

Saturday, March 31, 2012. At about 6pm Agnes and her friend Florence Mugo enter Sharlocks Hotel bar in Nanyuki. Agnes starts speaking to a British soldier. Mugo leaves and catches a motorcycle taxi to Lions Court hotel, a popular drinking spot



9pm. Agnes arrives at Lions Court to find Mugo and another friend, Susan Nyambura, in the bar. Agnes is out of breath. She says she "picked a soldier's pocket" but got caught



The three friends mix with dozens of British soldiers who have booked rooms at the hotel. Evewitnesses say some of the soldiers are drunk and dancing with local women, many of whom are



Agnes and a British soldier are seen dancing and drinking beer. At midnight, a guard escorts them to the soldier's room. Later, a night porter says he heard a "fierce row" inside the room. Nyambura waits until 3am for Agnes but she never returns



Sunday, April 1. Agnes's family and friends begin a search after she fails to return home to her sister's apartment in Majengo. A missing person's report is made to Nanyuki police station. Officers visit the



Tuesday, June 5. Agnes's body is found in a septic tank at the hotel. She is naked except for a white bra and a necklace. A post-mortem examination finds she has been stabbed in the chest and abdomen, and has been badly beaten



Kenyan police begin a murder investigation and identify nine soldiers present the night Agnes died, who are now back in the UK. Police say they asked for them to be questioned and DNA-tested but the Ministry of Defence says no request was received



Investigation, Kenya's FBI, visits Agnes's family and informs them that a fresh inquiry has begun. Officers say they want to travel to the UK to

## I believe British soldiers killed my sister. Now I want the truth

Nine years ago a young mother was found dead in a septic tank in Kenya. She vanished after British troops enjoyed a debauched night out in a hotel. Now detectives want to question the soldiers who were there

**DAVID COLLINS** AND HANNAH AL-OTHMAN



n a humid Saturday night in woman with long braided hair walked into the air-conditioned bar of the Lions Court Inn hotel in Nanyuki, Kenya. Agnes Wanjiru, 21, sat at a table with two friends. Beside them a dancefloor heaved with dozens of British soldiers, drinking bottles of Tusker beer, dancing with local women and taking them back to their rooms. At about midnight, Agnes – who had left her five-month-old daughter with a babysitter – left the bar arm-in-arm with one of the soldiers. It would be the last time she was seen alive. Two months later the sex worker's bat-

tered body was found in the fetid sludge of a septic tank yards from the lodges the soldiers had occupied.

The murder shocked the quiet town. and risked serious political ramifications By then, the British soldiers had left for home. One of those present that night remembered the night of Agnes's death as a debauched evening of "non-stop" sex with local prostitutes in return for only a

few pounds. "It was all night, [soldiers] ferrying women back and forth to the rooms, which were like these huts," the former infantryman said. "You could do whatever you wanted."

But on his return to the UK, rumours had started. "There was a lot of talk among the soldiers that a soldier had killed her [Agnes].

"I heard there was a soldier boasting about killing a prostitute in Nanyuki." Kenyan police identified nine soldiers they wanted questioned over Agnes's murder. They asked the British Royal Mildiers and take DNA samples. Last week the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said it

received no such request. The inquiry stalled, and the case was never solved. A new investigation has begun into the murder, however, after an inquest delayed by more than six years found that Agnes was killed unlawfully. The MoD confirmed last week that it was now assisting the Kenvan authorities "to determine what support is needed".

Detectives from the Directorate of Criminal Investigations, Kenya's FBI, visited Agnes's family in February. The focus of their inquiries? The same nine suspects, all serving infantrymen at the time, who were at the bar on the night Agnes died. Hotel logs show they had booked rooms, yet they were never Agnes's sister, Rose Wanyua Wanjiku

48, said: "They claimed they had the names of the soldiers and would carry out the interviews, even if it meant flying Confidential documents relating to the original Kenyan police investigation

in 2012, seen by this newspaper, raise

serious questions for the British armed The documents show that at least ble. The Kenyan police should have four witnesses saw Agnes leave the hotel forced the British Army to produce the bar with a British soldier and go to the culprits to face the law.' out in the room between the pair. They

yet neither happened. "There was so many of us about you

being seen," the soldier said. "[But] when you're in the army and you're talking about a foreign prostitute THE DISAPPEARANCE help cover it up."

from a poor family could be "overaccidentally recovered.

"She was in the company of some Brit-



also show that Kenyan detectives specifi- They denied involvement in her death. cally asked the British military to ques- Both confirmed they had not been tion the soldiers and take DNA samples – questioned by either the British or the Kenyan authorities.

"Nobody's been in touch with me," couldn't do something like that without one soldier said. "I've never been questioned by the army or the police about it."

from Kenya, most people wouldn't give a The dusty market town of Nanyuki is f\*\*k to be honest. Most [soldiers] would heavily dependent on the money spent Rose, who has raised Agnes's child, the road in Nyati Barracks. Sex work is the road in Nyati Barracks. Sex work is Stacy, says she believes the Kenyan and rife, Local girls can earn the equivalent of British authorities have allowed Agnes's a week's salary by sleeping with a British killer to escape justice for nine years soldier and charging about £30, although because they believed the death of a girl some charge just a few pounds for sex. looked". She said: "From the first day we daughter and living with her sister in a reported the case at the police station, single room in the town's Majengo ghetto the police did nothing until her body was — was one such sex worker desperately trying to make ends meet.

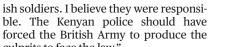
> leaving her daughter with a neighbour. Agnes had headed into town with her **new deal with the** friend Florence Nyaguthii Mugo, then British Army base aged 21 and working as a hairdresser. near Nanyuki is Agnes had no pockets, so gave Mugo her vital for the national identity card to put in her trous- economy of the

stopped at Sharlocks Hotel bar, where described by witnesses as very drunk. at the local supermarket since the start of the evening, one of them remembered. "They were buying alcohol for pre-

drinks before the hotel," the former infantryman said. workers. The taxis were full of soldiers and prostitutes. Everyone was pre-drink-

thing's dead cheap." Mugo asked Agnes for money to catch a boda boda (a motorcycle taxi), and went ahead to the Lions Court hotel, a popular night-time drinking spot with a lively dancefloor. Mugo arrived to find another friend, Susan Nyambura, 22, and the two of them sat at a table, drinking water and waiting for Agnes, who turned up at about 9pm.

The bar and dancefloor were heaving by then, according to Simon Minja Giionga, 28, a hotel waiter.



soldier's room. One of those witnesses Last week The Sunday Times tracked claims to have heard a "fierce row" break down two of the nine soldiers who were in the hotel the night Agnes vanishe

by soldiers from the British Army base up Agnes – struggling to support her "Agnes was a cheerful and friendly girl, just like her daughter, Stacy," Rose said.

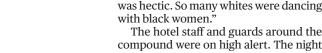
"On the day she disappeared, she was just as happy as ever." That Saturday, Rose returned to their home in a maze of shacks with corru- British soldiers gated metal roofs and rickety wooden undertake hot walls to find that Agnes had gone out, climate training in Kenya, where a

ers for safekeeping. On their way, Agnes and her friend wider region Agnes chatted to a British soldier Some of the soldiers had been drinking

town and the

"Some were drinking in taxis with sex ing with them, and obviously every-

"I can remember the bar had so many customers," he told police in his witness "I can remember the bar had so many statement. "Normal customers, British Army soldiers and local whites. Some customers were sitting, others were dancing with African women. The bar



200 British soldiers at another nightspot Court Hotel". p the road. During a 20-minute brawl, was reportedly hurled through a window. had gone into a room." Two RMP officers sent in to stop the fight to one soldier.

> dier there on the night says he rememthe police. local sex workers.

you go out on the piss and you go pick up to retrace Agnes's steps. prostitutes. That's just how life is. You're At the hotel, she bumped into a guard tiple prostitutes that night. Obviously I Agnes bought water and she and her

two friends went on to the dancefloor Agnes's safety: the pair had seemed to be where, according to several witnesses, getting on well. she met a British soldier who started to

"While dancing I saw the deceased decided to report her missing at Nanyuki [Agnes] dancing with a white man – police station. probably a British Army soldier," Nyambura's witness statement said. "By that and efforts to trace her were launched time the deceased was holding a bottle of but to no avail," read an official police beer. In the hall the whites were so many report. "Several visits were made to the and all drunk. I saw the deceased moving hotel in a bid to uncover the mysterious out of the bar with one of the whites and I disappearance of the lady but couldn't assumed they were going into a room." yield any fruit."

Nyambura's evidence was corrobo rated by Mugo, whose statement said that Agnes had ordered a drink, which was compound were on high alert. The night then paid for by "a soldier of the British before violence had broken out between Army whom she found in the bar of Lions

described by one local as "like a scene" dancing with that soldier and after a short from a John Wayne movie", one soldier time I could not see her. I assumed they

Mugo left at midnight after receiving a were "launched off a balcony", according call from her mother to come home. Nyambura waited in the bar for Agnes The hotel staff were used to British until 3am. Eventually, she also went troops looking to let off steam after com- home. "I was unable to contact her since bat training on the plains of Kenya. A sol- she had no mobile telephone," she told

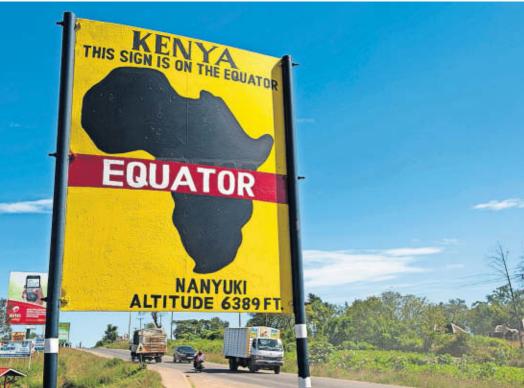
bers "about 60" soldiers staying in the The next day, she visited Agnes's home hotel that night, mingling with up to 40 in Majengo to check on her, but Rose said she hadn't turned up from the night "It's the culture," said the soldier. before. Concerned, Nyambura returned "Even if you go to Germany or Cyprus, to the Lions Court with a friend in order

away for weeks and weeks on end. That's — she knew and asked him if he had seen the only opportunity you're going to get Agnes. The night guard said he had and so you're going to pay for it. I'd say escorted them to the door of the soldier's the majority of soldiers had sex with mul-room in the hotel and saw them enter. "He said he had seen her and actually had sex with girls. I don't think I saw led her to a room with the European,"

> By late Sunday evening, Agnes's sister and friends were becoming worried and

The guard had not been concerned for

"A report was made at the station



Agnes's disappearance would remain a mystery until two months later, when a disturbing discovery was made by staff at Saturday afternoon, paying 2,000-3,500 the Lions Court.

Wangari, instructed his staff to investitraining. gate the source of a foul odour that had

spread through the building.

His maintenance manager, John where Agnes was found. Gichuki, opened a manhole belonging to one of three septic tanks inside the hampered the investigation. By the time walled compound. He found a woman's the murder inquiry was launched two body submerged in the filth, naked months after Agnes's disappearance, the except for a white bra and a necklace. On the other side of Nanyuki, Chief had been repeatedly cleaned. patrol when he received a phone call NO MILITARY INQUIRY Inspector Mohamed Jerumani was on

headed straight there." The body was transported to Nanyuki

identified as Agnes by her sister. Eight days later a post-mortem examination found she had died as a result of tinue to assist the Kenyan police. But stab wounds to her lower right abdomen when Jabali wrote to ask that the soldiers and her chest. There were also signs she be questioned and DNA-tested, the had been badly beaten. With the condirequest appears to have gone missing. tion of her body, it was not possible to determine whether she had been sexu- Detective Jabali to RMP officers in the ally assaulted. British Army Training Unit Kenya

THE SUSPECTS

At Nanyuki police station, Detective Rammatic headache.

ish soldier she had been drinking beer did they share a room? with at one of the tables in full view of One of the hotel guards confirmed he of each of them if your laws can allow ... I had escorted Agnes and a British soldier can as well give you the deceased specito one of the rooms - lodges on the men samples to compare with theirs in grounds of the hotel that have beds with your laboratories. mosquito nets. "From that point the lady

ali wrote in one of his reports. Mugo told police in her witness state- the request. The soldiers were never ment that at least one soldier in Nanyuki questioned or asked for DNA. had reason to be angry with Agnes: she

had stolen money from him. Hotel out of breath, sweating and pant- room with Agnes from photographs, saying, like she'd been running," Mugo told ing they could not be certain. detectives. "I asked her what was wrong, and she said, 'I picked a Johnny's pocket soldiers – they all look the same." The and was caught. I did it for my baby. investigation has stalled ever since. There was enough money for a nice life." Mugo added: "She was desperate. She authorities is said to be "concerned" needed some money to look after her about the standard of the original investi-

in the room, according to Kenyan police government to conduct proper interofficers who worked on the investigation. views with the suspects," Rose said.

Hotel logs were used to identify nine British soldiers who had checked in on Kenyan shillings each (£13-£20), and checked out the next day. Many of them gave their local address as Turaco Farm,

Two of the rooms occupied by British soldiers were next to the septic tank However, a lack of forensic evidence

where many soldiers stay during their

room she occupied with a British soldier

from Wangari. "He informed me that On June 16, Jabali met Major Phillips from there was something terrifying at his the RMP, who handed over the names, hotel that he wanted me to see," Jeru- ranks, regiment and battalion of the solmani's witness statement said. "We diers who were staying at Lions Court that night.

"I can confirm that all of the detailed

district hospital mortuary where it was soldiers are no longer undertaking training in Kenya," Major Philips wrote. He promised that the RMP would con-A letter dated June 20, 2012, sent from

(BATUK), made specific requests for assistance in the investigation. It included a photograph of Agnes and adhan Jabali was faced with unpicking a a list of 13 questions to put to the nine suscase that threatened to cause a diplopects including: Did any of them have sex with any girl during the night? Did they He compiled witness reports from exchange contacts with any lady during those who had been at the Lions Court the night? Had they checked into the that night. Four claimed to have seen hotel in a group or separately? Did each

> The letter added: "There is another request if it is possible to get DNA profiles

Agnes walking out of the bar with a Brit- of them know which room they slept in or

"Looking forward to your co-operawas never seen coming out of the room, tion and hope to hear from your office neither did she return to her home," Jab- the soonest. Sources at the MoD say they never saw

from the Lions Court hotel were unable "She [Agnes] turned up at Lions Court to pick out the soldier who went to the One told police: "They're white British

A night porter at the hotel said he had "We were told by the police officers dier. He heard several voices and had sus-inquiry was not good enough and that Kenya worth at least £10 million a year to

The savagery of the murder shocked Nanyuki, a bustling gateway for tourists seeking luxury safari trips to Mount Kenya National Park and mountaineers hoping to climb the country's highest The new inquiry team for the Kenyan peak. It also posed an awkward problem for the Kenyan and British authorities. The relationship between the coun heard a "fierce fight" in the room being who visited from Nairobi in February that Two months ago Ben Wallace, the occupied by Agnes and the British sol- the standard of the original police defence secretary, signed a deal with

pected there was more than one soldier ontenough pressure was put on the UK. Nanyuki and the surrounding area. The agreement will allow 3,000 British troops annually to train in the coun



work to support her daughter. A guard at the **Lions Court hotel** said he escorted her to a room with a soldier. She lived in the



tryside nearby. The dusty town, about 125 miles north of Nairobi and known for them at this base. its farms, ranches, game parks and wildlife reserves, has an army base where, under the agreement with the Kenvan land belonging to the MoD was shot dead government, the UK can send up to six niantry dattaiions a year to carry ou eight-week exercises on land at Archers

killed by unexploded British ordnance since 1945.

medics provide healthcare to the civilian Shops and businesses also depend on money spent by British soldiers on deployment. Roadside curio sellers offer

hand-carved ornamental wooden badges and insignia for British troops. Lilian Muthoni, 37, a curio shop owner said: "This town's economy depends mostly on tourists and the British Army, who are big spenders. They buy our products at good prices. But since the Covid-19 pandemic started,

Post and Laikipia County. As part of the

arrangement, the Kenyan Defence For-

cises with the British Army. In the past

conducted, involving about 600 Kenyan

The army base, it is argued, provides a

number of benefits to the wider community in Nanyuki. Royal Engineers carry

out civil engineering projects such as

building roads and bridges, while army

two years, five joint exercises have been

troops and 4,500 British troops.

ces can also take part in training exer-

they used to." Restaurants, bars and nightclubs all benefit from the British presence. "The soldiers spend money on drinks and food and there's always a good boost to business within the town," said Muigai Njuguna, 51, a bar worker.

they don't come out of the barracks as

James Mutiso, 49, a taxi driver, said: "When we see the whites in bars drinking, we are sure of business. They will definitely hire a ride back to their base or hotel at the end of their trip, and they pay

The steady supply of soldiers has created an industry for sex workers. While British soldiers can pay up to £30, although some will pay much less, local men will pay only £1 for sex.

"The British are very quick, so you can get another customer," one Nanyuki sex vorker said. "Local men take much longer, are harder to please and pay less." The former British infantryman who stayed at the Lions Court Inn hotel on the weekend in question paints a concerning icture of soldiers using impoverished local women for sex. "The prostitutes would follow you around in the supermarket," he said. "That's where you picked most of them up.

Then their friends would turn up, and then their friends. "When we got back to the UK, the army made us get mass tested for HIV." Many local women use prostitution to

pay for their children's education, food and accommodation.

Britain's long-standing military base in Kenya was recently given an overhaul, with a new £70 million facility built at Nyati Barracks to include a new headquarters, welfare centre and accommodation. About 230 UK military personnel

are based permanently in Kenya, most o However, it has not been without controversy during its 50-year history. In 2012, an armed intruder who broke into

It has also been claimed that up to 50 Kenyans, mainly herders, have been

In March this year, British soldiers were accused of starting a fire during a training exercise that forced families living around the barracks to flee when

flames ripped through a wooded area. The same month it was reported that the commanding officer of 3rd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment ordered his soldiers to remain on base after it emerged that dozens had used brothels near by. Many had reported concerns about contracting HIV after unprotected sex.

HOPES OF THE FAMILY

Agnes's daughter, Stacy, will soon celebrate her tenth birthday. Her aunt and uncle have not told her about her mother's murder.

"Our biggest challenge has been to hide the truth from Stacy," Rose said. "Sometimes she asks questions, but we have always found a way to avoid it. "We have made sure that the rest of

our children, two boys and three girls, treat her just like any other sibling. Her death has left us with so much sadness. Even the passing of my mother did not affect me like this.

"Stacy was just five months old and I still remember her cries during those early days after her mother went missing. She would cry the whole night." The family hope the new investigation

will finally bring justice. Rose sadi: "All we want as a family is for the British and Kenyan authorities to take some responsibility. We want a safe future for Stacy, just like her mother would have wanted.

"We want her to get through school and give her a better home to live in. And we want to give her the answers she will want one day about her mother's death. "It's time for the British authorities to take responsibility and help the Kenyan police to conduct a proper investigation.

We just want justice.' An MoD spokesman said: "In 2012, Special Investigation Branch carried out initial enquiries in Kenya, including providing information about British personnel to the Kenyan police. No further requests for assistance were received.

"Following the conclusion of a Kenyan inquest in 2019, we are aware that the Kenyan authorities are looking into this incident. The jurisdiction for this investigation rests with the Kenyan police, and we are currently in discussions with the Kenyan authorities to determine what

support is needed. "Due to this being subject to an ongoing investigation it would be inappropriate to comment further." @DavidCollinsST

Additional reporting: Dennis Okeyo, Nanyuki



