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DESPATCH ON OPERATIONS IN IRAQ, EAST SYRIA AND IRAN, FROM 10TH APRIL, 1941 TO 12TH JANUARY, 1942.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War, on 18th October, 1942, by GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD P. WAVELL, G.C.B., C.M.G., M.C., Commander-in-Chief, India.

DESPATCH OF TROOPS TO IRAQ.

1. Events in Iraq, in early April, 1941, led to a decision by His Majesty's Government to despatch a force to Iraq as rapidly as possible, and on 8th April a telegram from the Secretary of State for India was received enquiring if the Government of India could make available a suitable force to occupy Basra as early as possible.

2. Detailed plans for the despatch of a force to Iraq had been under preparation at Army Headquarters, India, for some time but on account of commitments elsewhere it had not been found possible to provide the necessary troops before July, 1941.

In order to meet the request of His Majesty's Government, and in view of the urgency of the situation, it was therefore decided to divert to Iraq a convoy which was at that time in the process of embarking at Karachi prior to sailing for Malaya. It was hoped at the same time that the diversion of this convoy would conceal the fact that troops were being despatched to Iraq.

This proposal was communicated to His Majesty's Government on 9th April and accepted by them on 10th April. The force in this convoy, which was under the command of Major-General W. A. K. Fraser, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.V.O., M.C., Commander 10th Indian Division, consisted of two senior Staff Officers, Headquarters 10th Indian Division Artillery, 3rd Field Regiment, 20th Indian Infantry Brigade and certain ancillary troops.

3. Instructions were given to Major-General Fraser to the following effect:—

(i) The object of his force was to occupy the Basra-Shaiba area in order to ensure the safe disembarkation of further reinforcements and to enable a base to be established in that area.

(ii) The attitude of the Iraq Army and local authorities was still uncertain and it was possible that attempts might be made to oppose the disembarkation of his force. In framing his plan for disembarkation, he was, therefore, to act in the closest concert with the officer commanding the Naval Forces.

(iii) Should the disembarkation be opposed, he was to overcome the Iraqi forces by force and occupy suitable defensive positions ashore as quickly as possible.

(iv) The greatest care was to be taken not to infringe the neutrality of Iran.

4. The force sailed from Karachi on 12th April and a period of considerable anxiety ensued as to whether the landing would be opposed or not. As the force had originally been prepared for despatch to Malaya it had not been specially embarked with a view to immediate tactical employment on arrival at destination, and consequently a risk was accepted in diverting it to Iraq where an opposed landing was by no means impossible. In view of the necessity for speed there was no time to readjust the loading of units, which would have caused a delay of some days.

5. In addition to the troops proceeding by sea, 400 personnel of the 1st Bn. King's Own Royal Regiment were flown from Karachi to Shaiba. The arrival of the first air party was timed to synchronise with the arrival of the

convoy. Troop-carrying aircraft used were 7 R.A.F. Valentias and 4 Atalantas supplemented by 4 D.C. 2's which had recently arrived in India.

6. The seaborne force arrived at Basra without incident on 18th April and by the evening of 19th April the disembarkation was completed. All evidence indicates that the rapidity with which British forces arrived in Iraq came as a surprise to Rashid Ali and his supporters and probably accounts for the fact that no organised resistance was encountered on arrival. The initial advantage thus gained undoubtedly had an important bearing on the subsequent operations.

7. The naval vessels covering the operation consisted of H.M.S. Emerald, H.M.S. Falmouth, H.M.S. Cockchafer, H.M.S. Seabelle, H.M.I.S. Lawrence and H.M.A.S. Yarra. The convoy, composed of 8 transports escorted by H.M.A.S. Yarra, was met at sea by H.M.S. Seabelle from Basra on the morning of 15th April. Later in the day the escort was reinforced by H.M.S. Falmouth who became S.O. (Escort). On 17th April the convoy was joined by H.M.I.S. Lawrence and proceeded towards the entrance of the Shat-el-Arab. The following day the convoy moved up the Shat-el-Arab and arrived at Basra at 0930 hrs. H.M.S. Emerald was already in Basra.

The movement in the Shat-el-Arab was made in two Sections, each Section being preceded by two warships:—

Section I—Cockchafer and Falmouth.

Section II—Yarra and Seabelle.

Lawrence remained to mask the Control Battery at Fao, while Emerald was at Basra throughout the operation.

8. On 21st April the Iraq Government formally agreed to the arrival of the British troops in Iraq under certain conditions: the principal stipulations being that no further troops should land before those who had already arrived had crossed the frontier out of Iraq, and that at no time should British troops in Iraq exceed one mixed Brigade. However, although the Iraq Government was adamant on this question and the situation remained very tense, further British ancillary troops disembarked at Basra without incident on 29th April.

9. On 7th May, Lieut.-General E. P. Quinan, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., arrived in Basra by air from India and took over command of all British land forces in Iraq from Major-General Fraser, who resumed command of the 10th Indian Infantry Division. On the same date a small Force Headquarters also disembarked, together with the Headquarters of the 10th Indian Infantry Division and the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade.

10. The directive which was issued to Lieut.-General Quinan on 2nd May instructed him to command all British Empire land forces in Iraq and stated that it was the intention of His Majesty's Government to:—

(a) develop and organise the port of Basra to any extent necessary to enable such forces, our own or Allied, as might be required to operate in the Middle East including Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Iran, to be maintained.

(b) secure control of all means of communication, including all aerodromes and landing grounds in Iraq, and develop these

to the extent requisite to enable the Port of Basra to function to its fullest capacity.

Lt. General Quinan was further instructed to begin at once to plan a system of defences to protect the Basra Base against attack by armoured forces supported by strong air forces, and also to be ready to take special measures to protect:—

(i) Royal Air Force installations and personnel at Habbaniya and Shaiba.

(ii) The lives of British subjects in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq.

(iii) The Kirkuk oilfields and the pipe line to Haifa.

He was also to make plans to protect the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's installations and its British employees in South West Iran if necessary.

He was informed that it was the intention to increase his force up to three infantry divisions and possibly also an armoured division, as soon as these troops could be despatched from India.

Operations—May, 1941.

11. The first hostile move by the Iraq forces occurred on 30th April, when two infantry brigades of the Iraqi Army, supported by Artillery and some armoured cars, began concentrating around Habbaniya and training their guns on the Camp, thereby constituting a direct threat to the British Cantonment there. A demand for the withdrawal of these troops was refused by the Iraqi Commander, who stated that no normal training was to be carried out from Habbaniya, and that fire would be opened on aircraft or troops leaving the Camp. Hostilities broke out on 2nd May and the Royal Air Force station was shelled intermittently until 5th May. The Camp was also bombed and machine-gunned by the Iraqi Air Force. The Royal Air Force bombed the Iraqi positions scoring many direct hits on their guns, armoured cars and machine gun posts. During this period also the Royal Air Force, despite the fact that the aerodrome was often under heavy fire, successfully evacuated by air to Basra a large number of women and children, who had been sent from Baghdad to Habbaniya when the situation at the former place became threatening. (The remainder of the British population of Baghdad were accommodated either in the British Embassy or the American Legation throughout the period of Operations.)

12. The situation at Habbaniya daily became more critical as, due to the persistent bombing of the landing grounds, we lost a number of aircraft and, although 1st Bn. King's Own Royal Regiment were brought up from Shaiba by air as reinforcements, the garrison was considerably outnumbered. In the meantime, Iraqi troops had occupied Rutbah, and by 3rd May all the refineries and oil installations were in their hands. There were at the time insufficient forces at our disposal to drive them out. On 6th May Colonel O. L. Roberts assumed command of Habbaniya.

13. A situation had now developed in Iraq which was not that which was visualised when operational control had been delegated to the Commander-in-Chief, India. The despatch of additional troops from India to restore the situation could not be effected in sufficient time, and His Majesty's Government therefore decided that operational control should pass

temporarily to Middle East Command from whence only immediate assistance could be provided. The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, consequently assumed operational control of Northern Iraq from 5th May and Southern Iraq from 9th May, and was instructed by His Majesty's Government to despatch such immediate assistance as was possible. In view of this, arrangements were put in hand to assemble in Palestine a small mechanized force of all arms, which at that time was all that could be spared. This force consisted of an incomplete mechanised cavalry brigade, a field regiment less one troop, three squadrons Trans-Jordan Frontier Force and 1st Bn. The Essex Regiment; it arrived at Habbaniya on 18th May.

14. On 6th May, however, our forces at Habbaniya succeeded in clearing the plateau which overlooked the cantonment at short range and in doing so captured 26 Iraqi officers and 408 other ranks, together with a considerable amount of equipment. Our own losses were slight, but our aircraft inflicted very heavy casualties on the remainder of the Iraqi force as it withdrew in disorder towards Fallujah. It was evident that the morale of the Iraqi troops had been seriously affected by the attacks which had been made on them from the air. In this operation 1st Bn. King's Own Royal Regiment played a prominent part, and the Iraqi levies, who were normally stationed at Habbaniya and consisted mostly of Assyrians, gave our troops whole-hearted support.

15. In the Basra area no major operations took place. The principal difficulty was that, to start with, there were insufficient troops to take over Maqil, Ashar and Basra City concurrently. The airport, dock area and power station at Maqil were occupied, but although the Iraqi troops in Basra agreed to withdraw on 2nd May, they failed to do so. When, even after the time limit had been extended, they failed to comply, action by bombing and artillery fire was taken against them whereupon they immediately withdrew northwards, along the West bank of the River Tigris above Qurmat Ali and towards Qurna. The only other action of any importance in the Basra area occurred on 7th May, when our troops occupied Ashar, the business quarter of Basra, after encountering slight opposition from some Iraqi police and armed civilians.

16. In the meantime, following the engagement with the enemy at Habbaniya on 6th May, there was little land fighting until 19th May, when our troops, in company with the mechanised force from Palestine, occupied Fallujah after nearly a whole day's fighting. During this operation an air-borne detachment was landed in rear of the enemy position. Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force operating from Habbaniya, had been busily engaged attacking Iraqi aerodromes and other military objectives, with such success that by 8th May the Iraqi Air Forces had been practically eliminated. On 12th May, German aircraft were first reported in Iraq, and after that date encounters took place almost daily between our aircraft and German M.E.110's, casualties being sustained by both sides. On 29th May, Italian aircraft were also in action near Baghdad.

17. In the meanwhile, Rashid Ali and many of his principal supporters had fled the country and the Iraqis asked for an armistice. This was signed at Baghdad at 1500 hrs. on 31st May. It was followed by rioting and looting in Baghdad.

Advance to Baghdad

18. Shortly before this it had become apparent that it was essential to get troops forward from Basra to gain control of the situation at Baghdad and also to open up communications between Basra and Habbaniya. To effect this, 2nd Battalion 4th Ghurkha Rifles were moved from Basra to Habbaniya by air and a column was despatched from Shaiba towards Baghdad by the Euphrates route. This column, which consisted of 20th Indian Infantry Brigade Group, advanced from Shaiba on 27th May along the line of the railway, brushing aside slight opposition encountered near Ur. The advance from Fallujah was slow owing to extensive inundations, and the Brigade was unable to reach Samawa until 10th June and Baghdad on 12th June. The Iraqis had done considerable damage to the railway track, removing hundreds of sleepers and destroying essential installations at the stations. Reconstruction was carried out rapidly, and the line was re-opened to traffic on 9th June.

19. Although the progress of the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade Group was slow, preparations were well in hand for another force to advance by the Tigris. This force, under Brigadier Weld, Commander 21st Indian Infantry Brigade, was to proceed by river to Kut and thence by motor transport to Baghdad. All available barges and steamers were collected; many from up-river, and the barges decked so as to take motor transport, guns and armoured cars. These plans were made in conjunction with the Senior Naval Officer Persian Gulf (Commodore C. M. Graham, R.N.), and the convoy sailed on 12th June under command of a Naval Officer and with naval escort. The military force consisted of 21st Indian Infantry Brigade (less two battalions), two troops of 13th Lancers (armoured cars), one troop 157 Field Regt. and ancillary units. It reached Kut on 17th June and Baghdad on 19th June. This move up the Tigris had a most salutary effect on the tribes along the route, who, according to reports, were likely to be very troublesome and actively hostile.

Occupation of Mosul

20. No time had been lost in despatching troops to Mosul, where pro-Axis influence was much in evidence. A small mobile column, consisting of one Squadron Household Cavalry with two 3.7-in. howitzers and six Royal Air Force armoured cars, was formed and this left for Mosul by road, arriving on 3rd June. Two companies 2nd Battalion 4th Ghurkha Rifles, together with a Royal Air Force detachment, went by air from Habbaniya to Mosul on 3rd June; the remainder of the Battalion reached Mosul by air next day. In addition, 1st Battalion King's Own Royal Regiment from Habbaniya left Baghdad on 2nd June and arrived on 3rd June. The 20th Indian Infantry Brigade arrived in Baghdad via the River Euphrates route from Basra on 12th June and detachments were sent without delay to Kirkuk, Haditha, Rutbah, Fallujah and Mosul in order

to release troops who had come from Palestine and Transjordan.

21. On 18th June Lt.-General Quinan assumed command of all land forces in Iraq which were still under General Headquarters, Middle East.

Advance into Syria

22. It was decided that assistance in the Syrian Campaign should take precedence over all other tasks in Iraq, and that this assistance should consist of:—

(i) Protection of the railway from Iraq to Turkey where it ran through Syrian Territory.

(ii) The advance into Syria from Iraq of two Indian Infantry Brigade Groups.

Arrangements were put in hand for Haditha to be stocked with 15 days supplies and petrol for two infantry brigade groups (lorry-borne), one armoured car regiment, and one squadron Royal Air Force.

Orders were issued for the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade Group at Baghdad, the 25th Indian Infantry Brigade Group and the 13th Lancers at Basra to advance up the Euphrates Valley and the 21st Brigade (Brigadier C. J. Weld) to protect the Line of Communications Haditha-Deir-ez-Zor.

The operation forward of Haditha was to be controlled by the General Officer Commanding Palestine and Transjordan, and to facilitate this the 10th Indian Division was ordered to provide an Advanced Headquarters.

The governing factor was the provision of motor transport for troop-carrying and for maintenance. Only one and a half General Purpose Transport Companies were available and these were employed together with the 2nd Line Transport of all infantry brigades except the 24th Indian Infantry Brigade at Basra.

Three more General Purpose Transport Companies were due to sail from India on 25th June. Neither Headquarters Palestine and Transjordan nor the Royal Air Force in Iraq could assist with motor transport, strenuous effort was therefore made to hire the necessary civilian transport to make up the serious deficiency until the arrival of the three companies from India. It was now necessary to get troops into Deir-ez-Zor as soon as practicable, and orders to this effect were given to Lt.-General Quinan.

23. The situation at the time was that the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade, less two battalions, had arrived in Baghdad via the Tigris route on 19th June. Of the other two battalions of that Brigade one was in Mosul, and the other en route Basra-Baghdad. Orders had been issued on 20th June for the move by road of 25th Indian Infantry Brigade together with the 13th Lancers from Basra to Baghdad, using all available motor transport.

Every effort was therefore made to accelerate the concentration of one brigade group of the 10th Indian Division at Haditha. A battalion of the 20th Brigade was sent forward to Mosul by road and rail to relieve the other battalion of 21st Brigade, which was to proceed to Haditha.

In order to facilitate stocking at Haditha and to achieve surprise it was essential to keep back the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade Group in the Baghdad-Habbaniya area.

24. On 22nd June, one Infantry Battalion, less one company, and one Squadron 13th Lancers moved to Haditha with orders to capture Abu Kemal, known to be occupied by some French troops and rebel Iraqis. The transport situation made a move forward from Abu Kemal before 29th June impossible.

21st Indian Infantry Brigade was concentrated at Abu Kemal by 30th June, including 2nd Battalion 4th Gurkha Rifles from Mosul and the 13th Lancers. The advance from Abu Kemal began on 1st July with 21st Brigade Group leading.

Advanced Headquarters 10th Indian Division arrived at Abu Kemal on the evening of 30th June and operational command of the column passed to the General Officer Commanding Palestine and Transjordan at 2400 hrs. 30th June.

25. Meanwhile a small force had been prepared at Mosul for operations in the Bec du Canard to clear the area Qamichliye—Hassetche—Ras el Ain of Vichy troops and secure the use of the railway as far as the Turkish frontier near Nisibin. The operations were designed to attack the northern flank of the French troops in the Jezireh and to establish a threat towards Aleppo.

Another column, consisting of one infantry battalion and detachments of other arms, moving from Mosul arrived at Souar on the River Khabur, 30 miles North-East of Deir-ez-Zor, as 10th Indian Division approached the latter town.

The 20th Indian Infantry Brigade, less two battalions (2nd Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles in the Kirkuk area and 2nd Battalion 8th Gurkha Rifles with detachments at Baghdad, Rutbah and on the pipe line) was already in Mosul with the 1st Battalion King's Own Royal Regiment under command. As it was essential for security reasons to leave at least one battalion in the Mosul area and to protect the pipe line and oil installations, the 17th Indian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier D. D. Gracey)—less one battalion—was moved to Mosul from Basra, leaving the equivalent of one infantry brigade in the Basra area. The move began on 25th June and concentration at Mosul was completed by 6th July.

A column consisting of two companies 1st Battalion 12th Frontier Force Regiment and one section 3rd Field Regiment and three Royal Air Force Armoured cars, under command of Major P. T. Clarke, 1st Battalion 12th Frontier Force Regiment, moved forward from Mosul on the night 2nd/3rd July with orders to occupy Tell Kotcheck, seize the railway and rolling stock up to that station and prevent sabotage of the railway line. Complete surprise was achieved and the French Garrison of Tell Kotcheck decamped.

On 4th July, the remainder of 1st Battalion 12th Frontier Force Regiment reached Tell Kotcheck and on the night 4th/5th July the advance began. Tell Aalo together with its garrison was captured without loss on 5th July.

On 6th July the 32nd Field Regiment and one company 5th Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles arrived at Tell Aalo and on 7th July at 0500 hrs. the advance on Qamichliye was continued. A column consisting of one company infantry, one troop artillery and three Royal Air Force armoured cars deployed in front of Qamichliye at about 1000 hrs. and

shortly afterwards our troops took possession of the town. The railway and all railway installations up to the Turkish frontier had been captured intact as well as several bridges which had been prepared for demolition.

On 8th July, a column was sent to capture Hassetché, the seat of the local Government in the Bec du Canard. Here the French decided not to fight and the town and fort were occupied without opposition.

On 9th July Ras el Ain was found to be clear of French troops. Lack of motor transport made further advance impossible. 5th Battalion 13th Frontier Force Rifles therefore remained in occupation of the Bec du Canard covering the railway and the remainder of the column returned to Mosul on 14th July.

26. On return of the Headquarters of 17th Indian Infantry Brigade to Mosul, the Headquarters of the 20th Indian Infantry Brigade moved to Baghdad, being better placed there to control its detachments dispersed in the oilfields and on the Kirkuk-Haifa pipe line.

The 10th Indian Division (less 20th Indian Infantry Brigade) remained in Syria until released for operations in Iran, it reverted to command of the General Officer Commanding Troops in Iraq on 10th August. It was maintained throughout from Iraq and this strained to the utmost the very limited resources in motor transport.

Reversion of Command to India and issue of Revised Directive.

27. Meanwhile, in view of the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime and the improved situation in Iraq, His Majesty's Government considered that control of the operations should revert to India as soon as possible as she had a greater interest and stake in them. It was therefore decided that the Commander-in-Chief, India, should take over control of all land forces in Iraq as soon as he was able to meet the administrative commitment.

At 0300 hrs. on 18th June the control of operations in Iraq passed back to the Commander-in-Chief, India, and Lieut.-General Quinan took over command of all the land forces in that area.

On 5th July, General Sir Claude Auchinleck, who until then had been Commander-in-Chief, India, became Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Forces, in succession to General Sir Archibald Wavell, who took up the appointment of Commander-in-Chief, India, on 11th July.

28. The outbreak of war between Germany and Russia and the conclusion of operations in Syria resulted in a changed situation in Iraq. A revised directive was therefore issued to Lt. General Quinan on 29th July. The instructions contained in this directive were to the following effect:—

(i) Lt. General Quinan was instructed that his object in general was to hold Northern Iraq against any enemy attack developing through Turkey and/or Iran, and to develop facilities for the maintenance and employment in Iraq of a force which might in certain circumstances amount to ten divisions (some armoured) and thirty squadrons Royal Air Force.

(ii) The operational boundary of British Air Force in Iraq was extended to include the area in Syria East of a line adjoining

Eamichliye to a point where the road Mosul-Deir-ez-Zor crosses the Iraq-Syria frontier.

(iii) Lt. General Quinan was to submit his plans for holding the Northern Frontier of Iraq against hostile advance through Anatolia or Iran. The construction of permanent defences in this area was to be confined to denying, where possible, the main lines of approach by armoured fighting vehicles into Iraq from Turkey or Iran with the object of slowing up an advance and forcing it into unsuitable country. Plans in detail were also to be prepared for an advance into Turkish or Iranian territory in order to seize defiles suitable for delaying action and to carry out extensive demolitions.

(iv) A suitable force was to be held in readiness to enable the occupation of Abadan and Naft-i-Shah to be carried out at short notice.

(v) Basra base was to be developed to maintain ten divisions and thirty squadrons Royal Air Force. Um Qasr and Koweit were to be developed as subsidiary ports.

Situation in Iran.

29. The policy to be adopted in view of the unsatisfactory attitude of the Iranian Government to the representations made regarding the expulsion of Axis nationals from Iran had been under consideration by His Majesty's Government and the Soviet Government during the early weeks of July and on 22nd July Lt. General Quinan was instructed to be prepared to occupy Abadan and Naft-i-Shah and at a later date the oilfields in South West Iran. On 24th July intimation was received that His Majesty's Government had approved of the proposals for the application of Anglo-Soviet diplomatic pressure backed by a show of force on the Iranian Government in order to secure the expulsion of Axis nationals from their country; should diplomatic pressure fail force was to be used.

Instructions were therefore issued to Lt. General Quinan to make preliminary arrangements for:—

(i) The concentration of a striking force on the Iranian Frontier in the Basra Area of:—

One Indian Infantry Division.

One mechanized cavalry brigade.

Two Indian Armoured Regiments.

To be supported by one Army Co-operation squadron R.A.F.

The object of this force was to occupy the oilfields and refinery at Abadan.

(ii) The assembly of a naval/military force at the head of the Persian Gulf consisting of three or four sloops and two companies of infantry, to occupy Bandar Shahpur and seize the port and shipping.

Lt. General Quinan was informed that the above forces were to be ready to move into Iran in the second week in August but that troops were not to be concentrated in the Basra area until further orders were issued. He was further instructed to be prepared to send a small force to seize the Naft-i-Shah oilfields and to detail one infantry battalion for the occupation of Bushire.

For the purpose of this operation the 4th Cavalry Brigade (later renamed 9th Armoured Brigade) from Palestine had been placed at

the disposal of G.O.C. Iraq and Lt. General Quinan was instructed to arrange for its transfer in direct communication with G.O.C. Palestine and Transjordan.

On 8th August Lt. General Quinan submitted outline plans for action as follows:—

(a) *8th Indian Division* (Major General C. O. Harvey).

(i) Seizure of Abadan Refinery at first light by the 24th Indian Infantry Brigade Group (Brigadier R. E. Le Fleming) less one battalion, moving by the River Shatt-el-Arab and supported by the Royal Navy.

(ii) Seizure of Khurramshahr by one battalion of the 24th Indian Infantry Brigade supported by one Squadron Guides Cavalry, moving by land from Tanumah (opposite Basra).

(iii) Simultaneous advance by the 25th Indian Infantry Brigade Group (Brigadier R. G. Mountain) and the 13th Lancers from Tanumah to Ahwaz, thence to Haft Kel oilfields with detachments to Kut Abdullah and Dorquain pumping stations.

(iv) All moves supported by the Royal Air Force after first light.

(b) *2nd Indian Armoured Brigade* (Brigadier J. A. Aizlewood).

Simultaneous seizure of Naft-i-Shah and Qasr-i-Shirin, the latter mainly by the 14/20 Hussars.

On seizing Naft-i-Shah an advance was to be made without delay to the Gilan area and preparations to be made for a move on to Shahabad preparatory to a general advance on Kermanshah. In the event of the latter being necessary the 9th Armoured Brigade (Brigadier W. R. Tiarks) was to participate. No air support could be made available unless stiff opposition was encountered.

(c) The Bandar Shahpur operation was to take place simultaneously as planned. Two companies of the 2nd Battalion 10th Baluch Regiment embarked on H.M.A.S. Kanimbla after dark on 11th August and sailed that night. The 9th Armoured Brigade from Palestine arrived at Kirkuk and Khaniqin on 11th August.

Operations in Iran.

30. On 29th July intimation was received from His Majesty's Government that a joint Anglo-Soviet note to Iran was to be presented on 12th August. Lieut.-General Quinan was informed of this and was instructed to complete the preliminary concentration of his troops by that date.

31. Lt.-General Quinan informed the General Officer Commanding Palestine and Transjordan that he would require the 9th Armoured Brigade, which, in order to achieve a measure of surprise, he proposed to locate initially at Kirkuk. He also ordered the following moves to be put in hand:—13th Lancers from Syria and one squadron Guides Cavalry to Shaiba to join the 8th Indian Division, 25th Indian Infantry Brigade, less one Battalion, from Syria to Shaiba. The 24th Indian Infantry Brigade was already in the Shaiba-Basra area and the 18th Indian Infantry Brigade due to arrive from India on 10th August. This completed the concentration of the 8th Indian Division.

The 14th/20th Hussars were to be employed in the Naft-i-Shah area.

32. Lt.-General Quinan decided to place all operations in Southern Iran, including the seizure of Abadan, under Major-General C. O. Harvey, Commander 8th Indian Division. Operations in the Naft-i-Shah area were placed under Brigadier J. A. Aizlewood, Commander 2nd Indian Armoured Brigade, whose force was to consist of the 2nd Indian Armoured Brigade Group (less two regiments), two Indian Infantry Battalions and one medium battery.

In addition, the following air component was made available for operations in Southern Iran, and was to be moved to Shaiba by 12th August.

One Army Co-operation Squadron (Vincent).

One Fighter Squadron (Hurricanes).

One Bomber Squadron (Blenheims).

Six Bomber Transport aircraft.

33. The presentation of the Anglo-Soviet note was postponed more than once and it was not until 17th August that it was finally delivered to the Iranian Government. On 21st August information was received from His Majesty's Government that the reply to the memorandum had been unsatisfactory and that an advance by joint Anglo-Soviet forces into Iran would probably commence on 22nd August. The necessary warning orders were issued and 9th Armoured Brigade was ordered to move to Khaniqin on 22nd August. Due to representations by the Russian Government a further postponement was necessary and the final date for the advance was fixed for 25th August.

34. As the concentration of troops had been completed by 12th August, these many postponements decreased any chance of achieving surprise and it was apparent that the Iranian Government fully expected an early British advance into Khuzistan and that reinforcements, including light and medium tanks, were being sent to Ahwaz.

The Iranian forces likely to oppose our advance were estimated to be:—

In the Ahwaz-Abadan-Khurramshahr Area.
6th Khuzistan Division.

One composite Division, made up of units from Teheran.

16 Light Tanks.

10 Armoured cars, 2 sloops, 3 gun boats, 4 aircraft.

In the Senna-Kermanshah Area.

5th Kurdistan Division.

12th Kermanshah Division.

One composite Division from Teheran.

One weak Brigade Group from 13th Division en route from Isfahan.

35. The advance into Iran commenced on 25th August and the operations went according to plan. 24th Indian Infantry Brigade (less one battalion) embarked in naval craft after dark on 24th August and landed at Abadan at 0410 hrs. on 25th August. The majority of the Iranian troops were asleep in their barracks and escaped by lorries, but resistance was met from some well sited machine-gun posts along the wharves. Street fighting ensued and it was difficult to dislodge the Iranian troops without damaging the refinery buildings, which were not completely cleared until 1700

hrs. on 25th August. As it was then too late to clear up Abadan town or Bawarda that day, a cordon was formed round the refineries and the troops bivouacked. The following day was spent in clearing up Abadan island.

36. 18th Indian Infantry Brigade (less one battalion) which had with it one battalion of the 24th Indian Infantry Brigade, a squadron of the Guides Cavalry and a battery of Field Artillery, and 25th Indian Infantry Brigade, with 13th Lancers under command, met with little opposition.

18th Indian Infantry Brigade advanced from Tanumah on the night 24th/25th August, and, moving across the desert to the North of the various water obstacles and defensive positions, came in on Khurramshahr at 0410 hrs. Mopping-up operations were delayed by a considerable number of Arabs who joined in the fighting from the palm groves. On 26th August a ferry was established on the river Karun, and 18th Brigade with a Troop Carrying Motor Transport Company completed the crossing on the afternoon of 27th August advancing beyond Dorquain Pumping Station to a point half way to Ahwaz.

25th Indian Infantry Brigade moved from Tanumah and captured Qasr Shaikh by midday on 25th August, from where it protected the Northern flank of 18th Indian Infantry Brigade. On 26th and 27th August, 25th Brigade carried out reconnaissances towards Ahwaz, and on 27th August it moved forward along the west bank of the river Karun to within 25 miles of Ahwaz.

37. The advance on Ahwaz by the 18th and 25th Brigade Groups, East and West respectively of the Karun river, began in the early hours of 28th August. Some resistance was encountered, but as our troops were approaching Ahwaz news of the Shah's "cease fire" order was received from an Iranian envoy. The Iranian General ordered his troops to return to barracks in Ahwaz.

38. One Company of Infantry in six Valentia aircraft landed at 0700 hours on 25th August at Haft Kel to protect the oilfields there and to escort the British and Indian women and children from the main fields at Masjid-i-Suleiman to Haft Kel. Two of the Valentias crashed on landing but there were no casualties.

39. The Bandar Shahpur operation was carried out most successfully on 25th August. The naval force* including two companies of the 3rd Battalion 10th Baluch Regiment (under Major W. E. Maxwell) on board the Armed Merchant Cruiser H.M.S. "Kanimbla" (Captain W. L. G. Adams, R.N.) had sailed from Basra on the night 11th-12th August. She cruised in the Persian Gulf until 24th August and approached Bandar Shahpur harbour in the early hours of 25th August.

One Company was landed at 0715 hours and had secured Bandar Shahpur, meeting only slight opposition, by 0830 hours by which time the second company had landed.

40. Meanwhile operations had been proceeding in the Naft-i-Shah-Pai Tak Pass area. The Iranian troops in the latter area were reported to have been heavily reinforced. The 9th Armoured Brigade arrived at Khaniqin from

Kirkuk on 22nd August and came under the orders of Brigadier Aizlewood in command of a column known as Hazel Force, consisting of the 2nd Indian Armoured Brigade Group (less two regiments), the 9th Armoured Brigade (all in trucks, no armour) and the 1st Battalion 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles and the 2nd Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles.

41. On 23rd August Major General Slim, 10th Indian Division, now available on return from Syria, was placed in command of operations in West Iran. The 21st Indian Infantry Brigade (less one battalion) and 157 Field Regiment at Habbaniya were placed at his disposal and ordered to move to Khaniqin.

Major General Slim, who arrived at Khaniqin on the evening of 24th August with a detachment of his Headquarters, decided to make no change in Brigadier Aizlewood's plan for the capture of Naft-i-Shah and the advance on Shahabad via Gilan. He decided to employ the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade Group against the Pai Tak Pass position in co-operation with the turning movement via Gilan.

42. Naft-i-Shah oilfields were secured against slight opposition in the early hours of 25th August.

Qasr-i-Shirin was cut off from the North West, North and East by 0445 hours on 25th August by the 14/20th Hussars after a difficult night march, and was captured later during the morning by a column advancing from the South. This column continued the advance and reached Sari Pul Zuhab, five miles West of the Pai Tak Pass, by 1530 hours on 25th August.

Meanwhile another column left Khaniqin direct for Gilan meeting with no opposition until it reached the Eastern outskirts of Gilan where it was held up until nightfall by rifle, machine-gun and anti-tank fire. Three attempts to get forward with light tanks before dark on 25th August failed.

The Iranian troops remained in position East of Gilan during the night covering an anti-tank obstacle, but were forced to withdraw by midday on 26th August. The advance from Gilan towards Shahabad continued on 26th August, a number of road blocks were encountered but no opposition although the route provided a series of good defensive positions.

Shahabad was occupied at 0700 hours on 27th August.

43. Meanwhile the Pai Tak Pass position, which was reported to be strongly held was bombed by the R.A.F. on the evening of 26th August. The 21st Indian Infantry Brigade (less one battalion) reached Sari Pul Zuhab during the night 25th-26th August and reconnoitred the approaches to the Pai Tak Pass on 26th August. The Iranian troops abandoned the Pass hurriedly during the night 26th-27th August and the 21st Brigade advanced without opposition on 27th August to Karind where they met patrols sent from Shahabad from the 9th Armoured Brigade during the afternoon.

44. Reconnaissance from Shahabad on 27th August found the Iranian troops holding the high ground overlooking the village of Zibiri on the road Shahabad-Kermanshah. From this position Iranian artillery shelled the road West of Zibiri accurately on the morning of 28th August. An attack on the position was

* H.M. Ships Enterprise and Hermes and R.F.A. Pearlleaf.

prepared and was to have been launched at 1000 hours; but just before that hour an Iranian Officer arrived with a white flag and the request for a truce was granted.

Lt. General Quinan arrived at Zibiri whilst Major General Slim was still discussing terms with the Iranian envoy and he approved the terms offered. He also instructed Major General Slim to advance and occupy Kermanshah in order to secure the oil refinery and tinning factory there.

The refinery area was occupied on 29th August by a detachment and on 30th August the remainder of the 2nd and 9th Armoured Brigades reached Kermanshah.

45. Our total casualties during the operations from 25th to 28th August in Iran were as follows:—

		<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>
British Officers	5	3
Viceroy's Commissioners			
Officers	1	1
British Other Ranks	1	4
Indian Other Ranks	15*	34
		—	—
Total	22	42
		—	—

46. On 29th August Major-General Slim at Kermanshah was ordered to despatch to Hamadan a force under Brigadier Aizlewood consisting of the 14/20th Hussars, one Gurkha Battalion and a troop of artillery, with ancillary units, with the object of making friendly contact with the Russians.

A report was received that Russian forces were advancing on Kermanshah from the direction of Senna and on Hamadan from Kazvin. A detachment was despatched therefore along the Senna road as well as that to Kazvin.

The Russian forces were met at Senna at 2200 hours 29th August and just South of Kazvin on the afternoon of 31st August.

47. On 29th August the General Officer Commanding Iraq was instructed to report his views and plan for dealing with the situation in Iran. He stated that it was proposed to:—

(i) station troops at Hamadan, Kermanshah, Shahabad and thence along the Line of Communications to Khaniqin;

(ii) hold Khuzistan with the minimum forces, with Headquarters at Ahwaz. A detachment could be maintained at Sultanaabad for railway protection;

(iii) withdraw to Iraq all troops not required in Iran.

Owing to the shortage of motor transport it was not found possible to maintain any formations beyond Hamadan. The shortage of transport had been aggravated by the arrival of the 5th Indian Division (less one brigade group) in Iraq on the 6th September without any maintenance transport. This division had been sent to Iraq from Middle East as an additional garrison in accordance with a previous decision when operations in Iran appeared likely.

The Commander-in-Chief, India, arrived at Baghdad on 31st August, confirmed the above plan and instructed Lt.-General Quinan to maintain close contact with the Russian forces in Iran.

48. From 1st September onwards reports were received of tribal risings in Iranian Kurdistan. The situation rapidly deteriorated although active patrolling was carried out by the 9th Armoured Brigade from Senna and Kermanshah and also by the 21st Indian Infantry Brigade on the line of communication between Kermanshah and Khaniqin. Considerable quantities of arms and ammunition hidden or sold to tribesmen by Iranian Army deserters were recovered.

49. A small detachment of British troops with Colonel Popov of the Russian Mission was sent to contact the Russian troops at Saujbulagh on 7th September.

50. On 9th September orders were issued for the 9th Armoured Brigade (less one Regiment) with one Indian Infantry Battalion under command, to be ready to move to Teheran at short notice.

51. The 13th Lancers which had been withdrawn from Khuzistan, arrived at Kermanshah on 12th September and moved on to Hamadan next day, less one squadron which was retained for employment in the Kermanshah-Senna area.

52. There were indications that the Persians did not intend to satisfy our demands for the surrender of Axis nationals and on 14th September the War Office intimated that a joint Anglo-Russian advance to Teheran would begin as soon as mutual arrangements with the Russian Commander had been completed. The Russians agreed to a simultaneous entry into Teheran at 1500 hours on 17th September by the British from the South and the Russians from the East and West. This was carried out according to plan, relations between our troops and the Russians were most cordial.

Meanwhile Khuzistan remained quiet and all except one Infantry Brigade and a battery of Field Artillery were withdrawn to Iraq.

But in Kurdistan fighting still continued between gangs of Kurds and Iranian troops garrisoned in various forts. Active patrolling was continued to give moral support to the Iranian Commander at Kermanshah.

The Headquarters of the 6th Indian Division (Major-General J. N. Thomson) arrived at Basra on 12th September with the 27th Indian Infantry Brigade, and was ordered to relieve the 8th and 10th Indian Divisions in Khuzistan and West Iran respectively.

Other local moves were carried out, and on 26th September and 3rd October respectively the 9th Armoured Brigade from Teheran and the 5th Indian Division (less one Brigade Group) from Kirkuk began to return to Middle East Command.

53. On 10th October information was received from His Majesty's Government to the effect that a proposal had been made to the Russian Government for the withdrawal of both Russian and British troops from Teheran and its neighbourhood and that plans should immediately be made with the Russian Commander for joint withdrawal to take place as soon as possible. The withdrawal was carried out on 18th October after a combined British-Russian parade on 17th October. The Russians withdrew to Kazvin and Pahlevi and our troops to Sultanabad and Hamadan.

*Includes four died of wounds.

54. The situation in Iranian Kurdistan had not improved and on 10th October it became necessary to maintain a strong mobile detachment at Senna for the purpose of stabilising the situation by frequent patrolling.

55. Work continued on the construction of fortress areas in North Iraq and in Persia throughout the winter, all available labour, engineer resources and troops being employed. The 6th Indian Division (less one Brigade) remained in Iran and the whole of the 8th Indian Division and two Brigades of the 10th Indian Division worked on defences in Iraq. One Brigade each of the 6th and 10th Indian Divisions were employed on protective duties in the Basra-Shaiba base area, on the lines of communication Basra-Baghdad and Baghdad-Habbaniya-Rutbah, and in Kirkuk and on the oil pipe line. The 2nd Indian Armoured Brigade Group trained in North Iraq after concentrating there in November.

In spite of exceptionally severe winter conditions very good progress was made on defensive works.

At the same time work continued steadily on:—

(i) development of the main base area at Basra-Shaiba and advanced bases near Baghdad, and at Kirkuk and Ahwaz (Iran);

(ii) construction of aerodromes and satellites in North Iraq and in Iran;

(iii) improvement of road, rail and river communications in Iraq and Iran;

(iv) developments of Um Qasr and Bandar Shahpur (Persian Gulf) Ports;

(v) construction of telegraph communications systems in Iraq and Iran.

56. At the end of October plans were put in hand to receive in Iraq two British Divisions and up to eight Squadrons of aircraft, for later despatch to the Caucasus. Though no definite decision had been reached regarding the despatch of these forces, 50th Division was

ordered to move from the Middle East to Iraq as soon as possible. This Division (less one Brigade Group which had been retained by Middle East Command) began to arrive in Iraq on 14th November, and was concentrated in the Kirkuk area by 8th December.

57. On 15th November, 1941, a new directive cancelling that issued on 29th July was issued to Lt.-General Quinan. It gave details of the reinforcements he might expect to receive up to June, 1942, and instructed him that his primary task was the defence of Iraq and Iran against the enemy advance from Anatolia or from the Caucasus. In the defence of Iraq he was to act throughout in the closest co-operation with the Commander Ninth Army (Palestine and Transjordan).

He was to be prepared also for the following possible operations:—

(i) Operations in Anatolia in co-operation with troops of Middle East Command and possibly the Turkish Army.

(ii) Co-operation with the Russian Army in the defence of the Caucasus or North Iran.

He was to prepare to maintain ten Divisions and thirty Squadrons Royal Air Force in Iraq and up to six Divisions in Iran. In addition to developing road, rail and river communications as necessary to ensure maintenance of these forces, he was to ensure the maximum possible delivery of supplies to Russia.

58. In view of changes in the general situation, orders were received on 3rd January, 1942, for the 50th Division to return to the Middle East Command and the move commenced from Kirkuk on 12th January, 1942.

59. With effect from 12th January, 1942, operational control of Iraq and Iran passed from the India Command to the Middle East Command.

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