



## SUPPLEMENT

TO

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TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER, 1916.

War Office,  
14th November, 1916.

The following Despatch from Lieutenant-General Sir Percy Lake, K.C.B., relative to the operations in Mesopotamia subsequent to 30th April, 1916, has been received from the Government of India for publication.

In forwarding this Despatch to the Government of India the Commander-in-Chief expressed his appreciation of the zeal and perseverance with which Sir Percy Lake faced and energetically improved the difficult conditions encountered by him during the tenure of his command:—

General Headquarters,  
I.E.F. "D."  
27th August, 1916.

From Lieutenant-General Sir P. H. N. Lake, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "D."  
To the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, India, Simla.

SIR,—On relinquishing command of Indian Expeditionary Force "D" I have the honour to submit a short Despatch, dealing with the operations of this Force since the fall of Kut on April 30th, and also describing in general terms the work carried out at the Base and on

the Line of Communications up to the present date.

### OPERATIONS.

1. No operations on a large scale have been undertaken since the fall of Kut.

On the Tigris Line the troops immediately facing the enemy were, with the exception of those actually on duty in the trenches, resting, recuperating and consolidating their position. Fatigues were very heavy, the heat of summer came on rapidly, and a good deal of sickness prevailed.

Nevertheless pressure on the enemy was never relaxed, and every opportunity was taken to test his morale by bombardments and minor engagements whenever opportunity offered.

2. During May the pressure of the Russian advance from Persia towards Baghdad must have begun to make itself felt by the enemy, for on the 19th May General Gorringe reported his apparent withdrawal from his advanced positions at and in front of Es Sinn on the right bank, though the Sannaiyat position was still strongly held. This withdrawal was followed up, and by the evening of May 20th General Gorringe was able to report that, except for small rearguards covering the bridges over the Hai river, the right bank of the Tigris as far as the Hai was clear of the enemy.

3. As the enemy's retention of the Sannaiyat position prevented the passage of our supply ships up the river, our troops operating on the other bank towards the Hai had to depend for food, forage, and in some cases even water, upon land transport.

Consequently, General Gorringe's occupation of the positions evacuated in the enemy's retirement could only be gradual, and was largely dependent upon the construction of new roads and a reorganisation of his supply system.

These conditions have continued practically unchanged up to the present date. The abatement of the floods and the intense heat have dried up the ground, caused the marshes to recede and made movement easier. On the other hand, water difficulties have increased, and drinkable water away from the river is difficult to find, the soil being usually impregnated with various salts.

The Turks still hold the Sannaiyat position, and have constructed other lines behind it on the left bank, which they appear to hold in force.

On the right bank their outposts reach the Hai river, which is now fordable. We hold positions from which we dominate the Hai and can deny its passage, while we could, if we pleased, bombard Kut itself.

4. One incident requires mention. On May 20th a strong Russian Cavalry patrol of three officers and 110 other ranks arrived unexpectedly at Ali Gharbi. The patrol had started from the neighbourhood of Karind and had safely executed an adventurous march of some 200 miles, much of it through the Pusht-i-Kuh hills. The officers came to report themselves to me in person at Basrah, where, by command of His Majesty the King, I decorated them with the Military Cross, in recognition of their exploit, and of this, the first meeting of British and Russian troops as Allies in the field for 100 years.

The patrol left Ali Gharbi on their return journey on June 4th, and after skilfully surmounting various difficulties succeeded in reaching their main body in safety.

5. On July 11th General Gorringe was succeeded in the command of the Tigris column by General Maude, who has held it up to date.

6. As regards aviation, the superiority of certain of the hostile aeroplanes over any of our machines in the matter of speed, combined with a large reduction in the number of our pilots (due to sickness partly attributable to overwork), enabled the enemy in May and June to establish what was very nearly a mastery of the air.

With the arrival of more pilots from home matters improved, until in August three of our machines, working together, forced the best enemy machine, a Fokker, to descend, seriously damaged, in its own lines.

7. Operations on the Euphrates have been confined to raiding expeditions, carried out in order to punish attacks on our vessels, damage to the telegraph line, or attacks on tribes who are our allies. All these expeditions have been well organised by Major-General Brooking.

8. On the Karun Line the only incidents worthy of note have been attempts by pro-German Persian tribesmen, who had been co-operating with the Turks against the Russians, to escape to their own mountains, where they were likely to make mischief. These attempts were frustrated by the 23rd Cavalry operating on the Kharkeh and Ab-i-Diz rivers. Lieu-

tenant-Colonel Younghusband's arrangements were well conceived, and resulted in the complete discomfiture of the tribesmen and the capture of their leaders.

9. During the hot season, now drawing to a close, the business of administration and the work of preparation for more active measures during the coming cold weather assumed relatively great importance. I make no excuse, therefore, for alluding at some length to the work performed.

10. The valuable co-operation of the Royal Navy, under Captain W. Nunn, has, as usual, been conspicuous during the period under review. The gunboats stationed on the Euphrates took a leading part in the successful minor operations referred to in paragraph 7 on that river and in the Hammar Lake.

I would also bring to notice the able assistance given by Mr. W. Grant, Admiralty Overseer at Abadan, in preparing river craft for service.

11. In my previous despatch I alluded to the difficulties against which the Medical Services have had to contend.

Much thought and hard work have been devoted to overcoming these difficulties and meeting the medical needs of the force. The advance made in this direction is clearly shown by the fact that the total accommodation for sick and wounded in Mesopotamia, which on January 21st (exclusive of Kut) was 4,700 beds, and by May 13th had risen to 9,425, amounted on July 1st to 15,745, with 2,700 more in process of organisation.

The advent of the hot weather early in May, with a sudden rise in the temperature, increased the number of sick rapidly. The intense heat was aggravated at the front by the total absence of shade and by the failure of the "shamal" or north wind, which, usually due about the middle of June, did not commence to blow till July 19th. The admissions to hospital then at once lessened, and are still decreasing. The majority of the cases are not serious.

An outbreak of cholera occurred at the Tigris front at the end of April, but was got under control in the course of a short time, since when only a small number of isolated cases are reported from time to time from various parts of the country.

I am much indebted to Surgeon-General F. H. Treherne for the valuable assistance he has consistently rendered since his arrival in the country; also to Colonel W. H. Willcox, Consulting Physician, whose high professional knowledge has always been at the service of the force. Much credit is due to the Nursing Sisters, who have carried out their duties with great devotion, and have shown untiring zeal and energy in alleviating the sufferings of those who have passed through their hands.

By the untimely death of Colonel Sir V. Horsley, both the force and the medical profession sustained a severe loss.

12. In the Supply and Transport Corps much sickness, followed by invaliding, occurred, especially among the senior officers. As a result the duties of the Corps fell heavily on those who remained, while the service of supply was much hampered by a shortage of river transport on a rapidly falling river. That the supply of food, clothing, etc., has nevertheless been maintained without serious deficiencies reflects credit upon the work of the Corps.

13. During the flood season, from April to June, nine-tenths of the country round Basrah is under water, and in normal years a continuous belt of flood, from 6 to 9 miles wide and from 1 to 4 feet deep, separates the Basrah tract from the higher lying desert country to the south-west.

This flood water in 1915 forced its way into and inundated the Makina Masus Camp area. This year, in order to meet the needs of the constant stream of troops and stores pouring into Basrah, it was imperative to safeguard from floods the ground space required for camps, hutting, store depôts and additional hospital accommodation. This was done by constructing, first, a main protective embankment or "bund" from the Tigris at Magil to the higher ground at Shaiba. This "bund" was 11 to 12 miles long, and completely shut off the belt of flood water above referred to.

It was supplemented by a second bund, which branched off from it about 2 miles from the river, and was carried to the neighbourhood of the Zubair Gate of Basrah, some 3 miles. A series of smaller subsidiary bunds was constructed along the river front and the intermediate creeks. The whole system, covering a total length of some 20 miles, safeguards an area of some 48 square miles in all, and of 1½ square miles at Magil and Makina Masus, which has been adopted as the main camp for troops in and near Basrah. Wharves have been constructed, and ocean-going steamers are now able to come alongside and unload.

A large amount of hutting for hospitals and troops has been erected, providing accommodation for 8,700 sick and 15,000 troops; water supplies for the troops have been installed at Basrah and Amarah, and many important miscellaneous works have been carried out.

The amount of valuable work brought to completion reflects credit on Major-General J. C. Rimington, Chief Engineer; Colonel E. R. B. Stokes-Roberts, Director of Works, and those serving under them.

14. Two railways are now in course of construction. Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. White and his assistants are pushing on both lines with much zeal and energy, in spite of considerable difficulties in the transport of materials.

15. A new powerful wireless station has been installed. Work was commenced on the 10th February, 1916, and completed on the 25th August, 1916. The rapid erection of this station is due to the energetic co-operation of the Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, India; to Mr. E. L. Bagshawe, Director of Telegraphs, Force "D," and especially to the ability and energy of Mr. J. G. P. Cameron, Assistant Superintendent of Telegraphs, the engineer in charge of the construction work.

16. The Veterinary Services, under Lieutenant-Colonel W. S. Anthony, have done much to maintain the animals of the force in good condition, in spite of hard work and unavoidable short commons in certain cases.

17. The administration of the Remount Services, the care and training of the horses reflects credit upon Captain J. F. H. Anderson, Army Remount Department.

18. I am anxious to place on record my deep sense of the good effect produced through-

out this force by the Army Chaplains of all denominations, whose devotion to duty and contempt of danger while performing it deserve the highest commendation.

19. Like other departments, the Royal Indian Marine has suffered severely from sickness and invaliding, especially among its superior officers. The rapid growth of its duties may be gathered from the fact that whereas in January, 1916, there were nineteen permanent and twenty-one temporary officers and 525 other ranks employed, by July the number had risen to forty permanent and 163 temporary officers and 3,981 other ranks, besides native labourers. The necessity for assimilating this large influx of newly-appointed officers and men threw a heavy strain on the permanent cadres, who were also faced with many unforeseen demands. That under these conditions its duties have been carried out with a considerable measure of success is distinctly creditable to the Service.

20. The thanks of the whole force in Mesopotamia are especially due to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the British Red Cross Society, including its Indian branch, and the Young Men's Christian Association.

The two former, through their representative, Lieutenant-Colonel J. Gould, have devoted their resources to supplementing the medical appliances and comforts provided by the State for the care of the sick and wounded. All officers and men who have passed through the hospitals at any time would desire to express their gratitude to these Societies.

The Young Men's Christian Association, on the other hand, through its able officials, among whom I would specially mention Mr. L. A. Dickson, Revd. B. H. McLain, Revd. T. S. Riddle, and Mrs. Webley, has contributed most materially to the well-being, physical and moral, of the troops in general outside the hospitals in a manner deserving of the highest admiration.

21. The appointment of Sir G. C. Buchanan to the Force as Director-General of Port Administration and River Conservancy has been of undoubted value. Owing to the difficulty experienced in obtaining certain stores and equipment from India and Burma, and to sickness among the supervising staff, the work of developing the Port of Basrah, and of dredging and improving water communications generally, was at first delayed. It is now, however, well in hand, and the results already achieved are sufficient to show that the projected measures will have far-reaching effect on the business of the Port and our all-important river communications. Sir G. Buchanan especially desires to mention the assistance he has received from Lieutenant J. G. Grant, R.E.

22. My thanks are due to Captain the Honourable Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan for many valuable services rendered in connection with the Army of Occupation; also to 2nd Lieutenant E. Ezra, I.A.R.O., attached General Headquarters, who held his fast motor-launch at all times at my disposal.

23. The able services of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir P. Z. Cox and the officers of the Political Department, to which I referred in my previous Despatch, have continued to be of high value to the State during the period under review.

24. The administration of the Lines of Communication has throughout been extremely

arduous and difficult; to Major-General G. F. MacMunn, Inspector-General of Communications, and his Staff I am greatly indebted for the manner in which they have handled the many intricate problems of supply and demand with which they have been constantly confronted. The administration of the Base Depôts, under Lieutenant-Colonel d'A. C. Brownlow, Base Commandant, has been carried out in a highly satisfactory manner.

25. In conclusion, I desire to bring again to your notice the able and devoted assistance that I have at all times received from the General and Administrative Staffs at General Headquarters and from my personal Staff, to all of whom I am deeply indebted. In this connection I would especially mention Major-General M. Cowper and Major-General A. W. Money, heads respectively of the Administrative and General Staffs; Brigadier-General O. B. S. F. Shore, Sub-Chief (now officiating as Chief) of the General Staff; Lieutenant-Colonels W. H. Beach and H. R. Hopwood, of the General Staff; and Captain L. G. Williams, Assistant Military Secretary. The work of all these officers has been of high value to the State.

The clerical establishment have one and all shown untiring zeal and energy in the performance of their arduous and responsible duties.

26. I have in my previous Despatch submitted a list of officers and men whose services were deserving of reward. That Despatch covered a period of active operations, and the bulk of the names were those of officers and men who had distinguished themselves actively at the front.

I now submit a list composed chiefly of those officers and others who deserve commendation and reward for services, less interesting, but equally essential to the well-being of this force, rendered in connection with its administration.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,

Your obedient servant,  
PERCY LAKE,  
Lieutenant-General,  
Commanding Indian Expeditionary  
Force "D."

*List of Officers brought to notice.*

Bingham, Commander A. G., R.I.M.  
Birch, Rev. O. W., Chaplain, Ecclesiastical  
Establishment, Bengal.

Blaker, Major W. F., R.F.A.  
Bridge, Rev. H. N., Chaplain, Ecclesiastical  
Establishment, Madras.  
Campbell, Lt. C. R., R.I.M.  
Campbell, Lt.-Col. W. N., Indian Army (ret.).  
De Courcy, Capt. Hon. M. W. R., 32nd Sikh-  
Pioneers.  
Dent, Capt. W., D.S.O., 103rd Mahratta Light-  
Infy.  
Dick, Major R. N., Royal Sussex Regt.  
Dobbs, Mr. H. R. C., C.I.E., I.C.S., Political  
Dept.  
Douglas, Lt.-Col. (temp. Col.) A. P., Dep.  
Dir. of Ordnance Services.  
Edwardes, Major A. C., 102nd Grenadiers.  
Ewbank, Col. W., Royal Engineers.  
Fell, Bt. Col. M. H. G., R.A.M.C.  
Fulton, Lt.-Col. (temp. Col.) F. C. R., Dep.  
Dir. S. & T. Corps.  
Gaunt, Bt. Lt.-Col. (temp. Lieut.-Col.) C. R.,  
Reserve of Officers.  
Gregson, Mr. E. G., C.I.E., Indian Police.  
Hoskyn, Major J. C. M., 44th Merwara Infan-  
try.  
Ingram, Major C. R., R.W. Kent Regt.  
James, Lt.-Col. S. P., M.D., I.M.S.  
Jones, Commander B. H., R.I.M.  
Knox, Lt.-Col. S. G., C.I.E., Political Dept.  
Lewis, Lt. (temp. Capt.) R. F., 21st Cavalry.  
Lindsay, Lt.-Col. H. A. P., C.M.G., S. & T.  
Corps.  
Noel, Capt. E. W. C., Political Dept.  
Pirrie, Lt.-Col. F. W., Survey of India.  
Robertson, Chief Engineer H., R.I.M.  
Rowland Hill, Mr. D., Postal Dept.  
Swiney, Col. (temp. Brig.-Gen.) A. J. H.  
late Royal Engineers.  
Thompson, Mr. A. B., Postal Dept.  
Thyne, Commander W. K., R.I.M.  
Ward, Lt. J. C., R.I.M.  
Wilson, Capt. A. T., C.M.G., D.S.O., Political  
Dept.  
Wilson, Capt. R. C., 114th Mahrattas.  
Winter, Lt.-Col. C. B., 112th Infantry.  
Wood, Lt.-Col. C. B., ret. pay.

P. Lake,  
Lieut.-General,  
Commanding Indian Expeditionary  
Force "D."