



SECOND SUPPLEMENT

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SATURDAY, 13 APRIL, 1918.

War Office,  
13th April, 1918.

The Government of India has forwarded for publication the following Despatches on the operations against the Mahsuds, March-August, 1917:—

To the Right Honourable Edwin Montagu,  
His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.  
Delhi, 11th January, 1918.

SIR,

We have the honour to forward a copy of a letter from the Chief of the General Staff, submitting a despatch by Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., Commanding Northern Army, on the operations against the Mahsuds, March-August, 1917.

We concur in the remarks of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief as regards the admirable services rendered by General Sir A. A. Barrett and Major-General Sir W. G. L. Beynon, and the assistance afforded by the Nepalese

Contingent and General Sir Baber Shamshere Jang.

The list of names of those deserving of reward and mention will be forwarded to you in due course.

We have the honour to be,  
SIR,

Your most obedient, humble Servants,

Chelmsford.  
C. C. Menro.  
W. S. Meyer.  
C. H. A. Hill.  
C. S. Nair.  
G. R. Lowndes.  
G. S. Barnes.  
J. H. DuBoulay.

From the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi,  
To the Secretary to the Government of India,  
Army Department. 20th December, 1917.

I am directed by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief to forward for the information of the Government of India, a despatch by Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett,

K.C.B., K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., Commanding Northern Army, on the operations against the Mahsuds, March-August, 1917.

His Excellency desires to bring to notice the admirable service rendered by:—

(a) General Sir A. A. Barrett, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., who had the direction of the operations.

(b) Major-General Sir W. G. L. Beynon, K.C.I.E., C.B., D.S.O., who commanded the South Waziristan Field Force.

His Excellency also wishes to acknowledge the great assistance afforded to the Government of India by the three regiments of the Nepalese Contingent who took part in these operations.

General Sir Baber Shamshere Jang, Bahadur Rana, K.C.I.E., in his capacity as representative of the Nepalese Army and Liaison Officer, afforded Sir William Beynon all possible help, advice and support.

The list of names of those deserving of reward and mention will be submitted to you in due course for transmission to the Secretary of State.

Murree, 20th September, 1917.

From Lieutenant-General Sir A. A. Barrett, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., Commanding, Northern Army.

To the Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, Simla.

I have the honour to furnish, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, the following report on the operations undertaken against the Mahsuds during the period March to August, 1917.

2. On 26th February, news was received at Wana that a large Mahsud *lashkar* was moving against Sarwakai, one of the posts garrisoned by the South Waziristan Militia. The Commandant of the Corps at once strengthened the garrison, which, by operating outside the post, on 2nd March successfully kept the Mahsuds at bay. On the following day, however, after inflicting considerable losses on the enemy, it had to withdraw into the post, having suffered many casualties, including the loss of its British officer, killed.

On learning of this attack, Brigadier-General G. M. Baldwin, D.S.O., Commanding the Derajat Brigade, ordered the concentration of the Derajat Movable Column at Mur-taza.

3. On 4th March, I received orders from the Chief of the General Staff to assume control of the operations necessary to deal with the Mahsud outbreak, and directed the General Officer Commanding, Derajat Brigade, to proceed at once with the Movable Column to the relief of Sarwakai. I also ordered the despatch to Tank of the 44th Infantry Brigade, which had already been warned to stand ready to support the Movable Column, and of the 23rd Indian Mountain Battery.

4. In accordance with these orders the Derajat Movable Column advanced up the Gomal and relieved Sarwakai on 9th March. Some 3,000 to 4,000 Mahsuds had remained in the vicinity of the post with the apparent intention of opposing the column, but on its approach the *lashkar* withdrew. On 10th March, General Baldwin, whose column had been augmented by a detachment of 250 South Waziristan Militia, under Major G. E. Davis, the

Commandant of the Corps, advanced to Bar-wand, a village in the Shahur Valley, where punitive measures were carried out in face of some opposition. The column retired to Sarwakai the same day and on the 11th proceeded to Khajuri Kach, where it remained for the rest of the month. With the exception of an attack on a piquet on the Gwaleri Pass, no further hostile acts were committed by the Mahsuds during March.

Meanwhile, the 44th Infantry Brigade with the 23rd Indian Mountain Battery had been concentrated at Tank by 11th March, and on 12th it marched to Jatta, at which place it was well situated to support the Movable Column up the Gomal Valley or the garrison of Jandola.

5. Representatives of certain sections of the tribe were interviewed towards the end of March by Mr. J. A. O. Fitzpatrick, C.I.E., the Political Agent, Wana, and, as it appeared that there was little likelihood of further trouble, orders were issued for the return of the Derajat Movable Column to Tank, which place was reached on 3rd April, and for the dispersal to their stations of the units of the 44th Infantry Brigade.

The hope that the Mahsuds would remain quiet was, however, quickly dispelled, as on 9th April the piquetting troops of a convoy proceeding over the Gwaleri Pass towards Nili Kach were attacked. Consequently the Derajat Movable Column was directed to proceed again up the Gomal, and one section of the 23rd Indian Mountain Battery and the 1/4th Gurkha Rifles of the 44th Infantry Brigade were ordered to return to Tank. The Movable Column arrived at Khajuri Kach on 17th April, and on 21st, whilst proceeding from Tanai to Wana, it was opposed by a considerable body of tribesmen in the defile near Karabkot. The passage of the defile was successfully forced, the casualties suffered by the column not being heavy, and on 24th April the column returned from Wana to Tanai, where it was suitably placed to operate in the direction of either Sarwakai or Wana.

6. On 1st May, another attack was made by a strong party of the enemy on a convoy proceeding from Nili Kach to Khajuri Kach. The convoy escort was taken at a disadvantage and the losses suffered by it were severe. On hearing of this attack, Brigadier-General Baldwin at once despatched 500 rifles from Tanai to Sarwakai with a view to intercepting the Mahsuds returning to their country, and, on the following day, a party of Militia from Sarwakai, supported by some of the above detachment, succeeded in coming up with the raiders and inflicting casualties upon them. On 2nd May, Brigadier-General Baldwin's column moved to Khajuri Kach and arrived the following day at Nili Kach.

It will be observed that the Mahsuds, in all their attacks on convoys proceeding along the Gomal route, selected for the purpose the stage between Nili Kach and Khajuri Kach. The country in this stage, in which the Gwaleri Pass has to be crossed, is extremely difficult and peculiarly favourable to the tribesmen's tactics. No movement of troops can be hidden from the Mahsuds on the hill tops; the track in many places follows deep nalas with precipitous sides; and the very broken and intricate nature of the country affords every advantage

to the enemy for concealment, and for subsequent withdrawal.

7. The attack made by the enemy on 1st May, combined with the increased raiding by large gangs into the Derajat district, showed that the Mahsuds were becoming emboldened, and it became necessary to increase the strength of the garrison of the Derajat. Three additional infantry battalions which, with the 1/4th Gurkha Rifles, formed the 43rd Infantry Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General W. M. Southey, C.M.G., and two sections of mountain artillery were therefore ordered to Tank, the 107th Pioneers and No. 7 Field Company, Sappers and Miners, having been previously sent into the area to improve communications. On 6th May, the force in the Derajat was constituted the Derajat Field Force, and Major-General W. G. L. Beynon, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., was appointed to command with Sir John Donald, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., as his Chief Political Officer. On the 12th May, the Bannu Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General the Honourable C. G. Bruce, M.V.O., was placed under General Beynon's orders, and the troops in the Derajat and Bannu Brigades were designated the Waziristan Field Force.

8. Whilst these reinforcements were moving into the Derajat, an action was fought on 10th May in the vicinity of Sarwakai. The Officer Commanding the post, Major L. P. Collins, D.S.O., 1/4th Gurkha Rifles, hearing that a body of the enemy was retiring from the vicinity of Tormandu, moved out during the night of 9th-10th with a force of 450 rifles, comprising 1/4th Gurkha Rifles, 11th Rajputs, and South Waziristan Militia, with the object of intercepting the enemy's retreat. At dawn, the Mahsuds were successfully surprised, but large enemy reinforcements arriving very fierce hand-to-hand fighting took place. As there was danger of being surrounded, the Officer Commanding the detachment rightly decided to withdraw to Sarwakai. Although our losses in this engagement were severe, those inflicted on the enemy were also heavy, and included the leader of the *lashkar*. Great praise is, I consider, due to the troops, who were largely composed of young soldiers, for the steadiness and gallantry with which they fought.

9. Hitherto only certain sections of the Mahsuds had been hostile, and it had been hoped that the operations could be confined to those necessary for the security of the Gomal and the protection of the Derajat border. It was most desirable to avoid, if possible, undertaking offensive operations during the hot weather when the climatic conditions in the Derajat are of the worst description. Also, as soon as the rains commence, the railway and road communications are very liable to interruption. The confidence of the hostile sections of the Mahsuds in their immunity from punishment had, however, resulted in bringing in other sections of the tribe against us, and, on the 19th May, Government sanctioned the taking of punitive measures, with the Khaisara Valley as the objective.

10. To carry out these offensive operations the force in the Derajat was reinforced by the 45th Infantry Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General C. C. Luard, two battalions of the 44th Infantry Brigade, one section

No. 1 British Mountain Battery, and No. 11 Field Company, Sappers and Miners.

In order to protect the Bannu district four additional battalions, two of which belonged to the 44th Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General G. D. Crocker, were added to the garrison.

11. Meanwhile, on 16th May, a Mahsud *lashkar*, believed to have been of a strength of some 2,000 men, attacked, on the Gwaleri Pass, the second echelon of a convoy proceeding up the Gomal to ration Sarwakai and Wana. The convoy was unable to get through, and returned to Nili Kach. Major-General Beynon therefore directed Brigadier-General Southey to march from Murtaza to Nili Kach with two battalions. This General Southey was unable to do until 20th owing to the Gomal River being in flood. The convoy then proceeded to Wana without further incident.

12. The accumulation of supplies preparatory to carrying out of punitive measures in the Khaisara Valley from Wana had now to be undertaken. The Gomal River, however, again came down in flood, and the disadvantage of utilising, as a line of communication, a route traversing the long and dangerous defile of the Gomal and liable to be interrupted for long periods by floods in the river, made it desirable to consider the possibility of utilising an alternative line into the Khaisara. Major-General Beynon therefore submitted proposals, which had my full approval, for operations *vis à vis* Jandola and the Shahur Valley. On 26th May, these proposals were sanctioned by Government. In order to facilitate the passage of Major-General Beynon's main force through the Shahur *tangi* between Jandola and Haidari Kach, at which defile it was probable that the Mahsuds would endeavour seriously to oppose the advance of the force, it was decided that a detachment of two battalions and a section of mountain guns should be located at Sarwakai, from which place it could operate against the rear of any enemy holding the defile.

Steps were taken at once for the formation of an advanced base and for the accumulation of supplies at Jandola; also for the completion of the garrison of Sarwakai up to the strength decided upon.

13. Up to the end of May no hostile acts had been committed by the Mahsuds in the Tochi. On 31st, however, Tut Narai, a small post, garrisoned by the North Waziristan Militia, was captured by a ruse, the *lashkar* taking part being estimated to be some 600 strong. Owing to the fire brought to bear on the attackers by men holding the two outlying towers and to the rapidity with which the local village pursuit parties were turned out by Major F. H. Humphrys, the Political Agent, Tochi, the enemy were unable to damage the post. Brigadier-General Bruce, who was at Miramshah with the Movable Column, ordered Tut Narai to be at once regarrisoned, and a small column, under the command of Major G. B. Scott, D.S.O., Commandant, North Waziristan Militia, was despatched the same evening and effected its object without incident.

14. By the 9th June, Major-General Beynon's striking force and the line of communication troops destined for Jandola and the posts beyond were concentrated at Jandola. During this concentration the only aggressive action taken by the enemy was a determined attack on 7th June by a party of 300 men

against a piquetting detachment, consisting of two British officers and 89 men of 2-1st Gurkha Rifles, near the Zam Post. The enemy was driven off with heavy loss; our losses, as a result of the close fighting in scrub jungle, also being severe.

15. As Major-General Beynon was now about to proceed in command of this striking force up the Shahur Valley, it became apparent that he would not be in a position effectively to control any operations which might become necessary on the Tochi side. Consequently, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief decided that the troops in the Bannu and Derajat areas should again become separate forces, being designated the North and South Waziristan Field Forces, respectively, under the general control of the General Officer Commanding, Northern Army. Orders giving effect to this decision were issued on 14th June.

16. On 13th June sufficient supplies had been collected at Jandola to admit of Major-General Beynon advancing up the Shahur Valley. Prior to this he had, on 12th, moved out to attack a considerable body of the enemy near the junction of the Shahur and Takhi Zam; the enemy did not, however, make a stand. On 13th, a reconnaissance was carried out to the eastern end of the Shahur *tangi* and a double camel track was cleared up the river bed. The following day the 45th Brigade proceeded to the Chagmalai at the eastern entrance of the defile, and on the 15th seized the heights commanding it, under cover of which the 43rd Brigade advanced to Haidari Kach, whilst the force at Sarwakai demonstrated in the direction of Turan China. The passage of the Shahur *tangi* was unopposed, and the Sarwakai Column was successful in killing and capturing a few of the enemy in Kamardun Village.

17. On 16th June, the 45th Brigade joined the main body of the force at Haidari Kach. The three following days were occupied in carrying out punitive measures in the vicinity, in improving the road through the defile, and in reconnoitring the route to Barwand. Reports were now received that the Mahsuds intended strongly to oppose the further advance of Major-General Beynon's force, and on 19th June, when the force moved to Barwand, considerable opposition was met with. During the whole of the ensuing night several hundred of the enemy made determined efforts to capture a piquet of the 54th Sikhs (F.F.) under the command of an Indian officer. This piquet, although sustaining heavy losses, was successful in maintaining its position. Major-General Beynon describes the defence as a most gallant one, which not only worthily upheld the fine traditions of the battalion and of the Punjab Frontier Force, but, as was admitted by the Mahsuds at the final *jirga*, contributed in no small measure to inspiring the tribe with respect for His Majesty's troops and a general desire for peace.

On 20th, for reasons of water supply, the force moved forward a short distance to Ispana Raghza. The enemy made a determined attempt to check the advance, but the 43rd Brigade overcame the opposition, the work of the 1-25th London Regiment and the 1-4th Gurkha Rifles being specially noticeable.

On 21st, Major-General Beynon ordered the 45th Brigade to destroy the village of Nanu, at the head of the Splitoi Valley, whilst the 43rd Brigade dealt with the settlements in the

vicinity of Ispana Raghza. The enemy had evidently determined to make a stand on this occasion, and aeroplanes reported considerable bodies of the enemy on the ridge dividing the Splitoi and Shahur Valleys, through which ran the pass to Nanu. The 45th Brigade attacked the pass with great spirit and dash, the 2/6th Sussex Regiment moving against the pass itself, whilst the 2-1st (King George's Own) Gurkha Rifles and the Mahindrada! Regiment, Nepalese Contingent, seized the heights to the south and north of the pass, respectively. The enemy was driven off, Nanu village destroyed, and the retirement of the troops to camp effected with only slight molestation. Major-General Beynon brings to notice the most creditable manner in which the Mahindrada! Regiment carried the heights forming its objective and also the valuable work performed by the aeroplanes of the 31st Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, both in reconnaissance and in bombing the enemy. The defeat of the enemy on this occasion appears to have brought home to the enemy the futility of attempts to oppose the British *Raj*, and messages asking for terms of peace began from now to be sent in.

On 22nd June the 43rd Brigade destroyed the large village of Shah Salim Mela, in the Waspas Valley. The enemy had made careful preparations for opposing the advance; but, owing to the good dispositions made by Lieutenant-Colonel C. O. O. Tanner, commanding the Brigade, the whole of the enemy's defence was turned and our casualties were slight.

18. Sufficient supplies having now been collected to enable the advance to be resumed, the striking force moved on 23rd to Narai Raghza. A very difficult defile had to be negotiated in the face of opposition, which was cleared away by the 45th Brigade. During the following night the camp was heavily sniped and several piquets were attacked, one of the 1-4th Gurkha Rifles coming in for a particular share of the enemy's attention. The possession of bombs assisted considerably in the defence of these piquets.

On 24th, Major-General Beynon directed the 43rd Brigade to capture the Shrawani Pass, to cover the passage through it of the 45th Brigade which was to carry out punitive measures in the Khaisara. The heights leading to and commanding this Pass were seized by the 1st Rifles, Nepalese Contingent, 54th Sikhs (F.F.) and the 1-4th Gurkha Rifles. The enemy was forestalled and the 45th Brigade was rapidly pushed through into the Khaisara Valley. Under cover of the right flank guard, which was continuously engaged with the enemy, the destruction of all the villages within reach was proceeded with; the villages in the Nana Khel-Ghazi Kot area and the Machi Khel settlements being thoroughly dealt with, practically all the towers of these villages being blown up. The retirement was then ordered. This movement was hotly followed up and a piquet of the 55th Coke's Rifles (F.F.) was charged, but the enemy was driven back with loss. Major-General Beynon brings to notice the skilful manner in which the retirement of the 45th Brigade was carried out by Brigadier-General Luard. Major-General Beynon's intentions were to visit the Khaisara again on the following day, but messengers had arrived from Kaniguram asking for terms of peace, and the Chief Political Officer considered that the damage already effected was

sufficient. Accordingly, on 25th, after destroying a village in the vicinity of the camp, the force returned with slight molestation to Ispana Raghza.

19. Whilst these operations were taking place several raids were carried out by aeroplanes of the 31st Squadron, Royal Flying Corps. Shingai villages in the Takhi Zam and others in the Badda Toi were bombed and in a particularly successful raid on 26th June nine hits were scored on Makin and six on Marobi, the home of Mulla Fazl Din, the titular chief of the tribe. These raids involved considerable risks. Engines were very liable to failure in the high temperature prevailing; distances from the base at Tank were long and hills up to 8,000 feet had to be crossed. These risks were, however, cheerfully taken by the flying officers and were well repaid by the results obtained, which undoubtedly contributed largely to the general desire for peace displayed by all sections of the tribe.

20. A letter had now been received from a *jirga* at Kaniguram asking for Government terms of peace. These were communicated verbally, and the messengers were informed that military operations would be suspended until 2nd July, on which date representative *maliks* were ordered to come in.

On this date the *maliks* from Kaniguram arrived at Boji Khel, to which place General Beynon had transferred his force on 28th and 29th June, owing to the water supply at Ispana Raghza being unsatisfactory. The *maliks* accepted the terms imposed, and hostages were given for their due fulfilment.

On 9th July, the first instalment of the rifles demanded from the tribe was handed in, and fresh hostages were given pending final settlement. The attitude of the tribe being now very satisfactory, Major-General Beynon's force moved back, on the 11th and 12th July, to Manzal, at the junction of the Shahur and Danawat Valleys, the post at Haidari Kach being at the same time transferred to Chagmalai.

Owing to the difficulty experienced by the *maliks* in collecting the rifles which had to be surrendered, the final *jirga* could not be held as early as had been hoped, but on the 10th August a full representative *jirga* of 3,000 Mahsuds ratified the settlement; peace was declared, and British territory opened to them for trade. By 12th August all troops had been withdrawn to Jandola, and the dispersal of the forces in the Derajat and Bannu areas commenced.

21. Whilst these operations had been taking place, the troops under Brigadier-General Bruce in the Bannu area were not called upon to undertake any offensive measures. The presence of strong forces at Bannu and Miramshah deterred the Mahsuds from raiding into the Bannu district and Tochi Valley, and kept them in a state of uncertainty as to whether an advance from Miramshah might not be contemplated. On one occasion only was it necessary for Brigadier-General Bruce to act against a body of the enemy. This was on the 14th June, when a body of Mahsuds approached the Saidgi defile in the Tochi Valley with the object of attacking the 1-1st Kent Regiment marching to Miramshah. The prompt concentration of troops both from Miramshah and Bannu, to effect which mechanical transport

was largely employed, successfully prevented the enemy from carrying out his design.

22. The physical and climatic conditions of this portion of the North-West Frontier are peculiarly trying, and the period during which the recent offensive operations had to be undertaken was the hottest time of the year. Nothing, however, could have exceeded the cheerfulness and determination with which all difficulties and hardships were faced and overcome by the troops; not only by those actively engaged against the enemy, but by those on the lines of communication who, at first in the Gomal and later in the Shahur Valley, were continuously employed on piquetting duties in difficult and dangerous country.

23. At the time when it was decided to take the offensive the most unfavourable season of the year was just commencing. It was necessary that operations should be undertaken with the least possible delay and with a force of adequate size to ensure rapid success. This entailed the immediate expansion of the force already available, which threw a great strain on the communications leading into the area. The Kalabagh-Bannu-Tank narrow gauge line was inadequately equipped for the movement of large bodies of troops and was liable to interruption in the event of heavy rain. The unbridged passages of the Indus at Kalabagh and Darya Khan added greatly to the difficulties to be overcome. Consequently the work of those responsible for the communications was very arduous, and the manner in which these duties were carried out is worthy of great praise. The administrative services and departments had also to work under high pressure and adverse conditions, and their untiring efforts contributed greatly to the success of the operations. The Supply and Transport and Ordnance Services successfully met all the demands made upon them. The Medical Services, under the direction of Colonel P. Hehir, C.B., C.M.G., I.M.S., by the timely use of precautionary measures, were able to prevent the outbreak of epidemics, and the arrangements made for the reception and evacuation of the large numbers of sick, which it was anticipated would have to be dealt with as a result of the great heat and unhealthy theatre in which the operations took place, were fully adequate to deal with the casualties which occurred. The provision and equipment of base hospitals and convalescent depots at Rawalpindi and in the Murree Hills was quickly carried out under the orders of the General Officer Commanding, 2nd (Rawalpindi) Division, and amply sufficed to meet all requirements.

The Royal Engineers had to carry through much work, especially in connection with hospital accommodation, which was expeditiously and satisfactorily executed.

Whilst Major-General Beynon's striking force was in the Shahur Valley, sections of No. 3 Wireless Signal Squadron had to be relied on almost entirely for maintaining communications with it, and great credit is due to these sections for the way in which they coped with the heavy traffic.

24. I wish to express my thanks to the North-Western Railway authorities for the manner in which the transport of troops and supplies was carried out, especially over the narrow gauge railway in the Trans-Indus area. The congestion on this line was very

great, and it was only owing to the unceasing exertions of the personnel of this line that the heavy traffic was successfully dealt with, in spite of inadequate rolling stock and frequent interruptions due to damage to the permanent way caused by floods.

The operations threw a heavy amount of work on the Posts and Telegraph Department, for the successful coping with which I desire to express my gratitude and thanks. I also wish to thank the Red Cross Society and those who contributed to sending comforts to the

troops, for their gifts, which were most acceptable to the recipients.

25. I am greatly indebted to the advice and assistance I have received from the Honourable Lieutenant-Colonel Sir George Roos-Keppel, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Chief Commissioner, North-West Frontier Province, and to the manner in which the Political Officers attached to the North and South Waziristan Field Forces carried out their duties. Also for the assistance rendered by the North and South Waziristan Militias and Frontier Constabulary.

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