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Abstract: Although they rarely involve the vital interests of major powers, peripheral conflicts can be lengthy, can have a potential for escalation, can be marked by intense fighting, and can generate relatively heavy casualties. These traits typify many of the campaigns in which Britain has been involved since World War I and in which air power has
been used. This report examines the use of air power by the British in such peripheral conflicts. Five key themes emerge from the operations reviewed in the report: (1) 'high-tech,' sophisticated aircraft were not always an improvement over the older, slower aircraft that could take off from and land on short, rough airstrips; (2) in almost all of the peripheral conflicts in which Britain was involved, the air-defense threat posed by the enemy was at best negligible; (3) successful operations often hinged on close coordination and communication between air and ground forces; (4) air strikes were often inappropriate or ineffective in rural campaigns and were useless in conflicts with a prominent urban component; and (5) the British appreciated--particularly in pre-1939 conflicts--the comparative cost savings of air operations over traditional ground-force operations with similar goals and outcomes.

Descriptors: *AIR DEFENSE, *AIR POWER, *CONFLICT, *UNITED KINGDOM, AIR STRIKES, AIRCRAFT, CASUALTIES, COSTS, GLOBAL, INFANTRY, INTENSITY, SAVINGS, THREATS, URBAN AREAS, WARFARE

Subject Categories: Military Operations, Strategy and Tactics

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