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The Daimler Fighting Vehicles Project – Part Bw
On Active Service – 1948 to 1952 Greece

Greece 1948 - 1952

Following the German retreat from Greece in World War 2, ELAS (Εθνικὸν Λαϊκὸς Απελευθερωτικὸν Σύνδεσμος or National Popular Liberation Army) and EAM (Εθνικὸν Απελευθερωτικὸν Μέτωπον or National Liberation Front) both remained heavily armed from the war. On 4th December, war broke out between the two factions, ELAS led by the KKE (Κομμουνιστικὸν Κῶμμα Ἑλλάδος or Communist Party of Greece). Soon British and Greek ships were bombarding positions held by the Communists and holding off the attacks on naval shore installations.

By 12th December, Piraeus was secured but hard fighting in central Athens continued throughout December. The RAF and Greek-manned squadrons were soon in action against the ELAS forces, 73 Squadron arrived from Italy on the 8th December, 40 SAAF squadron and 205 Group Liberators flew in troops to aid the Greek government.

On 31st December, the Archbishop Damaskinos was inducted Regent of Greece and by the middle of January 1945, after six weeks of hard fighting British forces were in control of all Attica. A truce was signed on the 11th January, by which all ELAS forces had to withdraw from the neighbourhood of Athens, Salonika and Patras.

The threat of civil war loomed throughout 1945 and the 4th and 46th Divisions were sent from Italy to reinforce the Allied presence there. On the eve of the general elections in March 1946, an armed band descended into the town of Litokhoro and attacked the police station, the police station was totally destroyed along with several other buildings. Eight people were killed including six national guardsmen and police, and two civilians.

Several thousand members of ELAS who had fled the country in 1945 now returned to Greece called by the KKE and supported by Yugoslavia

The violence in the countryside grew daily as bandits roamed the hills, and isolated national guard outposts were attacked. In June 1946 the Greek general staff estimated guerrilla strength at about 2,600 Communist guerrillas.

On 18th June, the Greek parliament passed a security bill, this established new courts with authority to pass capital sentences for new crimes including membership in armed bands, prohibit public meetings and strikes, and gave police the power to arrest without a warrant.

Throughout 1946 guerrilla strength increased and at the end of October 1946, General Markos Vamvakis created the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), giving the KKE another army, which numbered nearly 10,000 strong by the end of the year.

Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria were seen to support the Communist forces, allowing the Communist guerrilla to launch raids from their territories including one against Skra on November 13th, just five miles from the Greece-Yugoslav border. Greece protested to the United Nations and the three countries were cited as giving aid and comfort to the insurgents.

In September, King George sought to create a broader appeal in the government of Greece. Tsaldaris resigned in January 1947 and was replaced by a coalition government under Maximos. General Spirotopoulos, the Chief of the General Staff, was relieved by General Vendiris on February 20 1947. During the turmoil, a United Nations Commission of enquiry arrived to investigate charges against Greece's neighbours.

Greece requested additional support from Britain at the end of February 1946, but unable to provide this aid, Britain informed the Truman administration that its aid to Greece would cease in at the end of March



1947. On 3rd March, the Greek government formally requested US aid. British troops are known to have remained in Greece until at least 1949, with a battalion of troops split between Salonika and Athens



(Photo sourced from Imperial War Museum-)

Photo Reference NA21422

Photographer: Lieutenant Powell Davies, Army Film & Photographic Unit

Description: Greece in Athens, An ELAS armoured car of an Italian Pattern having been stopped by a unit of the 23rd Armoured Brigade.

The Dingo is named JULIET and features a camouflage paintwork pattern



(Photo sourced from Imperial War Museum-)

Photo Reference NA21424

Photographer: Lieutenant Powell Davies, Army Film & Photographic Unit

Description: Greece in Athens, Brigadier Pritchard seen in his armoured Dingo scout car during a tour of the city.



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Following are extracts of the war Kings Dragoon Guards war diary that specifically mention the use of Daimler Dingo Scout cars

Many British military installations had been sited around Athens in what had seemed to be the most appropriate places, without any thought that they might find themselves in the midst of a civil war and in hostile territory. On 21 and 22 December 'B' Squadron rescued REME workshops sited in a foundry in the Imittos district of southeast Athens. A blown bridge and roadblocks were dealt with, resulting in three ELAS being killed and three being taken prisoner, but 240 men and 130 vehicles were brought to safety.

Over the following days a number of patrols were carried out: one by Lieutenant Dorell to Voula resulted in three more guerrillas killed and three captured, as well as one of their headquarters being destroyed; other patrols escorted Mr Churchill, Mr Eden and Field Marshal Alexander to Athens.

On Boxing Day ELAS attacked Kalamaki airfield, slightly wounding two KDG sentries and blowing up an armoured car on prepared charges, which wounded all three crew members. Patrols to the guerrilla strongholds of Vari and Koropi resulted in a Daimler armoured car being blown up on the 26th, and two Daimlers and a **Dingo** on the 29th, all luckily without any casualties.

On 31 December another rescue operation was successfully mounted to bring to safety 120 men of the 50th RTR, stationed ten miles east of Athens at Pallini wireless station, which provided the only direct link between Athens and London. Several roadblocks covered by sniper fire had to be cleared, resulting in fourteen ELAS killed and three prisoners being taken.