

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 Barwand, 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