga, Force “C” should if possible threaten Moshi from the Tsavo side, but it is for you to judge if this course is practicable and advisable.²⁹
- (14) [and] in so far as Naval support may be necessary, you will act in close co-operation with the Naval authorities, who will be instructed by the Admiralty to render you every possible assistance.³⁰

The new plan drastically changed the mission for IEF “B.” From planning a single operation to seize one port, Aitken was to seize Tanga, secure the frontier with British East Africa, and then bring the entire colony under British control. IEF “B” planned the mission as they received it in the cable. The force would move from India to Mombasa, coordinate with IEF “C,” and move to German East Africa and seize Tanga. IEF “B” would then secure the border with British East Africa and afterward concentrate on bringing all of German East Africa under British control.

Based on the number of units that had already deployed and the number that were required to defend the North West frontier, India Army Headquarters was short of trained units and decided to select units from the southern portion of India.³¹ While the 16th Poona Brigade had been selected for IEF “B” due its level of readiness, the 27th Bangalore Brigade was selected as the new nucleus of IEF “B” due to its location, not its readiness.³² By 11 September, Army Headquarters had issued mobilization orders to the

four components of IEF “B,” the 27th Bangalore Brigade, the Imperial Service Brigade, troops under IEF “B” direct control, and Line of Communication troops.

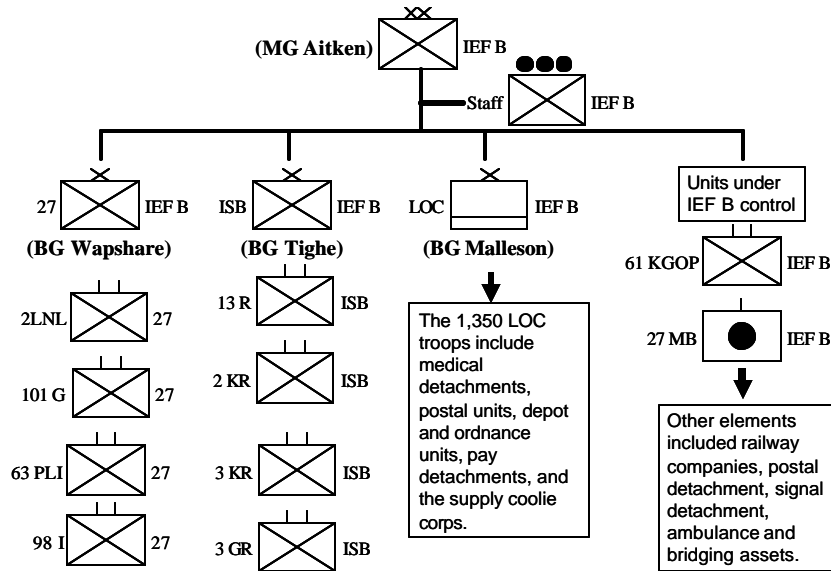


Figure 8. IEF “B” Organization

India Army Headquarters was running out of Regular Army units and had to task organize to fill IEF “B.” The Regular Army Brigade, the 27th Bangalore Brigade commanded by Brigadier General Wapshare, had its cavalry and artillery detached, as were the 61st Pioneers and the 108th Grenadiers. The 27th Brigade retained only two of its organic battalions, these were the 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (2 LNL), the only completely British unit in IEF “B,” and the 101st Grenadiers (101 G). In place of the two detached battalions, the Brigade was assigned two other Regular Army battalions, the 63rd Palamcottah Light Infantry (63 PLI) and the 98th Infantry (98 I).³³

The other Brigade required for IEF "B" were drawn from Imperial Service troops, soldiers in the employ of various princes in India. As they were not part of the Regular Indian Army, Imperial Service troops did not have the equipment or training of Regular Army units.³⁴ The other feature that separated the Imperial Service battalions from the Regular Army battalions was that the officers in the Imperial Service battalions were Indian and not British.³⁵ The Imperial Service battalions mobilized for IEF "B" were formed into a new organization, the Imperial Service Brigade commanded by Brigadier General Tighe. The Imperial Service Brigade was built around the 13th Rajputs (13 R), a Regular Army Battalion, and three Imperial Service Battalions; the 2nd Kashmir Rifles (2 KR), and two half battalions the 3rd Kashmir Rifles (3 KR) and the 2nd Gwalior Rifles (3 GR).³⁶

The third component of IEF "B" were troops directly under IEF "B" control such as the IEF "B" Headquarters, Force signal detachment, 61st King George's Own Pioneers (61 KGOP), the 28th Indian Mountain Battery, railway companies, pontoon bridging units, field ambulance detachments, and other small detachments. The final component of IEF "B" were Line of Communication (LOC) troops.³⁷ The LOC, led by the Inspector-General of the LOC, Brigadier General Malleson, included the medical personnel, post office, depot and ordnance detachments, signal detachments, finance, supply and transportation depot personnel and the supply coolie corps.³⁸ All together IEF "B" comprised 10,386 personnel; of these 7,881 were military and 2,505 were civilians in the employ of IEF "B."³⁹

On 13 September, the War Office notified the India Office that Brigadier General Aitken was confirmed as the IEF "B" Commander, and was promoted to temporary

Major General. The issues facing Aitken on 13 September were not only that his entire force was spread across India, but his staff was also completely new and slowly gathering as they received orders to join him. Army Headquarters mobilized IEF "B" units throughout India and directed them to their ports of embarkation. There was no central mobilization point. Units were directed to either Bombay or Karachi and as shipping became available were embarked. The method of mobilization allowed for a rapid embarkation of IEF "B," but there were problems with this plan. IEF "B" was embarked in multiple locations in a piecemeal manner. The lack of a central mobilization point meant that not only did Aitken not see his entire force prior to embarkation, but neither of his brigade commanders saw their entire brigades prior to disembarkation in Africa. Additionally, on 14 September, the *S.M.S. Emden* was confirmed as the German Cruiser raiding the Indian Ocean sea-lanes close to India. With both the *Emden* and the *Konigsberg* raiding the Indian Ocean, the India Office sent another telegram to India demanding that IEF "B" conduct its mission immediately.

On 1 October, a mailed copy of the new orders for IEF "B" reached India. and Aitken immediately requested clarification of paragraph (3). The copy had a cover letter attached stating that these were the *actual* orders.⁴⁰ Paragraph (3) read:

- (3) His Majesty's Government desire that you should in the first instance secure the safety of British East Africa by occupying the north-eastern portion of the German colony viz., the country between Tanga and Kilimanjaro. For this purpose it is suggested that you should first occupy Tanga with "B" Force and that, when this move has had its due moral effect on the Germans occupying the hinterland of Tanga, Force "C" should advance from Tsavo and threaten Moshi. It is however, for you to judge whether such an operation is practicable and advisable.⁴¹

Compared to the old paragraph (3)

- (3) His Majesty's Government desire that you should first secure the safety of British East Africa by occupying country between Tanga and Kilimanjaro. For this purpose suggest you should first occupy Tanga with "B" Force. When this move has had its due moral effect on the Germans occupying the hinterland of Tanga, Force "C" should if possible threaten Moshi from the Tsavo side, but it is for you to judge if this course is practicable and advisable.⁴²

The main difference between the two orders was what latitude they left Aitken to decide on his landing point. In the first order, IEF "B" is to occupy Tanga in one sentence, and the order of using Force "C" to threaten Moshi is the only area that is left to his judgment. In the last order, the one received by mail, Aitken is to occupy Tanga with IEF "B" and then IEF "C" should threaten Moshi. With both forces being discussed in one sentence it appears that both operations are left to his judgment. Aitken was concerned with this change in the two orders and requested clarification from India Army Headquarters as to whether IEF "B" was ordered to land at Tanga or not. Army Headquarters informed Aitken that he "had better stick to it, as it had in all probability been made on the recommendation of the Committee of Imperial Defence for good and sufficient reasons."⁴³ The CID had not made this decision Sir George Barrows had when he expanded the IEF "B" mission.

Major General Aitken spent the time in August and September developing an appreciation of German East Africa and the *Schutztruppe* he would face. Several members of his staff assisted in the process. Lieutenant Colonel Mackay and Second Lieutenant Ishmael, both of whom Aitken believed to be specialists on Africa and Tanga in particular, were dispatched to Mombasa six weeks earlier than IEF "B" to develop intelligence on the current situation in East Africa.⁴⁴ Another resource available to IEF "B" was Norman King, who had been the British Consul in Dar-es-Salaam until

July. The India Office had arranged for his induction into the Indian Army as a major and assigned him to IEF "B" as a political advisor. Major King presented an optimistic picture to Aitken; he reported that the majority of German colonists did not want the colony involved in the war. He also reported that the harsh German colonial policies had created an environment in which the natives would seize any opportunity to revolt against the Germans. Major King prepared a fact book on German East Africa for the Force, and then departed to British East Africa to join Mackay and Ishmael. Further information from captured letters indicated that the *Schutztruppe* would not defend the coastal ports due to the threat of British Naval bombardment; they would instead concentrate their defense on the interior of the colony.⁴⁵ The IEF "B" Intelligence Officer, Captain Richard Meinertzhagen, provided a counterbalance in opinion. He joined IEF "B" from the Indian Army Staff College in Quetta in August. Meinertzhagen was not only a Regular Officer of the India Army, he had also served in the King's African Rifles in British East Africa for four years. During his time in Africa, he had the opportunity to learn the differences between African and India warfare. While assigned to the KAR, he was able to observe the German *Schutztruppe* in garrison and in the field. He reported that the *Schutztruppe* was an extremely competent fighting force in the African wilds, and also disagreed with the India Office and Mr. King that there would be little resistance to the occupation of Tanga. Aitken's reply to Meinertzhagen's concerns was, "The Indian Army will make short work of a lot of niggers."⁴⁶

As the IEF "B" staff continued to plan, Army Headquarters continued to try to flesh out the units for IEF "B." Many of the units were severely under strength in soldiers and British Officers. The shortages required large-scale reassignment of personnel to the

deploying units. Army Headquarters also had to assign British Liaison Officers to the Imperial Service Battalions. The newly assigned personnel quickly brought the units to wartime strength. The rapid pace of the deployment prevented the replacement soldiers and officers from integrating into their units prior to embarking for Africa. BG Wapshare was unable to coordinate any training of his Brigade, the 27th Bangalore, prior to their embarkation, and the first time he would see his entire Brigade would be in German East Africa.⁴⁷ BG Tighe had better success with some of his battalions in the Imperial Service Brigade, having the majority of the Brigade in Deoli for six days prior to embarkation.⁴⁸ The 13th Rajputs were mobilized on 11 September and then spent the following two weeks guarding railways. The battalion arrived at Deoli after the remainder of the Brigade had gathered and had only four days there prior to movement to Bombay for embarkation.⁴⁹ The IEF “B” Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Sheppard, inspected the troops in Bombay. His remark to Aitken was “This campaign will either be a walk-over or a tragedy.”⁵⁰ Captain Meinertzhagen held an even more pessimistic view of the troops in IEF “B,” “They constitute the worst in India, I tremble to think what may happen if we meet serious opposition.”⁵¹

As the units mobilized, Army Headquarters also had to rectify equipment shortages within the units. Many of the battalions were still equipped with the obsolete long Lee-Enfield rifles, and Army Headquarters arranged for issue of the standard short Lee-Enfield rifles to all IEF “B” units. Many units were issued the new rifles, with unfamiliar sighting and working mechanisms, either just prior to embarking, or after they were on board the ships.⁵² Machine guns for IEF “B” were an even greater issue. Only the 2nd Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, the 101st Grenadiers, and 61st K.G.O.

Pioneers had machine guns prior to 1914.⁵³ The 13th Rajputs, 63rd PLI, and the 98th Infantry had to form machine gun sections and received their machine guns either just prior to embarkation or on board ship.⁵⁴ The Imperial Service Battalions were not included in the machine gun issue, and deployed without any.⁵⁵

As IEF “B” prepared to sail, Major General Aitken hosted an Officers Conference at the Bombay Yacht Club, the one and only briefing Aitken held for his officers prior to the operation. Aitken briefed his men that IEF “B” was going to take German East Africa, and that based on the situation when they arrived, they would land at either Tanga or Dar-es-Salaam.⁵⁶ Aitken went on to apologize to the Officers of IEF “B” for being involved in such a simple affair and that he would do his best to get them all reassigned to France when it was over.⁵⁷ To close the conference he issued his final guidance “There is one thing gentleman about which I feel very strongly. That is the subject of dress. I wish officers and men to be always turned out. I will not tolerate the appalling sloppiness allowed during the Boer War. That is all gentlemen thank you.”⁵⁸ And with this guidance, IEF “B” finished embarkation the next day and sailed for Mombasa.

IEF “B” units had been embarked as shipping became available. However, the threat to British shipping from the *Konigsberg* and *Emden* required that ships move in a convoy. By the time the entire force was embarked and sailed with naval escort on 16 October some units, such as the 61st K.G.O. Pioneers, had already been aboard ship for sixteen days. On 18 October, the Bombay convoy met with portions of IEF “B” that had been embarked at Karachi. During the voyage, Captain Meinertzhagen made this observation, “Of this force [IEF “B”], three battalions came from non-martial races and two have not seen service in the field for more than a generation. Neither Wapshare nor

Tighe had seen their troops until a few days before embarkation and it can safely be said that from top to bottom nobody knew anybody.⁵⁹ The voyage was miserable for the Indian troops. Crowded into the troopships, unused to conditions at sea, provisioned by unfamiliar food, with little to no room for physical conditioning, all this, combined with the equatorial heat, took a large toll on the troops both mentally and physically.⁶⁰ The convoy continued towards Africa until 30 October when the *H.M.S. Fox* met the convoy outside the port of Mombasa in British East Africa.

The *H.M.S. Fox*'s Commander, Captain Caulfeild, was the senior Naval Officer for the expedition, and he held a meeting with Major General Aitken and the IEF "B" staff on board the *Fox* that day. This meeting was the first Aitken heard of the neutrality agreements that the British Navy had made with Tanga and Dar-es-Salaam. Caulfeild felt that any operations in Tanga must be preceded with official notification to the German Colony that the neutrality agreements were no longer valid. Caulfeild was aware that on October 21, the *H.M.S. Chatham* had sailed into Dar-es-Salaam and informed the German Colonial government that due to the *Konigsberg* sinking the *H.M.S. Pegasus* in Zanzibar harbor on September 20, the truce was invalid; he also informed them that the Admiralty declared the neutrality agreement as invalid.⁶¹ The Commander of the *H.M.S. Chatham*, Captain Drury-Lowe, followed this up with a report to the Admiralty:

Informed Acting Governor I considered truce arranged by *Astraea & Pegasus* with Dar-es-Salaam and Tanga was to be disregarded after sinking of *Pegasus* by *Konigsberg* & also as many reports received *Konigsberg* had been using harbor.⁶²

Captain Caulfeild never mentioned the *Chatham*'s visit to Dar-es-Salaam, and insisted that German Officials in Tanga be informed of neutrality agreement invalidation. He also insisted that Aitken demand surrender prior to the landing of IEF "B."⁶³ That evening the

Fox and Aitken's troopship, the *Karmala*, entered Mombasa to meet with the Governor of British East Africa and the Commander of IEF "C." The remainder of IEF "B" remained aboard ship outside of Mombasa.

On 31 October, Aitken and his staff, including the long detached Lieutenant Colonel Mackay, met with Captain Caulfeild, Sir Henry Belfield, the Governor of British East Africa, Brigadier General Stewart the Commander of IEF "C," and Colonel Graham the Commander of the 3rd KAR. This meeting finalized many of the details for the Tanga landing. The first issue was the matter of the neutrality agreement with Tanga. Caulfeild reiterated his conviction that German officials in Tanga be informed that the neutrality agreement was invalid and be provided a chance to surrender. The IEF "B" Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Sheppard, and Captain Meinertzhagen disagreed vehemently with this stipulation. They argued that prior notification would totally deny the element of surprise to IEF "B."⁶⁴ Meinertzhagen went so far to submit a written memorandum to Aitken detailing that Tanga was most likely lightly held, but that the majority of the *Schutztruppe* could be redeployed to Tanga via the Usambara Railway within thirty hours.⁶⁵ The report also reiterated his belief that the *Schutztruppe* "colonial troops are the second to none, they are led by the best officers in the world, knows the country and understands bush warfare."⁶⁶ Aitken responded to Meinertzhagen "the German is worse than we are, his troops are ill-trained, ours are magnificent, and bush or no bush I mean to thrash the German before Xmas."⁶⁷ Aitken did not refer to the memorandum or its contents again.⁶⁸ One item that does not appear to have come up about this subject was the *Chatham's* visit to Dar-es-Salaam, although Lieutenant Colonel Mackay and Major King were both on board the *Chatham* when it went to Dar-es-Salaam.⁶⁹ After much

discussion, Aitken agreed to Caulfeild notifying the German Officials and demanding the surrender of the port prior to landing the force. Aitken had no option, as Caulfeild was not under his command, and Caulfeild's orders to cooperate with IEF "B" would not prevent him from informing the Germans at Tanga if he wished.

The second issue was the general situation. Aitken was very displeased that Mackay and Ishmael did not have any concrete indications of the *Schutztruppe* locations or plans. The only solid piece of information that he did was receive was that Tanga would not be held in any strength, and IEF "B" should have no difficulty in capturing it.⁷⁰ Captain Meinertzhagen believed the *Schutztruppe* was arrayed as the map below depicts.⁷¹

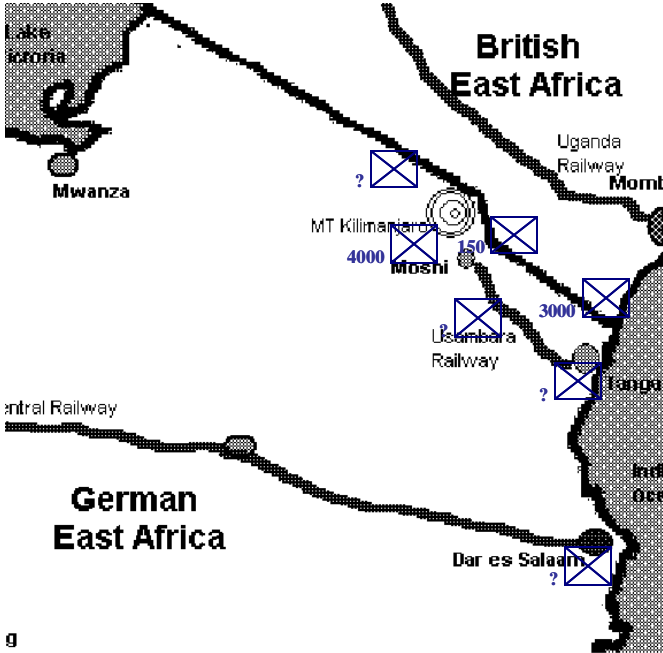


Figure 9. German Disposition as Believed by IEF "B"

The next issue was the role of IEF “C.” Aitken told Stewart that IEF “C” was to attack from Voi and Longido towards Moshi immediately after the landing at Tanga.⁷² The unspoken issue was that the landing was scheduled to begin in less than thirty-six hours and Aitken had never provided any warning to Stewart of the role he wanted IEF “C” to perform. Stewart would be unable to gather any forces to begin this operation until well after the landing had occurred.⁷³ Colonel Graham of the 3rd KAR then offered to bring his battalion to Mombasa to embark with IEF “B.” Graham believed that the 3rd KAR could serve as a covering force for IEF “B” during the landing. Aitken declined Graham’s offer of a battalion of soldiers fully trained in bush warfare out of hand.⁷⁴

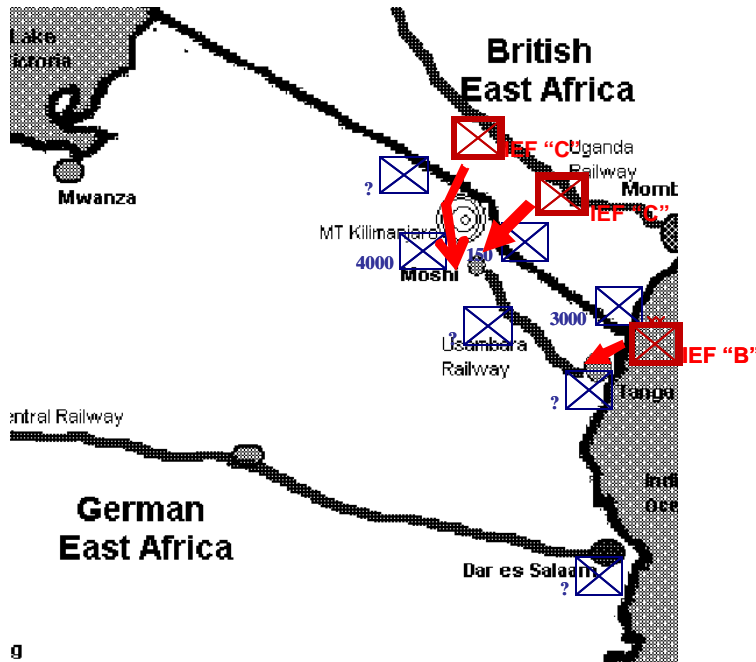


Figure 10. British Plan of Attack on German East Africa

The last issue discussed was the suggestion of Major Keen, one of Aitken's staff, that the troops be disembarked for a few days in Mombasa to recover from the voyage before they were landed in Africa.⁷⁵ Aitken told Keen he was "making an unnecessary fuss" and that it would ruin the element of surprise if he landed IEF "B" in Mombasa.⁷⁶ With the issues apparently resolved between the participants, IEF "B" the meeting adjourned and IEF "B" prepared to sail for Tanga.

An event with consequences for IEF "B" was the break down of the battleship *H.M.S. Goliath* at Mombasa. Besides the *H.M.S. Fox*, *Goliath* was the only other warship assigned to IEF "B." The loss of the *Goliath* significantly reduced the naval gunfire available to Aitken during the landing. The other impact from the loss was that Caulfeild did not have room aboard the *Fox* for Aitken and his entire staff. Aitken decided to maintain his headquarters aboard the *S.S Karmala*. Neither Aitken nor Caulfeild provided a liaison to the other all communications between the two would be via wireless communications.⁷⁷

As IEF "B" prepared to depart Mombasa on 1 November 1914, Aitken's staff developed the landing order to IEF "B." Having had *eighty-four* days to plan the mission, Aitken's staff issued the first order, Operation Order No. 1, to IEF "B" less than twenty-four hours before the actual landing.⁷⁸ The order was distributed to the subordinate brigades staffs present on the *S.S. Karmala*.⁷⁹ Highlights of the order were:

- (1) From reliable information received it appears improbable that the enemy will actively oppose our landing. Opposition may, however, be met with anywhere inland, and a considerable force of the enemy is reported to be in the vicinity of Vanga.⁸⁰
- (2) It is the intention of the G.O.C. to land at Tanga, and establish a base there, preparatory to an advance up the Tanga-Moshi Railway.⁸¹

- (3) The landing will commence on November 2nd. The time of commencement of disembarkation depends upon whether minesweeping operations are necessary or not.⁸²
- (4) Brigadier-General M.J. Tighe, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., (Imperial Service Brigade), will form the covering party and will take up position covering the town and port of Tanga. Post, telegraph and telephone offices and the railway station, to be occupied as soon as possible. The telegraph lines to Bagamoyo and Vanga (if any) to be cut, and the roads to these places watched. Exits from the town to be blocked, to prevent the dispatch of native information.⁸³
- (7) Lighters must be loaded, and cleared with the utmost dispatch. Men must be prepared to wade ashore, through two or three feet of water, if necessary.⁸⁴
- (10) Normal hours of unloading transports- 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.⁸⁵

The remainder of Order No. 1 dealt with logistic issues for the IEF “B” landing and was issued with two annexes. Annex A detailed the priorities to the LOC troops to establish Tanga as an operating base. Annex B detailed the order in which IEF “B” was to land at Tanga. The basic order of landing for IEF “B” was the 13th Rajputs, 61st K.G.O. Pioneers, 2nd Kashmir Rifles, the 3rd Kashmir Rifles, 3rd Gwalior Rifles, then the LOC troops, Force Headquarters, 27th Bangalore Brigade, various IEF “B” troops, the 28th Mountain Battery, and finally the Railway companies. With final naval arrangements made, and Operation Order No. 1 prepared but not issued to the battalions, IEF “B” sailed for Tanga on the night of 1 November 1914.

¹Eric Moore Ritchie, *The Unfinished War the Drama of Anglo-German Conflict in Africa*, (London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1940), 129.

²Ibid., 130.

³Ibid., 91

⁴Ibid., 135.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Michael Von Herff, *They Walk Through the Fire Like the Blondest German: Africans Serving the Kaiser in German East Africa (1888-1914)*, (Ann Arbor, Bell & Howell Company, 1991), 11.

⁷Mary Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire 1884-1918*, (New York, Macmillan Company, 1930), 135.

⁸Ritchie, 135.

⁹Ibid., 143.

¹⁰Charles Horden and H. Fritz M. Stack, eds., *Military Operations East Africa Volume I August 1914-September 1916* (London, His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1941), 29.

¹¹Ibid., 18.

¹²Ibid., 29.

¹³Ibid., 30.

¹⁴Ross Anderson, *The Battle of Tanga 1914*, (Gloucestershire, Tempus, 2002), 18.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 19.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Horden and Stack, 65.

²¹Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (Oxford, University Press, 2001), 580.

²²Anderson, 35.

²³Horden and Stack, 31.

²⁴Ibid., 61.

²⁵Ibid., 63.

²⁶Ibid., 62.

²⁷Horden and Stack, 65.

²⁸Ibid., 66.

²⁹Ibid., 67.

³⁰Ibid., 67.

³¹Ibid., 63.

³²Ibid.

³³Anderson, 36.

³⁴Ibid., 37.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Horden and Stack, 530.

³⁷Anderson, 134.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Horden and Stack, 67.

⁴¹Ibid., 68.

⁴²Ibid., 67.

⁴³Ibid., 67.

⁴⁴Arthur Aitken, *Memorandum on the Operations at Tanga*, (London, CAB 45/6 Public Records Office, 1917), 1.

⁴⁵Anderson, 58.

⁴⁶Farwell, 163.

⁴⁷Anderson, 38.

⁴⁸Ibid., 37.

⁴⁹Ibid., 38.

⁵⁰Horden and Stack, 69.

⁵¹Richard Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary 1899-1926*, (London, Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 82.

⁵²Horden and Stack, 69.

⁵³Ibid., 70.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Wynn E. Wynn, *Ambush*, (London, Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 26.

⁵⁷Ibid., 27.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Meinertzhagen, 83.

⁶⁰Horden and Stack, 72.

⁶¹Anderson, 55.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Meinertzhagen, 85.

⁶⁵Ibid

⁶⁶Ibid.,

⁶⁷Meinertzhagen, 84.

⁶⁸Horden and Stack, 73.

⁶⁹Anderson, 55.

⁷⁰Aitken, 2.

⁷¹Meinertzhagen, Map 1 86-87.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 59.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴Meinertzhagen, 86.

⁷⁵Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa (1914-1918)* (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 165.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷Anderson, 64.

⁷⁸Horden and Stack, 534.

⁷⁹W.E. Wynn, *Ambush* London, Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 47.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

CHAPTER 5

TANGA

On 2 November 1914, almost three months after its creation, IEF “B” arrived off the Indian Ocean port of Tanga. Tanga’s inner harbor was relatively shallow and protected by the Tanga Peninsula and Toten Island. It consisted of around 900 buildings, eighty of them being large, stone, and close to the waterfront.¹ The town itself consisted of two main areas divided by the Usambara Railway, the native quarter and the European settlement. Dense vegetation surrounded the town. Tanga was about ten meters above sea level and its port had a rudimentary jetty without any loading cranes. The inner harbor was too shallow for large ships to dock at the jetty; ships had to be unloaded by lighters in the harbor. East of town, toward the Tanga Peninsula, were relatively flat coastal plains covered with thick, dense vegetation. The vegetation transitioned to rubber tree plantations and Beehive farms south of Askari Road. Tanga Peninsula ended in cliffs rising twenty to thirty meters above small, muddy, beaches along the Indian Ocean. The beaches on the eastern edge of the peninsula were sandwiched between the cliffs and partially submerged mangrove swamps.

Tanga in 1914 was one of two ports in German East Africa with a railway terminus. The single track Usambara Railway ran 150 miles from the port of Tanga to Moshi, in the fertile Kilimanjaro region of German East Africa.² The Usambara Railway was a small railway with limited capacity; each trainload could only transport one FK with baggage or two FKs without baggage in a single trip.³ As the Usambara Railway entered Tanga, it traveled in a semi-circle past the railway station to its terminus by the jetty. The railway sat in a deep cut that formed a large embankment

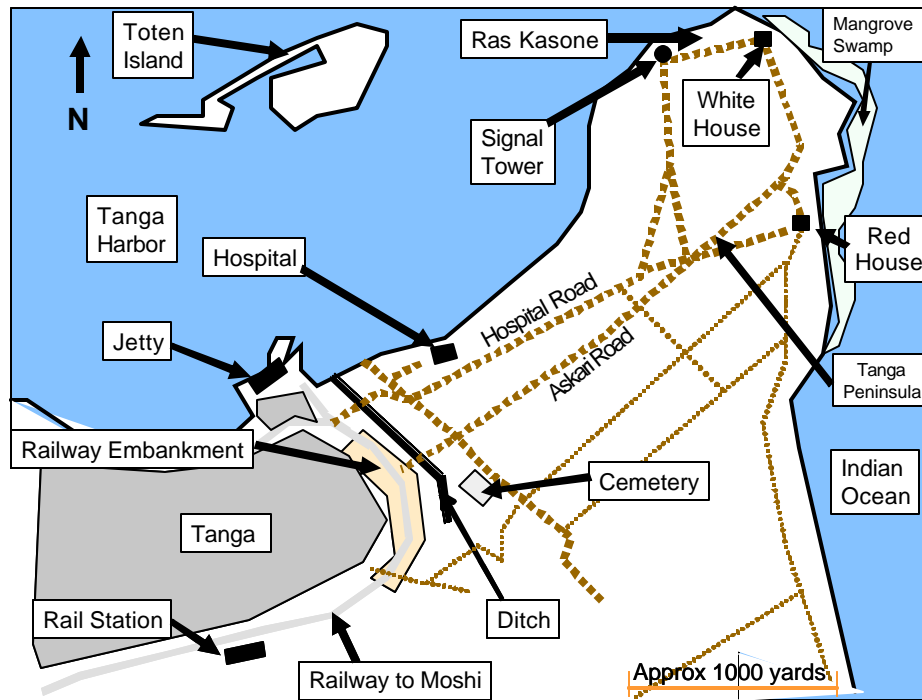


Figure 11. Tanga

on either side as it skirted the eastern edge of the town. East of the railway embankment was a large drainage ditch that ran south from the harbor. Three small bridges crossed the embankment and the drainage ditch. The Northern most bridge was part of Hospital Road. Hospital Road led from Tanga, past the German Hospital and through the interior of Tanga Peninsula to the signal tower on Ras Kasone, the northern portion of the Tanga headland. The road continued from there to a large white house on the eastern edge of the peninsula. The center bridge was part of Askari Road, which paralleled Hospital Road toward the peninsula, and also joined a spur of Hospital Road near the eastern edge of the peninsula next to a large red house. The southern bridge only crossed the railway embankment. This bridge was part of a track that ran towards the rubber plantations

southeast of Tanga. On the morning of November 2, the only defensive force in Tanga was a platoon from the 17th FK.

As the sixteen ships of IEF "B" anchored off Tanga at 0450, *H.M.S. Fox* began working into the harbor. The *Fox* was unable to reach the inner harbor until 0700, as fear of mines and German removal of all the navigation aids had slowed the ship.⁴ Dr. Auracher, the German District Commissioner for Tanga, was informed of the British presence at 0630, when a lookout on the Tanga Peninsula spotted smoke from the convoy.⁵ Dr. Auracher used a small dingy and boarded the *Fox* around 0730. Once on board, Captain Caulfeild informed Dr. Auracher that the neutrality agreement between Tanga and the British Empire was invalid. Caulfeild then issued him an ultimatum to surrender the town or face naval bombardment.⁶ Dr. Auracher replied that Tanga was an open town and he did not have the authority to surrender the town without permission from Dr. Schnee the Colonial Governor.⁷ After discussing travel time and communication means, Captain Caulfeild gave Dr. Auracher two and a half hours to raise a white flag over the town or suffer the consequences.⁸ As Dr. Auracher prepared to leave the *Fox*, he was recalled to Caulfeild's office, where Caulfeild informed him that he would be shot if anything happened to the *Fox*. Caulfeild then demanded to know if the harbor was mined.⁹ Dr. Auracher refused to answer the question and Caulfeild again threatened to shoot him if the *Fox* encountered any mines.¹⁰ As he left the ship, Dr. Auracher deliberately choose an indirect route to the shore to reinforce Caulfeild's belief that the harbor was mined.¹¹ Once on shore, Dr. Auracher went to the telegraph office and sent two cables. The first cable was to Moshi informing Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck, the *Schutztruppe* Commander, of the situation. The second cable was to Dar-es-

Salaam informing Dr. Schnee, the Governor, of the British demands. Lettow-Vorbeck's response was immediate. He told Auracher to not surrender and to defend the town. Von Lettow-Vorbeck told Auracher that he assumed all responsibility for any consequences of defending Tanga.¹² Von Lettow-Vorbeck's reassurance was important, as it was in direct contravention of Dr. Schnee's response that a bombardment of Tanga must be avoided at all cost, even if that meant surrendering the town. Dr. Auracher read both responses, left the telegraph office, and ordered non-combatants to evacuate Tanga. He then put on his *Schutztruppe* lieutenant's uniform and joined the platoon defending Tanga.

Von Lettow-Vorbeck's next telegraphed Captain Baumstark, the regional detachment commander and ordered him to reinforce Tanga with the 17th FK and to prepare the rest of his detachment for movement to Tanga if the British actually landed there.¹³ He then issued orders to the *Schutztruppe* forces in Kilimanjaro to consolidate at Moshi for movement to Tanga.¹⁴ Von Lettow-Vorbeck coordinated with the railway personnel, who had already been inducted into the *Schutztruppe*, to be prepared to transport units to Tanga that morning.¹⁵ Baumstark issued movement orders to his units and began moving to Tanga himself. The bulk of the 17th FK took about four hours to reach Tanga by foot from Kange.

The lone defending platoon, joined by Lieutenant Auracher and the Tanga Police, established a thin defensive line along the railway embankment on the eastern edge of town. Scouts were sent to the peninsula to observe the British force. As the seventy-five Askari and police of the lone platoon prepared to defend Tanga, Caulfeild's two and half hour deadline passed. Caulfeild decided to give Dr. Auracher more time and continued to wait in the harbor. At 1045, Caulfeild realized there would be no response to his

ultimatum, signaled “No surrender”¹⁶ to Aitken, and rejoined the convoy. Aitken called a meeting of the commanding officers to discuss the situation. Upon arrival, Aitken’s staff gave them each a copy of Operation Order 1 for a landing that day. It took until early afternoon for all the commanders to board the *Karmala*, Aitken’s flagship. Aitken and his subordinate leaders discussed the landing. Even though the surrender demand had been refused, Aitken did not adjust the first line of his order, “From reliable information received it appears improbable that the enemy will actively oppose our landing”¹⁷ Caulfeild informed the group that until the harbor had been swept for mines, none of the ships could enter Tanga harbor to unload.¹⁸ Aitken and his staff then discussed the three possible landing beaches, Beach C on the interior of the harbor, Beach B on the northern side of the headland, and Beach A on the eastern edge of the headland. The actual jetty was to have been the landing site, but as the *Fox* had not swept for mines, neither it

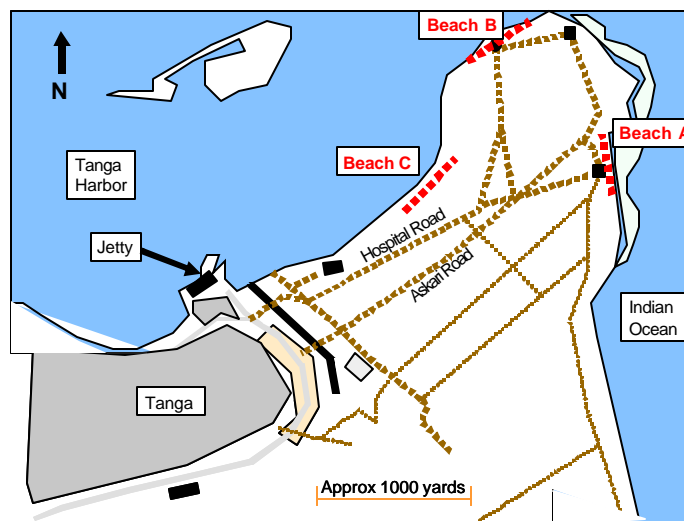


Figure 12. Landing Beaches

nor Beach C was available. Beach B was also ruled out, as Caulfeild believed any artillery in Tanga could range it.¹⁹ This left IEF “B” with Beach A. Beach A was an extremely small muddy beach with the headland cliff on the one side and partially submerged mangrove swamps on the ocean side. Just above Beach A was the red house that IEF “B” used as a landmark. With the plan now given out, IEF “B” was forced to wait until 1500 hours for all of the commanders to be ferried back to their own ships before moving towards Beach A. An interesting aspect of command arrangements was that other than wireless, Caulfeild and Aitken did not have any direct means of contact. Neither of them thought of placing a liaison officer with the other for coordination during the landings.

IEF “B” arrived at Beach A by 1600, but was unable to begin landing until Caulfeild completed minesweeping at 1740.²⁰ During the mine sweeping operations the ships of IEF “B” were observed by a patrol from the 17th FK.²¹ The *Fox* promptly opened fire and drove the patrol from the headland, but not before Von Lettow-Vorbeck had confirmation that Tanga was the British objective. At 1800, the first landing party of 13th Rajputs, from Tighe’s Imperial Service Brigade (ISB), disembarked. There was confusion and disorganization. It was not until 2200 hours that the lighters carrying the 13th Rajputs were finally lined up with the tugs and could begin movement from the ships to Beach A.²² At 2230, the 13th Rajputs encountered a coral reef 500 meters from the beach, the lighters were too deep to fit over the reef, and the troops were forced to disembark and wade the remaining distance through chest high water.²³ As the troops landed, they secured the cliff exits from Beach A to the Tanga headland. The feelings of many of the British officers were summed up by Meinertzhagen, “So here we are with

only a small portion of our force, risking a landing in the face of an enemy of unknown strength and on a beach that has not been reconnoitered and which looks like a rank mangrove swamp.”²⁴

Aitken and Von Lettow-Vorbeck had both been busy while Tighe’s ISB continued to land. As the daylight passed, Aitken realized he could not accomplish the landing plan he issued that day, so he issued Operations Order 2 to IEF “B.”

- (1) Owing to the necessity for sweeping for mines in Tanga Bay the convoy (or part of it) will anchor to-night 2-3 miles east of Tanga.
- (2) The covering party will now consist of the 13th Rajputs and 61st Pioneers, all under the command of Brigadier-General M.J. Tighe, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O. the town of Tanga is to be seized tonight.
- (3) 300 porters will be landed for the carriage of 1st Line equipment, telegraph stores, etc.
- (4) A visual station will be established on the shore, west of the anchored convoy, and a cable run to Tanga.
- (5) Reports to Karmala.²⁵

There remained no mention of the enemy. IEF “B” was to continue to seize Tanga as planned, despite the facts that the surrender had been refused and they could not use Beach B because German artillery might range it. Von Lettow-Vorbeck had received confirmation of IEF “B” landing when the 17th FK patrol returned to Tanga. Other than marshalling trains and units, Von Lettow-Vorbeck had not ordered any unit to move to Tanga besides the 17th FK.²⁶ After receiving confirmation that IEF “B” was landing at Beach A, he dispatched Lieutenant Merensky’s Detachment, with the 6th FK, 6th SCHK and part of the 1st FK, from Moshi on the Usambara Railway to Tanga.²⁷ He noted that the Askari were in high spirits as they left from Moshi, but felt “not so much to the fact that the Askari clearly understood the gravity of the situation, as that for him a trip in a railway train is at all times a great delight.”²⁸ Von Lettow-Vorbeck also ordered Baumstark to march the 15th and 16th FKs south to Tanga.²⁹ The remaining detachments

in the Kilimanjaro region were to march to Moshi leaving only one FK each to defend the region from IEF “C.”

As the *Schutztruppe* units moved towards Tanga, the ISB continued to land; by 0230, its 13th Rajputs and four of the six companies of its 61st Pioneers were ashore. The soldiers of IEF “B” were “debilitated by nearly a month of sea-sickness and cramped quarters, were thoroughly exhausted.”³⁰ Even with tired, exhausted soldiers, Tighe began forming the 13th Rajputs and the 61st Pioneers into attack formation at 0430, 3 November. Tighe ordered two companies of the 13th Rajputs with a machine gun section to lead the attack and seize the telegraph office and jetty.³¹ Once that was complete, Tighe planned to lead the remainder of the 13th Rajputs and three companies of the 61st Pioneers to envelope Tanga from the south and complete the capture of the town.³² At 0515, Lieutenant Colonel Stewart led the 13th Rajputs vanguard element through the bush toward Tanga.

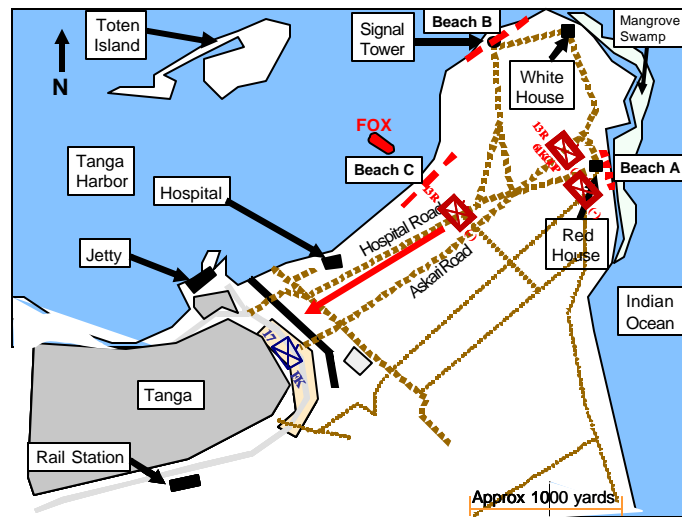


Figure 13. Battle on 3 November, Initial Moves

The Indian troops were exhausted and unused to movement in the African bush. After half an hour of their advance, the lead elements came into view of Tanga. As they crossed the ditch east of Tanga, they came under heavy fire from the 17th FK, which was dug in along the railway embankment.³³ The combination of heavy fire and open ground prevented any further advance by the vanguard. Stewart brought his force on line and established a base of fire, but was unable to advance. Back at Beach A, Tighe heard the firing. He ordered one company of the 61st Pioneers to protect the beach, requested additional reinforcements from Brigadier General Malleison, and then ordered the remainder of the 13th Rajputs and three companies of the 61st Pioneers forward.³⁴ Brigadier General Malleison had landed during the night with some of his LOC troops, but had no reinforcements to provide. Malleison forwarded the request to Aitken on the *Karmala*. The last two companies of the 61st Pioneers should have begun landing on

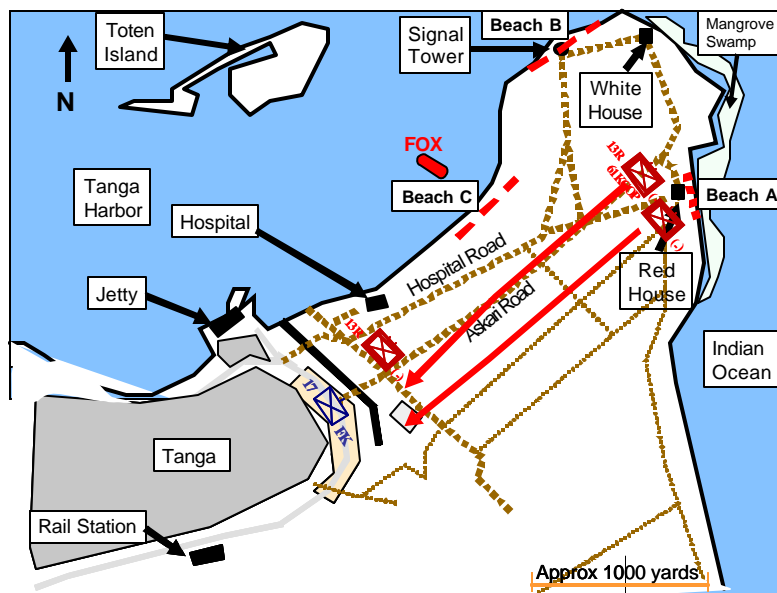


Figure 14. Battle on 3 November, Expanding the Battle

Beach A at 0600, but they had not even begun disembarking into lighters.³⁵ At 0630, Tighe reached the vanguard with the rest of his force. He directed the uncommitted part of the 13th Rajputs to positions south of the vanguard, extending the firing line.³⁶ By 0700, the entire 13th Rajputs were consolidated into one firing line, but their morale was soon shaken when their battalion commander and a company commander were killed by German machine gun fire.³⁷ Believing that extending his firing line had not improved the situation, Tighe ordered his reserve, the three companies of the 61st Pioneers, to lengthen the line to the south.³⁸ As the 61st Pioneers maneuvered into position, they came under heavy machine gun fire and many of the soldiers refused to advance any further.³⁹ Meinertzhagen's observation of the 61st Pioneers was, "Our British Officers behaved like heroes, but none of them had a chance with their men running like rabbits and jibbering like monkeys."⁴⁰ As Tighe walked his line to motivate the soldiers and get the 61st Pioneers into position, the *Schutztruppe* struck back.

At 0630, Lieutenant Merensky's Detachment completed its 150-mile train ride to Kange station from Moshi. At Kange, they dismounted the train and began their four-mile march to Tanga.⁴¹ As Merensky's Detachment marched toward Tanga, the 17th FK stubbornly held on. The 17th FK had used machine gun and rifle fire to stop the 13th Rajputs along the ditch east of Tanga and slow the advance of the 61st Pioneers. The constant firing had taken a toll; the 17th FK was rapidly running out of ammunition.⁴² At 0730, the 17th FK launched a platoon size spoiling attack into the northern flank of the 61st Pioneers. In desperate hand-to-hand fighting, the 61st Pioneers held their position and a lack of ammunition quickly forced 17th FK platoon to withdraw to the railway embankment.⁴³ Almost out of ammunition, the 17th FK intended to withdraw into Tanga,

but instead was reinforced by the timely arrival of Merensky's Detachment at 0730. Merensky positioned part of the 6th FK to support the 17th FK along the railway embankment and moved the remainder of his force to the southern flank of the 61st Pioneers.

At 0630, on board the ships, Caulfeild had completed minesweeping at Beach B and decided that there was little risk from German Artillery. He ordered the landing changed from Beach A to Beach B. Beach B was a larger beach without a coral reef, allowing the lighters to go directly from the ships to the beach and speeding up the landing. One additional company of the 61st Pioneers finished landing at Beach A, and the 2nd Loyal North Lancashire's (2nd LNL) would be the first unit landed at Beach B. The 2nd LNL were moved up in the disembarkation order in response to Tighe's earlier request for reinforcements. Tighe was pleased to learn of the change to Beach B, but was

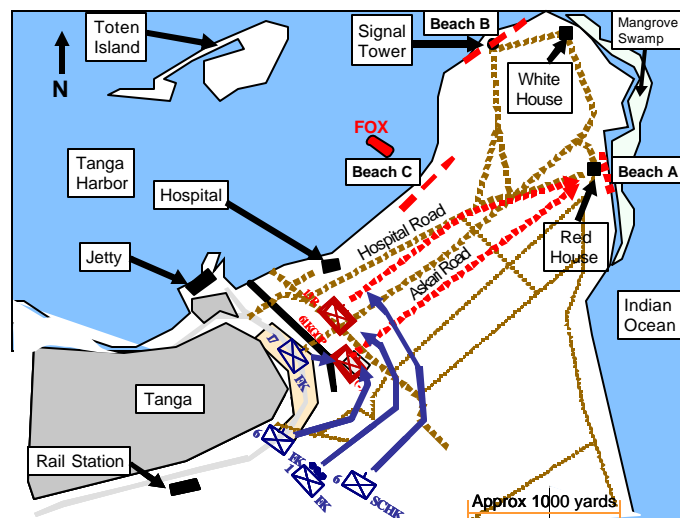


Figure 15. Battle on 3 November, German Counter-Attack

not sure if his troops could hold long enough for the 2nd LNL to land.⁴⁴ Before any reinforcements could reach him, Merensky counterattacked.

At 0800, Merensky committed his Detachment against the southern flank of the 61st Pioneers. The 61st Pioneers, exhausted and already shaken by their first experience against machine guns, broke completely when the *Schutztruppe* began to charge through the dense bush on their southern flank.⁴⁵ The collapse of the 61st Pioneers and the sounds of *Schutztruppe* Askari on the flank and to the rear of the 13th Rajputs compelled Tighe to order a withdrawal. During the 13th Rajputs retreat, *Fox* provided its only fire support during the battle. Caulfeild ordered the *Fox* to open fire, after receiving a signal from the *Karmala*. The *Fox* had no communication with Tighe or the ISB, and the thick vegetation prevented accurate observation.⁴⁶ The *Fox* fired eleven rounds toward Tanga, but quickly ceased fire after hitting the German Hospital with a six-inch shell.⁴⁷ During the firing from the *Fox*, Merensky's Detachment continued their attack and the 13th Rajputs retreat became a rout. The 61st Pioneer Company who had disembarked that morning joined the company that Tighe had left behind to defend the beach. The hasty defensive line of these companies halted the German attack toward Beach A. By 1000, Tighe's shaken battalions were huddled at the Red House. The 2nd LNL was hastily disembarking at Beach B and Tighe ordered them to move forward to protect the landing area. Tighe signaled the attack's failure to Aitken on the *Karmala*; he informed Aitken that the 13th Rajputs and 61st Pioneers were unfit to continue and at least four more battalions would be required to resume the attack.⁴⁸ The wounded at Beach A were treated as best they could, but it would be another two to three hours before medical supplies and equipment could be off loaded for them.⁴⁹ Tighe then waited on the headland, Ras Kasone, for

further guidance. Tighe never ordered any reconnaissance towards Tanga during the remainder of the day.

Aitken believed it would be impossible to land the four battalions Tighe requested that day, and planned to conduct the next attack on 4 November, after IEF "B" had completed landing. Aitken directed the priority of landing for the IEF "B" units and then came ashore with his staff at 1700. All of the Infantry units were ordered to offload, but not the 28th Mountain Battery. Aitken ordered the battery to mount their guns on the deck of the *S.S. Bharata* to support the next attack from off shore.⁵⁰ After landing, Aitken and his staff occupied the White House and assumed overall control of operations. The 3rd Gwalior Rifles were positioned to defend the beaches to allow the remainder of IEF "B" to land and make preparations for the attack. One of these preparations was not reconnaissance; Aitken also failed to order any reconnaissance towards Tanga. By 2300, the ISB had completed landing, but the 27th Bangalore Brigade would not be able to land until the morning. The next day, the 27th Bangalore Brigade completed landing by 0930, but Aitken decided to delay the attack until 1200 to allow the troops eat a meal before the battle.⁵¹ The attack was outlined in Operations Order 3, which was issued to the units at 1015 that morning. Operations Order 3 read:

- (1) The enemy is reported to be in considerable force west of the German Hospital.
- (2) The G.O.C. intends to attack them, and occupy Tanga to-night.
- (3) The Imperial Service Brigade (less three Coys. Gwalior Infantry) under General Tighe, will advance on a front of about 600' with their right on Tanga Bay.
The 27th Brigade, under General Wapshare, will continue on line to the left- his left flank being echeloned to the left rear.
The Right of the 27th Brigade will direct.
- (4) General Reserve, 61st Pioneers, under G.O.C.

- (5) Three companies of Gwalior Infantry will be placed at the disposal of General Malleson, to cover the Red House, Western landing beach, and Signal Tower.
- (6) Bayonets will be fixed, as the country to be operated in is thick.
- (7) The advance will commence at 12 noon, and will be covered, as far as possible, by the guns of *H.M.S. Fox* and No. 28 Mountain Battery on *S.S. Bharata*.⁵²

While IEF “B” spent the morning unloading at the beaches, the *Schutztruppe* was fully occupied with preparations of its own. Captain Baumstark had arrived at Tanga with the 15th and 16th FKs after Lieutenant Merensky had successfully driven the ISB back to the beach. Baumstark’s assessment was that IEF “B” was too strong and he could not hold Tanga with the force he had.⁵³ Except for reconnaissance patrols, Baumstark withdrew his force from Tanga and established a camp at Kange, four miles west of Tanga.⁵⁴ The 7th and 8th SCHK arrived at Kange later in the day and Von Lettow-Vorbeck himself arrived at Kange at 0300, 4 November. Baumstark explained the situation to Von Lettow-Vorbeck, but could neither confirm nor deny if the British had occupied Tanga after his withdrawal. Von Lettow-Vorbeck immediately conducted a personal reconnaissance of Tanga on a bicycle.⁵⁵ He discovered that Tanga was unoccupied and sent a messenger to order Baumstark to move forward, reoccupy the town, and establish patrols to find the British.⁵⁶ Von Lettow-Vorbeck intended to minimize the British advantages in numbers and fire support. He placed the 6th and 16th FKs along the railway embankment and in fortified buildings in Tanga; this gave them good fields of fire and the buildings of Tanga hindered observation from the sea.⁵⁷ Von Lettow-Vorbeck positioned Baumstark’s Detachment, consisting of the 6th SCHK, 15th FK, and the 17th FK, just south of the 6th and 16th FKs. This lengthened his line to the

south, and might allow him to launch a counterattack against the British southern flank. To the west of Baumstark, he positioned Captain Prince with the 7th and 8th SCHKs as the reserve. His orders were to reinforce the 6th and 16th FKs in Tanga or be prepared follow Baumstark during a counterattack.⁵⁸ Von Lettow-Vorbeck's intent was to hold the enemy east of Tanga and then conduct a counterattack against the British southern flank.⁵⁹ He knew that it was risky with the odds weighted so heavily for the British, but "I knew the clumsiness with which English troops were moved and led in battle."⁶⁰ Compounding his decision to fight in Tanga, Von Lettow-Vorbeck received a telegram from Governor Schnee ordering him not to risk damage to Tanga itself; under no circumstances was he create a situation that would result in a bombardment of the town. Von Lettow-Vorbeck did not agree--if he did not fight at Tanga the British would render his position in Kilimanjaro untenable. His response to his staff after receiving Schnee's telegram was "to gain all we must risk all."⁶¹ Von Lettow-Vorbeck continued to coordinate the movement of more units to Tanga. At 0900, 4 November, the 13th FK arrived at Tanga; the 4th and 9th FKs were still enroute. By morning, the *Schutztruppe* had occupied positions in Tanga. The next move was up to Aitken.

At 1200, 4 November, Aitken began his second attack on Tanga. IEF "B" attacked with both brigades on line. Aitken planned to fix the defenders in Tanga with the Imperial Service Brigade (ISB) and then use the 27th Bangalore Brigade to attack the southern flank of the defenders.⁶² The ISB was to attack on the right (north) along Hospital Road and the 27th Bangalore Brigade on the left (south), on and south of Askari Road. Brigadier General Tighe led the ISB with the Kashmir Rifle Battalions, the 2nd

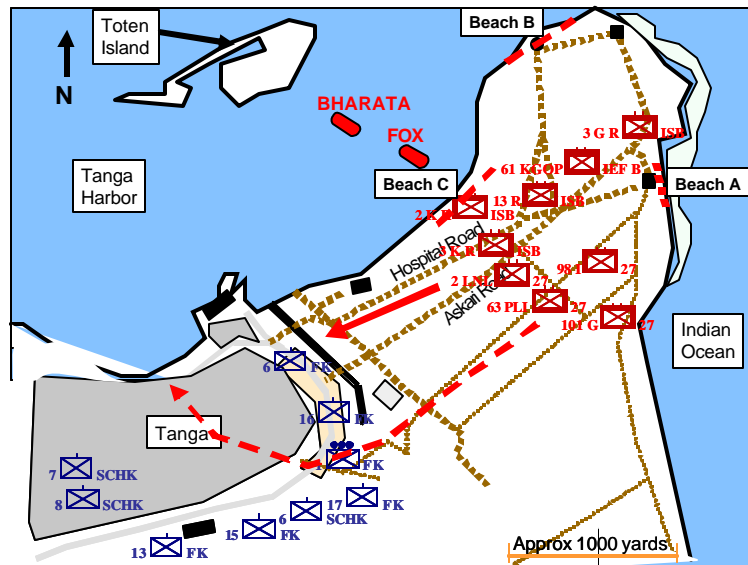


Figure 16. Battle on 4 November, Plans

Kashmir Rifles (2 KR) on the right, and 3rd Kashmir Rifles (3 KR) on the left. The 13th Rajputs followed the 3 KR as the ISB reserve. Brigadier General Wapshare's 27th Bangalore Brigade was on the ISB's left. Wapshare positioned the 2nd LNL to the left of Tighe's 3 KR, with the 63rd Palmacotta Light Infantry (63 PLI) to the left of the 2nd LNL. He echeloned the 101st Grenadiers on his far left to envelope Tanga's defenses from the south. The 98th Infantry followed behind the 63 PLI as the 27th Bangalore Brigade's reserve. Aitken kept his reserve, the 61st Pioneers, behind the ISB.

Due to the dense bush, Aitken moved forward with the ISB to observe the battle. Aitken also ordered all British officers, including those from the reserve battalions, to move forward with the lead elements to keep up with the situation.⁶³ The *Fox* and the *Bharata*, with the 28th Mountain Battery lashed to the deck, moved into the outer harbor of Tanga to provide indirect fire support. The fire support communication system was

cumbersome. As there were no forward observers on the ground, fire support requests were sent to the Force Headquarters and the signal tower, and from there visual signals were made to the *Fox* and *Bharata* to fire.⁶⁴

From 1200 until 1400, IEF "B" struggled forward through 2000 meters of bush. Skirmishes with *Schutztruppe* patrols, dense vegetation, and unfamiliar terrain all slowed the advance. The British advance quickly became uncoordinated as undergrowth and difficult terrain slowed some of the units. The 3 KR became entangled and lost contact with both the 2 KR and 2nd LNL, and the 2 KR angled north through easier terrain and ended up closer to the shore than planned. As the 3 KR hurried to regain its place in the formation, Wapshare ordered the 2nd LNL to angle north and close the gap with Tighe's ISB. The 63 PLI, suffering from poor physical conditioning and growing thirst, was rapidly outdistanced by the 2nd LNL.⁶⁵ As the 2nd LNL angled north, the 63 PLI fell even farther behind.

As Aitken and his brigadiers tried to restore the formation, the 2 KR reached the ditch east of Tanga, came under heavy fire from the 6th FK, and halted. As the brigade commanders tried to push the other battalions forward, the 3 KR came up on the 2 KR's left flank, and the 2nd LNL closed the gap with the ISB, and joined the fight to the left of the 3 KR. The 63 PLI was trying to close with the 2nd LNL when it also came under heavy machine gun fire, whereupon most of the 63 PLI disintegrated as individuals ran for the beachhead.⁶⁶ The commander of the 63 PLI later told Aitken, "after the first burst of fire from the enemy, he never saw his regiment again."⁶⁷ The crumbling of the 63 PLI left a large gap between the 2nd LNL and the 101st Grenadiers. Wapshare reacted by ordering the 101st Grenadiers to angle northwest and gain contact with the 2nd LNL left

flank.⁶⁸ IEF “B” was inclining to the right and thus into a compact mass, an event not foreseen by Aitken.

The 98th Infantry was not a veteran unit and the sound of machine gun fire followed by the sudden appearance of 63 PLI soldiers running to the rear unnerved the battalion.⁶⁹ As the 98th Infantry attempted to advance, it was attacked by swarms of angry bees. Within moments of the bees attack, the 98th Infantry was scattered in every direction.⁷⁰ Its officers tried to reorganize the battalion, but it was time consuming; Aitken said “Brig. Genl. Wapshare was equally emphatic about the behavior of the 98th Inf. He could not get them into the fight.”⁷¹ This was not the end of Aitken’s problems; as fire intensified towards the 2 KR, the majority of the 13th Rajputs fled towards the beach.⁷² As the 13th Rajputs fled, some of the 61st Pioneers turned and joined them.⁷³ Meinertzhagen described the sight, “half the 13th Rajputs turned at once, broke into a rabble and bolted, carrying most of the 61st Pioneers with them.”⁷⁴

Notwithstanding the retreats, the sheer weight of numbers soon allowed the ISB and the 2nd LNL to push the 6th FK and 16th FK back and gain a foothold in Tanga. By 1500, the 6th FK was pushed completely off the railway embankment and was defending Tanga in house-to-house fighting. Various British officers gathered small groups of soldiers, from the broken 13th Rajputs and 61st Pioneers, and led them back toward the battle. One of these officers was Captain Meinertzhagen. He gathered about seventy soldiers from the 13th Rajputs and led them back into the fight on the northern edge of Tanga.⁷⁵ Meinertzhagen was not the only member of the command group of IEF “B” forward in the battle. Aitken and his chief of staff were completely engrossed with attempting to stem the tide of retreating soldiers and get them back into the firing line.⁷⁶

In Tanga, Von Lettow-Vorbeck had given Captain Prince permission to reinforce the troops defending Tanga, if he thought the situation was serious. At 1500, Prince complied with these orders and counterattacked the 2 and 3 Kashmir Rifles in Tanga with the 7th and 8th SCHKs.⁷⁷ Baumstark also committed the 15th FK into the southern part of Tanga to support the 16th FK against the 2nd LNL attack.

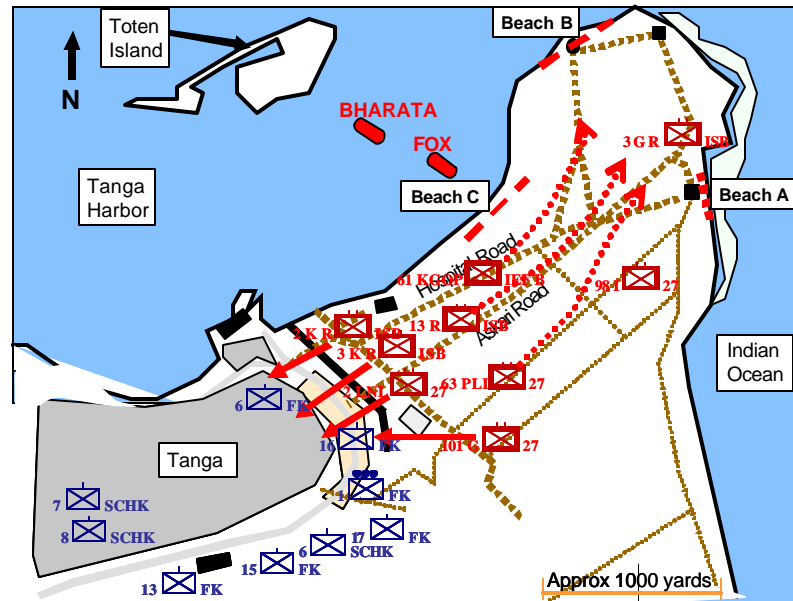


Figure 17. Battle on 4 November, Penetration into Tanga

While Tanga remain locked in house-to-house fighting, the 101st Grenadiers approached from the southeast. At 1500, they came under machine gun fire from the 16th FK as they tried to reach the Usambara Railway. The 101st Grenadiers charged the 16th FK, knocking one machine gun out of action. Baumstark immediately committed the 1st FK platoon and the 17th FK to support the 16th FK southern flank.⁷⁸ Caught in machine

gun fire from two directions, the 101st Grenadier's attack bogged down.⁷⁹ By 1530, IEF "B" was in a serious situation. The 13th Rajputs and 63 PLI had broken and were combat ineffective. The 98th Infantry was still reorganizing from the bee attack. The 101st Grenadiers were pinned southeast of Tanga. In addition, the 2 KR, 3 KR, and the 2nd LNL were locked in vicious combat in Tanga proper. Von Lettow-Vorbeck decided it was time to gamble.

When Baumstark stopped the 101st Grenadiers southeast of Tanga, Von Lettow-Vorbeck realized the time had arrived to commit his one remaining company, the 13th FK. He had just finished a reconnaissance in Tanga and was satisfied that Prince's reinforcements would contain the British advance. At 1545, he ordered the 13th FK to attack the southern flank and rear of the 101st Grenadiers. He thought, "the course of action up till now had shown that the enemy's front, of which the flank was unprotected, did not reach further south than the right wing of town. Here, therefore, the counter-stroke must prove annihilating."⁸⁰ As the 13th FK began their attack against the 101st Grenadiers, the 4th FK arrived from Kange and Von Lettow-Vorbeck immediately added them to the 13th FK attack. The combined fire from the defending companies and the 4th and 13th FKs was more than the 101st Grenadiers could withstand. Von Lettow-Vorbeck observed, "In wild disorder the enemy fled in dense masses, and our machine guns converging on them from front and flanks, mowed down whole companies."⁸¹

House-to-house fighting was ongoing in Tanga when the *Fox* was ordered by the IEF "B" staff to support the attack. Without any observers and unable to actually see targets, the *Fox* fired toward the center of town.⁸² The *Fox* salvo hit a house that the 2 KR

had just seized from the 6th FK,⁸³ and near Meinertzhagen, who had left Tanga to find Aitken and report the progress of the attack, knocking him into a palm tree.⁸⁴ Immediate signals from shore stopped further fire from the *Fox*. During this time, the 98th Infantry had finally been rallied, but, the battalion stopped east of Tanga. The soldiers refused to advance any further.⁸⁵

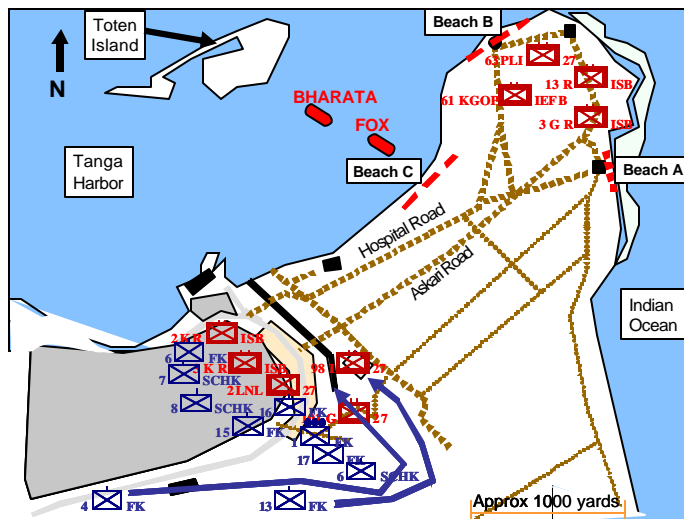


Figure 18. Battle on 4 November, German Counter-Attack

When the 101st Grenadiers collapsed, Baumstark ordered the 17th and 16th FKs to advance, adding their weight to the *Schutztruppe's* attack. The charging Askari encountered the halted 98th Infantry. The 98th Infantry broke and the soldiers ran for the beaches.⁸⁶ The companies of the 61st Pioneers, who had not run when 13th Rajputs bolted, now fled the field as the German counter attack continued from the south. Aitken was left without any reserves,⁸⁷ and was unable to protect the flank of the 2nd LNL following the collapse of the 101st Grenadiers and the 98th Infantry. Isolated and under

pressure from the front and rear, the 2nd LNL was forced to retreat. The retreat of the 2nd LNL created a domino effect; the 2nd LNL withdrawal caused the 3 KR to retreat followed by the 2 KR.⁸⁸

In the gathering darkness, the leaders of IEF “B” struggled to establish a defensive position east of the hospital, and officers scrambled to organize the mass of soldiers on the beach into fighting units again. Aitken signaled the *Fox* to fire into the town to hinder German pursuit. Captain Baumstark then indirectly aided British efforts. The German units were growing disorganized in the twilight pursuit, and with Tanga under fire from the *Fox*, Baumstark ordered his bugler to signal the troops to return to camp. The last camp his troops had occupied was at Kange, four miles away.⁸⁹ More and more buglers echoed the call and as his troops marched west, Von Lettow-Vorbeck was forced to stop his plans to continue the attack.⁹⁰ After having successfully driven the British from Tanga for the second time in two days, Baumstark abandoned it again.

Aitken spent the evening trying to plan another attack, but Tighe and Wapshare convinced him that their soldiers were incapable of further action; their greatest fear was that the Germans would attack that night and finish them off.⁹¹ At Kange, Von Lettow-Vorbeck re-organized his forces to reoccupy Tanga in the morning.⁹² Meinertzhagen spent the evening leading a small patrol towards Tanga. He was able to penetrate into the center of town before running across a German patrol.⁹³ He returned to Aitken and reported that the Germans had withdrawn from Tanga, but Aitken had already made up his mind.⁹⁴ Aitken had decided to re-embark IEF “B” and return to Mombasa. That night Aitken issued Operation Order 4, the last order for IEF “B” during the Tanga campaign. The order outlined the embarkation plan that IEF “B” would execute in the morning.⁹⁵

The morning of 5 November, Von Lettow-Vorbeck reoccupied Tanga. His two obsolete cannon had finally reached the town and he placed them into action against the *Fox* and *Bharata* in the harbor, hastening them out to sea.⁹⁶ That morning, Aitken sent Meinertzhagen to negotiate a truce with the *Schutztruppe*. The truce allowed each side to evacuate and care for their wounded. Throughout the morning, the British embarked IEF “B” at Beach A. Toward the late afternoon, the truce expired and Von Lettow-Vorbeck rushed his troops and cannons to the headland on Ras Kasone. Although the cannons engaged the British ships⁹⁷ the fire was ineffective, but it provided increased incentive for the British to weigh anchor and sail for Mombasa.

IEF “B” had been defeated. The *Schutztruppe* suffered 145 casualties during the battle, sixteen Germans and forty-eight Askari/carriers were killed,⁹⁸ and twenty-four Germans and fifty-six Askari/carriers were wounded.⁹⁹ IEF “B” suffered much higher casualties, 817 in all; there were 359 killed, 310 wounded, and 148 missing.¹⁰⁰ The *Schutztruppe* profited materially from the battle as well. During the re-embarkation, Aitken ordered all heavy equipment abandoned, including sixteen machine guns, 600,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, and significant general military supplies.¹⁰¹ The *Schutztruppe* recovered enough equipment to equip three FKs with modern weapons and miscellaneous equipment.¹⁰² The additional supplies and new confidence the *Schutztruppe* now possessed would serve them well in the years of war to come.

¹Ross Anderson, *The Battle of Tanga 1914*, (Gloucestershire, Tempus, 2002), 47.

²Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (Nashville Battery Classics, 1989), 36.

³Ibid.

⁴Anderson, 66.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Charles Horden and H. Fritz M. Stack, eds., *Military Operations East Africa Volume I August 1914-September 1916* (London, His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1941), 76.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Anderson, 67.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Paul Von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (Nashville, Battery Classics, 1989), 35.

¹³Ibid., 36.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶W. E. Wynn, *Ambush* (London, Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 49.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Horden and Stack, 77.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 79.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Anderson, 72.

²⁴Richard Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary* (London, Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 87.

²⁵Horden and Stack, 541.

²⁶Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 36.

²⁷Anderson, 72.

²⁸Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 36.

²⁹Anderson, 76.

³⁰Horden and Stack, 80.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Anderson, 77.

³³Horden and Stack, 81.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 81.

³⁵Anderson, 80.

³⁶Horden and Stack, 81.

³⁷Anderson, 80.

³⁸Horden and Stack, 81.

³⁹Anderson, 81.

⁴⁰Meinertzhagen, 89.

⁴¹Anderson, 80.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 81.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵Horden and Stack, 82.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 83.

⁴⁹Wynn, 55.

⁵⁰Anderson, 94.

⁵¹Wynn, 63.

⁵²Horden and Stack, 542.

⁵³Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 38.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 39.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., 41.

⁵⁹Ibid., 39.

⁶⁰Ibid., 41.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Horden and Stack, 84.

⁶³Meinertzhagen, 91.

⁶⁴Anderson, 94.

⁶⁵Horden and Stack, 86.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Arthur Aitken, *Memorandum on the Operations at Tanga*, (London, CAB 45/6 Public Records Office, 1917), 3.

⁶⁸Horden and Stack, 86.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid., 87.

⁷¹Aitken, 3.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Meinertzhagen, 90.

⁷⁵Ibid., 91. There were two companies of the 13th Rajputs who did not run when the battalion broke. These two companies fought with the 2nd and 3rd KR throughout the day in Tanga.

⁷⁶Ibid., 92.

⁷⁷Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 42.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Horden and Stack, 87.

⁸⁰Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 42.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Wynn, 65.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Meinertzhagen, 92.

⁸⁵Aitken, 3.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Anderson, 107.

⁸⁸Meinertzhagen, 93.

⁸⁹Anderson, 108.

⁹⁰Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 43.

⁹¹Anderson, 107.

⁹²Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 43.

⁹³Meinertzhagen, 93.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Horden and Stack, 543.

⁹⁶Anderson, 113.

⁹⁷Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 47.

⁹⁸Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 45.

⁹⁹Anderson, 121.

¹⁰⁰Anderson, 120.

¹⁰¹Von Lettow-Vorbeck, 45.

¹⁰²Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The defeat of Indian Expeditionary Force “B” in the fall of 1914 was completely unimaginable to Major General Aitken and his officers. By comparing the forces available to each side, IEF “B” should have easily accomplished its initial mission of seizing the port of Tanga. The critical factors that prevented IEF “B” from seizing Tanga were Aitken’s prejudice, combined with his failures in planning, synchronization, reconnaissance, and decisive leadership.

The first critical factor preventing IEF “B” from seizing Tanga was prejudice. Both of the belligerents at Tanga were proxy organizations under European leadership. The *Schutztruppe* was a cohesive force of seasoned company size units; its German officers and noncommissioned officers lived with their units, trained with them, and in many cases had fought several campaigns with them. Lieutenant Colonel Von Lettow-Vorbeck understood that his Askari were unprepared for modern warfare and adjusted the training plan and equipment of his companies. He and his German leaders fully understood the capabilities, strengths, and limitations of their Askari soldiers. He felt that a British force sent against him would be powerful, but slow to react to changes on the battlefield.

IEF “B” was an ad-hoc organization comprised of unfamiliar brigades with newly attached battalions. Despite his ad-hoc organization, Aitken and his officers never contemplated that the *Schutztruppe* was capable of resisting a modern British force. Aitken was presented with views and reports that the *Schutztruppe* was a formidable foe yet none of this information could shake Aitken’s absolute belief in his force’s

superiority. Aitken's idea that his Indian soldiers and British officers completely outclassed the *Schutztruppe* was not based on any rational standard. His prejudice was built on a long history of successful British operations and affinity for his Indian soldiers. His disregard of martial capabilities in Askari soldiers prevented him from viewing the *Schutztruppe* as a viable threat, and his inability to see beyond his prejudice precluded him from understanding his own force, or the enemy force.

The second critical factor in the battle was planning. Prior to the British landing, Von Lettow-Vorbeck performed an assessment of his organization, the terrain he would fight in, and the strategic situation of his colony. He understood that his Askari would fight an opponent who possessed modern weapons, not lightly armed African tribes. He realized that his Askari lacked modern weapons, so he distributed what modern weapons he did have throughout his force. He intended to bring additional British forces into the theater by positioning his force in Kilimanjaro. Knowing that the British landing site was probably Tanga, he conducted coordination meetings in Tanga for its defense with the local commanders. Von Lettow-Vorbeck also developed detailed plans for the rail movement of the *Schutztruppe* to Tanga. Prior to the second attack by IEF "B" on 4 November, he adjusted his defensive plan to account for the quality of his units and the capability of his subordinate commanders. He minimized the British advantages in fire support and numbers by carefully positioning defending units and maintained a reserve to counter attack. He fully understood the threat the British posed, but planned to maximize his chances of retaining Tanga.

Aitken however, never understood that Tanga would entail combat against a determined opponent. Whether it was prejudice or faulty assumptions, Aitken wasted

eighty-four days prior to the landing. Eighty-four days after being selected to lead IEF “B,” Aitken issued Operations Order 1; the day his troops landed. The order he issued told his subordinates to expect little to no enemy resistance. Aitken had no contingency plan in case the Germans did not surrender; in fact, he had not planned for the landing until the night prior to the landings. He never understood that his soldiers would face a tough fight. He did not anticipate a need for acclimatization for his troops; he fully expected that after being confined to cramped ship holds for thirty days that his soldiers would be able to land and fight effectively. Aitken dispatched officers to conduct initial reconnaissance in Africa prior to IEF “B” leaving India, but did not conduct any advanced planning with General Stewart, the commander of IEF “C,” in British East Africa. The first Stewart heard of his task to conduct a land attack toward Kilimanjaro simultaneous with Aitken’s landing was at the meeting in Mombasa the day before the landing. Aitken did not allow any training or acclimatization for his soldiers, did not incorporate Stewart’s IEF “C,” and did not plan the landing beforehand. The only thing Aitken planned was to beat the Germans before Christmas so he could get his officers reassigned to the “real” war in Europe.

The third critical factor of the battle was synchronization. Aitken and his staff did not synchronize their assets. One of the greatest advantages IEF “B” had over the *Schutztruppe* at Tanga was fire support. Von Lettow-Vorbeck’s two obsolete M1873 cannons did not even reach Tanga until the morning of 5 November, well after Aitken had decided to withdraw. Aitken on the other hand possessed a complete mountain battery with six direct fire cannons, as well as the guns of the *H.M.S. Fox*. Neither Aitken nor his staff planned to use this fire support to their advantage. The mountain battery was

left on the deck of the *S.S. Bharata*, which was in the harbor with the *Fox*. The mountain battery could have provided tremendous fire support had it been disembarked and moved forward to observe targets for direct fire. However, the battery on the *Bharata* and the *Fox* were unable to observe any German forces from the harbor. There were no dedicated observers for fire support. Additionally the method Aitken's staff devised to relay information to the *Bharata* and the *Fox* was crude at best. Commanders desiring fire support requested it from IEF "B" Headquarters at the white house by wire or runner. IEF "B" Headquarters had no direct links to the ships. Flag symbols were used from the Headquarters to communicate to the ships. This method prohibited timely, responsive, fire support. The first two attempts made to incorporate fires with the ground attack resulted in shelling of the German hospital on 3 November, and shelling friendly units on 4 November. The only time fires supported Aitken's intent was when he called on the ships to bombard Tanga to cover the route of IEF "B" on 4 November. The other advantage Aitken failed to synchronize was the land attack by IEF "C." If Aitken had informed Stewart of the plan prior to the meeting in Mombasa, Stewart would have been prepared to attack in conjunction with IEF "B's" landing. A coordinated ground attack from British East Africa would have prevented Von Lettow-Vorbeck from moving the majority of his force to Tanga as rapidly as he did. Also due to the Imperial Service Battalion not being issued machine guns, the *Schutztruppe* actually possessed four more machine guns than IEF "B." The failures in synchronization with tactical fire support and operational maneuver served only to help Von Lettow-Vorbeck.

The fourth critical factor of the battle was reconnaissance. Von Lettow-Vorbeck and the *Schutztruppe* conducted reconnaissance constantly. Even when the only unit in

Tanga was a single platoon, that platoon sent out patrols to observe IEF "B" to determine where the British would land. As more forces arrived, Captain Baumstark positioned patrols to maintain contact with the British. Upon his arrival at Tanga, Von Lettow-Vorbeck conducted a personal reconnaissance to learn if the British had occupied the town. This reconnaissance allowed him to reoccupy the town and prepare for the attack on 4 November. During the battle on 4 November, Von Lettow-Vorbeck conducted another reconnaissance in Tanga to ensure the Captain Prince's reinforcements would be enough to blunt the British attack.

Aitken and subordinate commanders were completely negligent about reconnaissance; they directed none. Aitken did not send any reconnaissance soldiers to Beach A prior to the landing. He had no indication of the terrain or enemy, but committed his troops to a landing regardless. General Tighe landed on the night of the 2nd, but dispatched no patrols to locate the enemy. Tighe did lead with a vanguard, but had no communication with it; at best, it was a reconnaissance in force. After the defeat of the ISB attack on 3 November, Tighe did not mandate any patrols to maintain contact with the *Schutztruppe*, if he had, IEF "B" could have taken Tanga unopposed that night. Aitken conducted no personal reconnaissance; he did not even land until 1700 on 3 November. Once on the ground, he spent his time arranging his headquarters at the white house. He did not move forward to learn the terrain, nor did he direct reconnaissance forward. None of the commanders in IEF "B" used any patrols prior to the second attack on 4 November. With proper reconnaissance, Aitken may have been able to determine the disposition of Von Lettow-Vorbeck's defense and conduct his attack to actually envelope the flank of the *Schutztruppe* instead of running into the center of the defense.

The last opportunity that Aitken lost was on the night of 4 November, while he was struggling with the decision to withdraw to the ships or try a night attack. Reconnaissance could have told him a night attack was unnecessary, as Tanga had been abandoned. The only officer that displayed initiative was Captain Meinertzhagen. By the time Meinertzhagen completed his reconnaissance and reported to Aitken that the town was almost deserted, Aitken had already made up his mind to withdraw. Aitken and his subordinate commanders' failure to conduct reconnaissance is inexcusable. The lack of initiative in reconnaissance prevented IEF "B" from occupying Tanga twice while it was unoccupied, and prevented any planning to be done to assail the *Schutztruppe's* weak points.

The final critical factor at Tanga was decisive leadership by the two commanders, Von Lettow-Vorbeck and Aitken. Von Lettow-Vorbeck was a seasoned colonial officer; he had fought in numerous campaigns and understood his role on the battlefield. Von Lettow-Vorbeck took every opportunity to prepare himself and his organization. His personal reconnaissances were crucial to his decision making. By observing for himself, he was able to understand the reports he received during the fight. He distanced himself from events immediately around him to allow himself to maintain a picture of the entire battle. This picture allowed him to realize the British attack was culminating and commit his reserves to a counter attack. He moved throughout the battlefield and provided his subordinates guidance to act. He was fully in control of the *Schutztruppe* during the battle.

Aitken was leading men into combat for the first time at Tanga. He allowed his subordinates to conduct the battle with minimal guidance. This technique can work well

if the subordinate commanders have a good grasp of the higher commander's intent, but was a poor choice with the intent Aitken provided. Operations Order 3 provided the framework for IEF "B's" attack on 4 November, but did not contain anything other than the formation for the attack. Aitken kept one battalion as his personal reserve for the battle, but had no criteria for using it. Instead of trying to step back and understand the battle as it unfolded, Aitken became involved in rounding up stragglers and trying to get them back to the firing line. Instead of providing guidance to his brigade commanders or deciding if he needed to commit his reserve, Aitken chased individual soldiers running through the bush. Aitken was overwhelmed by events in his immediate vicinity and stopped commanding his force. After issuing his order for the attack on 4 November, Aitken did not make another command decision until eight hours later when he ordered the *Fox* to bombard Tanga. Essentially, IEF "B" did not have a commander during the attack on 4 November. Aitken's failure to make decisions on the battlefield cannot be blamed on anyone but himself.

The issues exemplified by Aitken's performance at Tanga reflect not only his personal failures, but also the failure of the British system of training officers. Almost all British officers fully believed in the superiority of class and race. They were taught to be brave and lead by example, but the long-term historical success of their Empire left them biased and unprepared to meet a competent foe. Aitken, as the commander, is the one held accountable for all of IEF "B's" critical failures, however, only blaming Aitken excuses his subordinate commanders, staff, and the society from whence they came. Other than a few noted exceptions, the majority of the British officers in IEF "B" found no fault with the preparation or planning for the battles. Aitken never intended to lose the

battle, but the prejudices and assumptions he shared with his officers hindered all of their efforts. The critical factors that prevented IEF “B” from seizing Tanga are a direct reflection of an entire officer education system that imposed prejudice and bias as institutional standards. Aitken’s officers were incapable of visualizing competent Africans. The inability to see beyond their institutional bias and prejudice make them as responsible as Aitken for the mistakes made at Tanga.

Faults were indicative of the thinking and training of the British officer corps in 1914. Other British commanders at Gallipoli, the Somme, and Mesopotamia repeated the mistakes made at Tanga. As much as Aitken failed IEF “B,” the prewar British method of training commanders failed Aitken.

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- (5) Appendix B to Operation Order No. 1. November 1, 1914.
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- (8) Operation Order No. 3. November 4, 1914.
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