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DESPATCH ON THE PERSIA AND IRAQ COMMAND COVERING THE PERIOD 21ST AUGUST, 1942, TO 17TH FEBRUARY, 1943.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 8th April, 1943, by GENERAL SIR H. MAITLAND WILSON, G.B.E., K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Persia and Iraq Command.

FORMATION OF PERSIA AND IRAQ COMMAND.

1. The initial successes gained by the Germans during the summer of 1942 in their South Russian offensive made it necessary to take account of the possibility that they might succeed in occupying the whole of Caucasia, and later of undertaking an invasion of Persia.

Simultaneously their advance into Egypt not only denied to the Commander-in-Chief Middle East, for the time, the freedom to move forces rapidly from Egypt to Persia—the basis of previous plans for the defence of the latter country—but led also to the withdrawal from Tenth Army of troops, equipment and transport to reinforce the Eighth Army in Egypt.

Early in August, 1942, it was estimated, by the War Office and by General Headquarters Middle East, that in the circumstances most favourable to them the Germans might succeed in reaching the River Araxes in North Persia by late October. Unless therefore immediate steps had been taken to strengthen the defence of Persia, the enemy might have been allowed an opportunity to follow up success in the Caucasus by striking at the oil fields and installations at the head of the Persian Gulf; and on the security of these the Allied war effort in the Middle East, India and the Far East largely depended.

Routes for delivery of material aid to Russia to assist her to withstand the German advance in South Russia were already in operation but were capable of considerable development.

The decision to create, in Persia and Iraq, a separate Command directly under the War

Office was made in August, 1942, during the visit to the Middle East of the Prime Minister and Chief of the Imperial General Staff. I took up my appointment as Commander-in-Chief on 21st August; General Headquarters opened in Baghdad on 15th September, 1942.

My tasks, in order of priority, were as follows:—

First: To secure at all costs from land and air attack the oil fields and oil installations in Persia and Iraq.

Second: To ensure the transport from the Persian Gulf ports of supplies to Russia to the maximum extent possible without prejudicing my primary task.

In carrying out my first task it would obviously have been preferable for British forces—Army and Royal Air Force—to have given direct assistance to the Russian defence in the Caucasus. However, for administrative reasons, due to great distances and lack of communications, the strength of the forces which could have been utilized in this way would have been insufficient to have any appreciable influence upon the course of operations. Furthermore the unwillingness of the Russians to accept this form of assistance rendered such a course impracticable.

Operations to carry out my primary task could not therefore become necessary, unless the Russian defence in the Caucasus failed. My primary and secondary tasks were thus somewhat in conflict; the former called for intensive administrative preparation of the Persian lines of communication, which could only be carried out at the cost of curtailing deliveries to the Russians of supplies so urgently needed to sustain their defensive campaign.

REORGANIZATION OF THE COMMAND

2. Prior to the formation of the new Command, an administrative reorganization had been introduced by General Headquarters Middle East, with the object of freeing Commander Tenth Army from the administration of the bases and lines of communication in Persia and Iraq so that he could concentrate on his operational task. By this measure, which came into effect on 15th August, 1942, the control of the general administration of the ports, depots and communications behind the Tenth Army was vested in a senior Staff Officer of General Headquarters Mideast, designated the Inspector General of Communications (I.G.C.); while there was created an area Command, known as Pibase, to deal with the internal security and local administration of the Base and Lines of Communication area. At the same time the zone of responsibility of the Commander Tenth Army was to have been further reduced by transferring Northern Iraq from the Tenth to the Ninth Army.

The formation of a separate new Command under the War Office necessitated some modifications to this lay-out. With a General Headquarters on the spot, the decentralization of general administrative control was neither necessary nor desirable, and the Inspector General of Communications and his staff were therefore merged into General Headquarters. Owing however to the length of the divergent lines of communication leading from the Persian Gulf, and the extent of development still needed in the ports, base depots and means of communication, I considered that closer and more continuous supervision was required throughout the bases and lines of communication than could be exercised from General Headquarters. I decided, therefore, as a temporary measure, to include in my staff for this purpose a D.Q.M.G. Bases and Lines of Communication, with a small staff, located at Basra. This appointment was filled by Major General C. R. C. Lane, C.B., M.C., I.A., whose administrative experience and knowledge of the country and conditions well qualified him for this responsibility.

I decided, also, that the responsibility for local administration and internal security over the whole of the Base and Lines of Communication areas of Iraq and Persia was more than one Commander could deal with satisfactorily; I therefore divided the Pibase area into two area commands, covering respectively the Base and Lines of Communication areas of Iraq and Persia.

POSITION IN SEPTEMBER 1942.

3. The only troops immediately available in Persia and Iraq to meet a German invasion were two Indian Divisions and one Indian Armoured Division. Of these, the former had each only two infantry brigades and were below establishment and deficient in artillery, engineers and signals, and the latter had no medium tanks; both were short of transport.

Many other deficiencies remained to be filled before this small force could become a balanced fighting organization. Corps artillery units, Anti-Aircraft artillery, engineer units, signals and administrative units were either short of requirements or lacking altogether. The network of signals to ensure the control and maintenance of operations over so large

an area, although planned and started by Headquarters Tenth Army, was still not yet complete.

The Polish personnel, who, with the 3rd Carpathian Division already in the Middle East, were to form the Polish Army in the East, were in process of assembling at Khaniqin after their evacuation from Russia; they lacked organization, equipment and training, and many of them were still suffering in health from a long period of hardship.

Decisions had already been made by the War Office to strengthen and complete the forces in Persia and Iraq. Two British Divisions (5th and 56th) had already been diverted to the Command, and the former was commencing to arrive. These were to be followed by 7th British Armoured Brigade from India and the 5th Indian and 3rd Carpathian Polish Divisions from the Middle East. Additional units and resources of all kinds were being provided. Naturally these measures took time to complete.

One of my first tasks, therefore, was to complete the organization, equipment and training of the forces; in this every week's delay imposed by the Russian defence was of inestimable value.

4. In the administrative sphere much remained to be done before I could feel confident that operations in North Persia could be adequately maintained. I refer to this later.

One aspect of administration, however, limited all my operational planning. This was shortage of motor vehicles of all types, and in particular of Royal Army Service Corps transport in both 2nd and 3rd line; further, many of the vehicles were old and worn. In Egypt the demand was incessant for vehicles to maintain operations in progress, and for the time I had little prospect of aid from that direction; the flow of lease lend vehicles into Persia and Iraq had scarcely begun. Thus my capacity to maintain sufficient forces in North Persia was the limiting factor, rather than the availability of forces in the Command.

PLANS FOR DEFENCE OF NORTH PERSIA.

5. An advance by the Germans as far South into Persia as Teheran or Hamadan would enable them to sustain air attacks on our oil installations in Persia and Iraq, heavy enough at least to reduce the oil output, possibly to stop it altogether for a considerable time. My plans had therefore to aim at stopping any German advance from the North towards these areas; and with the limited fighting strength which I could deploy and maintain for this purpose it would be necessary to exploit fully any advantages of ground astride the various avenues of approach.

The Russian authorities in North Persia were averse from the concerted planning and comprehensive reconnaissance was impossible. From the information available, however, it was clear that good defensive facilities were to be found in the mountain passes of Chalus and Manjil (leading from the Caspian coast respectively to Teheran and Kasvin) and in the mountainous country about Mianeh astride the Tabriz-Teheran road. If the enemy avoided these routes, or extended his advance still further west, the mountains south of Senna, and the passes leading from Lake Urmia to Northern Iraq should also afford opportunities for a strong defence. Further to the South

and West a final line of defence had been selected by General Sir E. P. Quinan and prepared by troops of Tenth Army.

6. North Persia is a mountainous country, with few localities where airfields can be developed rapidly. Between the open country about Kasvin-Teheran-Hamadan on the South, and the River Araxes on the North, the only areas offering reasonable facilities for airfields lie in the valley between Ardebil and Tabriz and about Lenkoran on the Caspian coast.

Possession of this area was extremely important. As long as I could hold it, the Royal Air Force would be able to provide fighter cover for troops in action against the enemy and for bombers attacking his communications; if I lost it these advantages would be transferred to the enemy, and the Royal Air Force, forced on to the defensive, would have to disperse its efforts to provide fighter protection for the vulnerable oil installations, ports and communications.

I had reluctantly to come to the conclusion that the forces I could maintain north of this important area were not strong enough to fight a successful battle if the Germans attacked in strength. I determined, however, to hold it as long as I could, and it was therefore my intention to send forward to the River Araxes whatever mobile forces I could maintain, to delay any German advance for as long as possible.

7. By the end of September, 1942, I had had sufficient opportunity to consider the situation and to discuss it with General Sir E. P. Quinan, Commander Tenth Army, who had been studying the problem for some time and had been able to visit North Persia and see something of the country. By this time the likelihood of a winter campaign in North Persia was receding, the earliest date by which it was estimated the Germans could reach the River Araxes having already been put back to 15th November.

I had at this time only one Indian Motor Brigade and two Infantry Divisions fit to undertake operations and could not have maintained more than this force in North Persia without substantial administrative reinforcements, which even if they were available from the Middle East, could not reach Persia for some weeks.

At this time the troops in Persia and Iraq Command were located mainly in the Persian Highlands about Hamadan and Kermanshah, where the winter climate is very severe. It was desirable to move them for the winter to milder areas and this move could not be long delayed. It was my intention to bring all the troops back to the railways for the winter, in order to reduce the strain on the transport available and afford it opportunity for refitting before the Spring. I intended also to cut down to the minimum the force in Persia, whose maintenance requirements had to be moved up the Persian line of communications in diminution of the flow of aid to Russia.

My first proposal was to locate two divisions, which force I could expect to maintain in North Persia if operations took place during the winter, in the area of Kasvin; but as this was in the Russia zone the concurrence of the Russian Government had first to be obtained. As the time was not considered expedient for an approach in this sense to the

Russian Government, I had to modify my plan; this involved little or no risk, as the sustained Russian defence at Stalingrad and in the North Caucasus continued to postpone the date by which German intervention in North Persia might be expected. I therefore reduced the force in Persia to one division and one motor brigade, located in the British zone at Qum and Andimishk respectively; the remainder of the troops being brought back to winter training locations on the Iraq railway.

8. By November, 1942, the course of the campaign in Russia and the opening of the Allied offensive in North Africa had rendered a German threat to North Persia during the winter almost impossible; the earliest date for possible operations was estimated to be 15th April, 1943, five or six divisions being considered the maximum force the Germans were likely to deploy on or south of the River Araxes.

The troops in Persia and Iraq had meanwhile completed their moves to winter locations, and arrivals from other theatres had increased the strength available. I had now at my disposal two British divisions and one British Armoured brigade; three Indian divisions (two with three Infantry brigades each and one with two); one Indian Armoured division (with some light tanks and trucks in place of medium tanks); and one Polish division reasonably prepared for operations. The remainder of the Polish Army was in process of organization, equipment and training, and for some months to come could not be counted on for operations. The flow of equipment into the Command was increasing and some improvement had been effected in the transport position.

To achieve a balanced fighting force for possible operations in the Spring of 1943, I formed the British and Indian Infantry divisions into two Corps (3rd and 21st Indian) each of one British and one Indian division. Both Corps, together with 31 Indian Armoured Division and 10 Indian Motor Brigade, were placed under command of Tenth Army for operations in North Persia. I intended to retain direct command of the Polish Corps and to hold the remaining Indian Infantry division (of two Infantry brigades) in general reserve, and with this in view incorporated with it as an integral part 7th British Armoured Brigade.

My general plan to meet a German offensive in the Spring remained substantially as before, though I now had at my disposal a force more nearly adequate to its task.

I was still not in a position to maintain sufficient forces far enough forward to make sure of stopping the enemy before he reached the Northern group of airfields about Ardebil and Tabriz; my intention remained, therefore, to secure these areas for as long as possible and subsequently to defeat the enemy South and South West of Mianeh if he should succeed in advancing so far.

The defence of Northern Iraq against an attack from Lake Urmia I proposed to entrust to the Polish Army in the East, assisted by troops of the Iraqi Army. (My outline plan was submitted to the War Office on 17th November, 1942.)

One aspect in the situation which gave cause for some anxiety was the time required to get the forces in position and ready to meet the German thrust if it should come.

To ensure the greatest possible flow of aid to Russia, not only had the bulk of Tenth Army been withdrawn some 500 miles from its deployment area, but the preparation of the lines of communication on which it would depend had been retarded. Furthermore the decision to curtail or suspend the supply of material aid to Russia, to permit of my forces being maintained in their forward operational areas, would have been fraught with many difficulties, both political and military; clearly it had to be deferred to the last possible moment and would have called for very careful timing.

THE IRAQI ARMY.

9. By agreement with the Government of Iraq, it was arranged that, in the event of a German threat to that country, the Iraqi Army would resist aggression and for this purpose would deploy two divisions for the defence of the minor passes leading from the direction of Lake Urmia into North Iraq.

Plans were prepared for the co-operation of this force with the Polish Army, to whom the defence of this region was to be entrusted.

THE POSSIBILITY OF ATTACK THROUGH TURKEY.

10. Although preparation for operations in North Persia was the dominating consideration in Persia and Iraq throughout the autumn of 1942, the possibility of a German threat through Anatolia in the Spring of 1943 could not be dismissed altogether.

Plans previously made by the Commander-in-Chief Mideast to meet this case, which involved the employment of Tenth Army in North Iraq, remained unaltered and were kept under review.

INTERNAL SECURITY.

11. Iraq has remained quiet and no threats to internal security have occurred, nor have there been any indications of attempted sabotage. Precautions in this country therefore have been limited to the provision of military guards over installations and depots, as a deterrent to the theft and organized robbery of military stores which have everywhere been prevalent.

In Persia, on the other hand, the problem of internal security has been constantly to the fore. There is a wide distribution of arms throughout the country. The natural propensity of the tribes to attack anything likely to yield food or clothing has been intensified by Axis propaganda and by economic distress.

Threats to the security of our communications through Persia have arisen mainly in the hill sector of the railway about Durud, and on that portion of the Bushire-Isfahan road which passes through Qashgai territory. In both these areas minor incidents have been frequent. In the former it has been necessary to locate various garrison defence units along the railway; in the latter I have been mainly concerned to secure the tranquillity of the tribes without the necessity for using military force—a commitment, once undertaken, almost certain to remain and increase. In November, after consultation with Sir Reader Bullard, the British Minister in Teheran, I ordered military reconnaissance of the Bushire-Isfahan road and subsequently arranged to lend some assistance to the Persian Military Governor, in an effort

to achieve security of the roads by means of the Persian Army and Gendarmerie.

Teheran has also been a centre of trouble. In October, 1942, a political crisis occurred in connection with the provision of paper currency for allied use; arrangements were made, in consultation with the British Minister in Teheran, for a force of one British Brigade to be prepared to move to Teheran at short notice. This crisis was eventually averted without recourse to the use of troops. In December, shortages of food in the capital led to trouble, which culminated in rioting between the 8th and 10th December. The rioting subsided on the arrival of a British Infantry Battalion at Teheran, without the necessity for military action; some minor accidental casualties were sustained.

12. Investigations over a considerable period culminated in the discovery of an extensive plot, instigated by the German agent Meyer and others, to organize Fifth Column activities in Persia in preparation for the expected German invasion. This plot involved a Persian Cabinet Minister, three Members of Parliament, eleven Generals and many other senior officers of the army, as well as the Qashgai tribes. Early in December General Zahidi, who was implicated, was arrested in Isfahan, and this had a steadying effect.

As several German agents, including Meyer, are known still to be operating in South East Persia, I sent a small independent detachment of Kalpacks on an extensive mission throughout this area, the results of which are not yet available.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATION OF THE COMMAND.

13. Administrative preparation for possible operations has formed a major part of the activity of this Command. Following on the British entry into Iraq and Persia, an extensive programme of administrative development became necessary. Port capacities have had to be increased by developing existing ports and constructing new ones; railway communications extended and improved; a comprehensive programme of road construction and improvement carried through; hospital accommodation, workshops and storage facilities of all kinds to be provided at the cost of a great deal of engineer construction. In addition it was necessary to prepare groups of aerodromes, all-weather and dry weather, for the Squadrons and Base installations of the Royal Air Force, and to provide accommodation for repair and servicing, fuel and explosives.

By the time the Persia and Iraq Command came into being most of the work had already been planned by General Headquarters Middle East and by Headquarters Tenth Army. Much had been completed, and much was in course of construction.

Prior to 1942, planning and development were directed primarily to meeting a German threat through Anatolia, when North Iraq rather than Persia would have been the theatre of operations. Preparations were thus more advanced in Iraq than in Persia; by September, 1942, the existing port of Basra had been developed and construction of an additional port begun at Um Qasr; base depots and the connected establishments had been developed at Shaiba; and an advanced base at Mussayib was nearing completion. The development of

rail communications was well forward and an extensive fleet of inland water craft had been collected and organized. The preparation of aerodromes and Royal Air Force installations in Iraq had already reached an advanced stage.

The situation in Persia was less favourable. Means of communication were less developed to begin with, and a later start had been made to improve them. Construction of the ports of Khorramshahr and Bandar Shahpur was still far from complete; essential railway improvements were in hand but the fleet of locomotives and rolling stock was still much below requirements; the development of base facilities for the Army and the construction of aerodromes for the Royal Air Force were only beginning. Action to remedy this state of affairs had already been initiated, but stores arrived slowly and many delays and set-backs have been experienced.

14. The retarded progress of administrative preparations in Persia and the growing possibility of a German success in South Russia made it clear that an intensive administrative effort was required to ensure that operations in North Persia could, in fact, be maintained. I fixed 31st March, 1943, as the target date by which the base and lines of communication were to be ready to take the strain of operations. This decision necessitated a review of all plans, if the most economical use was to be made of the available resources; any projects not clearly essential had to be dropped, and long-term constructional works reconsidered to ensure that their continuance justified the effort involved. Some curtailment was thus effected.

In one respect, however, I decided to increase construction over previous planning. The base areas in Iraq and South Persia lie in one of the hottest regions of the world, and it was not to be expected that troops located there could sustain the intensive effort which operations must entail, unless provided with a reasonable scale of accommodation and amenities. I therefore authorised the construction of full-scale hutted accommodation throughout these areas.

15. The construction and stocking of base depots on the Persian line of communications could only have been completed in time at the cost of a considerable reduction in supply to Russia, which was already falling below expectations. The alternative to this was to rely upon the base depots in Iraq to maintain operations in North Persia, at least during the opening phases. This involved a very real risk; supplies for the Tenth Army and for the administrative and defence troops behind it, to the extent of some 2,000 tons daily, would have to be passed by barge across the Shatt-el-Arab, re-loaded to rail in the Persian ports and moved thence up the long and vulnerable Persian railway. In the circumstances, this risk had to be accepted. Such a contingency had been foreseen by the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, who had ordered the construction at Tanuma, opposite Basra, of a lighter quay linked to the Persian railway; and had arranged for the provision from India of materials for a bridge of boats across the Shatt-el-Arab. When I assumed command, construction of the lighter quay was already well advanced, but it seemed doubtful whether the materials for the bridge of boats would arrive in time, or whether

the bridge would prove sufficient. I therefore authorised the construction of a wooden pile bridge across the Shatt-el-Arab, which would afford both rail and road access from the Depots in Iraq to the Persian Railway system.

The insecurity of the Persian railway was a further cause of anxiety especially over the mountainous section between Andimishk and Sultanabad, and I felt it was necessary to have an advanced base beyond this section to afford some insurance against railway interruption through sabotage or bad weather. My first intention was to locate this advanced base at Teheran, but the only practicable site was found to be within the Russian zone of railway control. An alternative site was ultimately found near Sultanabad, and so far as could be done without interference to the forwarding of Russian supplies, preparations were made so that the various depots could be completed and stocked rapidly should the need arise.

16. Other preparations to ensure the maintenance of operations in North Persia had to be deferred to avoid cutting down supplies to Russia. The length of the rail communications from the base to the area of possible operations, as well as the extreme climatic conditions, called for the establishment forward on the line of communications of advanced workshops for the repair of tanks, guns and vehicles, hospitals and convalescent depots, reinforcement camps, etc.; in the circumstances all had to be held back in Iraq, ready to move their positions as soon as it became clear that British defensive measures must have priority in transportation over supplies for Russia. My first estimate was that I should need not less than three weeks for essential administrative preparations before I could expect to maintain Tenth Army in North Persia; subsequent more detailed examination indicated that this estimate was too short.

17. Considerable development and organization were needed in other administrative aspects. I was concerned at the paucity of resources for the repair of vehicles and weapons of all types. It will be appreciated that countries such as Persia and Iraq, deficient as they are of almost all forms of industrial development, offer few facilities in the shape of factories, plant, and resources of skilled labour capable of adaptation to the maintenance of a modern army. Workshop buildings had to be constructed, plant and materials imported, and skilled labour provided from Army resources or trained locally. The extent of this problem may be gauged from the fact that over one and a quarter million square feet of workshop space had to be included in the construction programme; and after exploiting all available local resources the supply of skilled labour fell short by 15,000 of the army's full requirements. Great progress has been made in the provision of workshops, and in training to semi-skilled standards large numbers of Indian Pioneer troops and local civilians; but should the problem arise again, the mechanical upkeep of the army will remain a major problem.

18. Differences in the organization and working of administrative services of the British and Indian Armies presented another problem. Originally the Expeditionary Force to Persia and Iraq was drawn from India and the force

remained predominantly Indian in character and organization when its command was transferred to General Headquarters Middle East. As the force increased in size and administrative units of the British Army arrived, it soon became apparent that both organizations could not work efficiently side by side. After careful consideration I came to the conclusion that the British Army establishments were more suited to the requirements of this Command; and with the concurrence of the Commander-in-Chief in India I therefore carried out a reorganization of the R.I.A.S.C. and I.A.C.C. elements of the Base and L. of C. troops.

19. Extremes of climate and distance, lack of transport, materials and skilled personnel have greatly hampered the administrative preparation of this theatre. This preparation is still incomplete; but credit is due to the staffs and administrative services in Persia and Iraq both before and during the period of my command for the great deal that has been accomplished. In particular, credit is due to the works services of the Royal Engineers. Their task has been both difficult and heavy, and great resource and ingenuity have been shown in improvising methods of using local resources to speed up construction and reduce demands on shipping for the import of materials of all kinds.

AID TO RUSSIA

20. Development of communications to facilitate supply to Russia through Persia began in the autumn of 1941. As I have already indicated, this development involved a heavy programme of port construction and railway and road extension and improvement; the collection from places as far afield as the United Kingdom, North America, India and Australia of locomotives and rolling stock; and the organization of whatever civil transport could be obtained, and the importation of Lease Lend vehicles to build up a road transport service.

The whole of this effort has been carried out in the face of great difficulties. The extremes of climate met with in Persia have reacted strongly on the mechanical efficiency and smooth working of the railway. Mechanical setbacks have been frequent; locomotives designed for temperate climates and easy grades have developed mechanical failures due to excessive heat and the heavy grades of a mountain railway; resources sufficient for the mechanical upkeep of the small pre-war fleet of locomotives, though supplemented by British personnel, have proved inadequate to deal with these unexpected failures; large numbers of new railway wagons have arrived with couplings too weak to stand the strains imposed on a mountain railway, and new couplings have had to be manufactured in India to replace them and have not yet arrived. The Persian railway had been in operation only five years when this new demand had to be met; its staff of operating personnel was small and had not yet reached the standards of efficiency to be expected in a long established railway, and this in turn has increased the strain on already deficient workshop capacity. Although plans were made to deal with these various difficulties, delay in the arrival of locomotives, wagons, plant and stores has postponed the achievement of the railway targets and has made reliable planning difficult.

The situation in the ports has been equally difficult. Construction has been delayed through the late arrival of stores from India which could not be replaced by local improvisation. It has been necessary to operate the ports to the maximum capacity possible whilst they were still under construction, and this is always difficult. Acute shortage of cranes of all types has been a serious limiting factor, and supplies from overseas have been slow in arriving.

The number of personnel available to organize, control and operate the transportation facilities has been very small—only enough to provide a thin British veneer over the Persian organization.

It will be realised that of the total tonnage landed at the ports, a considerable proportion has been required for purposes other than direct delivery to the Russians; in particular, the necessity to increase the numbers of locomotives and rolling stock for the railway to more than three times the initial figures has absorbed a great deal of the port capacity available. Another serious difficulty has been the high proportion of heavy and difficult stores included in the cargoes; such items as locomotives, railway wagons, heavy steel rails and pipes, sheet steel and so on, have proved difficult and slow to handle with the limited lifting appliances available. These are the main reasons why, prior to and during my tenure of command, the volume of goods moved forward from the Persian Gulf ports to Russia has consistently fallen short of expectation.

21. The organization of the road transport service to supplement the railway has also presented considerable difficulties. Units and personnel from the British and Indian armies were available to provide a nucleus for improving the ports and railway, but none were available for road transport. This responsibility was therefore undertaken by the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation, who were also the consignees in Persia of all "Aid to Russia" stores. A beginning was made by organizing a road transport service from Persian civil motor lorries obtained by contract. This was subsequently increased by the arrival from North America of Lease Lend vehicles, which again have been operated by the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation through civil agencies.

The whole road transport effort has been handicapped throughout by lack of sufficient personnel to supervise the working of Persian civilian employees and contractors, by the low standard of commercial morality prevalent in Persia (which has led employees of the Corporation to exploit the absence of supervision), and by lack of resources for the mechanical upkeep of the fleet of vehicles.

At the time I assumed command, the shortage of personnel to check malpractices in the road transport service had become acute, and the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation was attempting to obtain additional personnel by release from military service. The whole position seemed to me to be so unsatisfactory that a conference was held early in November at my Headquarters, attended by senior officials of the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation and of the Minister of State's Office, the Commanding General United States Persian Gulf Service Command, and others concerned. At this conference decisions were reached that

my General Headquarters should assume the general direction of the road transport activities of the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation; and that it should become responsible for maintaining its fleet of vehicles, and should take over and hold the large stocks of motor tyres which had already arrived for the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation or were on the water. I was then able to make available a certain number of experienced transport officers to assist the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation officials, and to organize a system of military check posts along the Persian routes to assist in supervising the working of the service. Later, at the request of the Russian authorities, certain military transport units were allocated to carrying Russian stores, to ensure that ammunition and certain other types of stores remained in military charge throughout. The results of these measures are not yet fully apparent, but a gradual improvement is being made in the working of the road transport service in Persia.

22. In the operation of the transport of stores to Russia a serious hold-up of shipping occurred in the Persian Gulf. This was already the case when I assumed command and has been a cause of anxiety throughout. It has been brought about by various factors. In estimating the capacity of the ports to receive stores, and the rail and road transport to clear them, insufficient allowance was made originally for the various difficulties in operation which I have mentioned; the tonnages despatched to Persian Gulf ports have been in excess of the already optimistic estimates of what could be accepted; and the high proportion of difficult cargoes, combined with the slow development of port construction and the slow arrival of lifting appliances, have accentuated the delays. Another factor, though in other respects a fortunate one, has been that sinkings en route have fallen below what was anticipated and allowed for in loadings. Improved performance in tonnages landed, combined with a temporary scaling down of loadings, are now rapidly reducing the congestion of shipping which should shortly disappear.

23. It was obvious during the summer of 1942 that the British personnel available for transportation duties in Persia were quite inadequate to deal with the scale of development planned and in progress, and that their numbers could not be materially increased. In August, 1942, therefore, information was received from the War Office that the United States Army was to take over the operation of the ports and railway in Persia, and in addition provide a fleet of motor vehicles to supplement the road transport service. Major General Donald H. Connolly was appointed Commanding General, United States Persian Gulf Service Command, and arrived in Persia in October, 1942, with advance elements of his staff. The first United States Army troops landed in December, 1942.

The process of handing over is still going on, and although minor set-backs and difficulties have naturally been encountered, as a result of willing co-operation on both sides the process of changing from British to United States Army administration and control is progressing smoothly. With the much larger resources in personnel and plant which the Commanding General United States Persian Gulf Service Command will have at his disposal, a rapid improvement is to be expected in the output of the transportation services and a corresponding increase in the tonnage which can be delivered to the Russian Army. Although the full resources of the United States Persian Gulf Service Command are not yet deployed, and the transfer of operations is still incomplete, an improvement is already apparent; though in fairness to the personnel of the British Army. I wish to place on record that the arrival of United States Army troops to relieve them has come at a time when much of the heavy work of preparation and development is at an end and about to show results.

24. The following figures show the tonnages which have been landed for Aid to Russia and carried forward by various agencies during the period of my command:—

	1942				1943	
	(Sept.)	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.)	(Jan.)	Feb.)
Tonnage landed	39,000	50,000	35,000	37,000	53,000	83,000
Cased MT landed	5,000	4,000	4,000	8,000	8,000	11,000
Tonnage forwarded by rail	24,000	23,000	20,000	23,000	24,000	33,000
Tonnage forwarded by road	11,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	21,000	18,000
Total tonnage forwarded... ..	35,000	39,000	36,000	39,000	45,000	51,000

25. The fact that deliveries so far have failed to reach expectations does not lessen the value of the work performed by the very inadequate number of British personnel which it has been possible to allot to this duty. Great credit is due to the personnel concerned in this work, who have carried through their task with unflinching energy in spite of many obstacles and disappointments they have encountered.

THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF TROOPS.

26. During the period under review, the health of the troops in the Command has been satisfactory. During September and October, 1942, the rate of admissions to hospital was comparatively high, mainly owing to the effects

of the hot summer, the prevalence of malaria in certain parts of the country, and in the case of the Polish troops to the after effects of their recent privations. Throughout the winter the troops have been very healthy and their standard of physical fitness for war is high.

Much valuable work has been done by the Medical Services, especially in the prevention of malaria.

A great deal has also been done for the welfare of the troops. The civil communities in Iraq and in Persia, the clergy, the philanthropic bodies and the NAAFI/EFI have all made valuable contributions to this essential work, which is more than ever necessary in a country where so few natural amenities exist.

THREAT OF INVASION REMOVED.

27. The sustained series of victories in South Russia and the successful operations in North Africa both render a German threat to North Persia in 1943 progressively more and more unlikely. The initiative now lies with the Allied Nations and it is our duty to retain that initiative and bring the maximum force to bear on the German war machine from as many directions as possible. It was to be expected, therefore, that the forces in my Command would be reduced and that the status of the Command would require revision.

In January I received orders to despatch the 5 British Division to the Middle East Command and finally on 23rd January I was summoned to a conference with the Prime Minister in Cairo. On 10th February the 56 (London) Division was also ordered to the Middle East Command. I decided therefore to re-group the remaining formations within the Command and issued orders for their location in the general area Mosul-Kirkuk.

On 17th February I left for Cairo to take up my new duties.

28. In concluding my despatch I wish to bring to notice the hard work and continual effort of the staff and signals on my Headquarters in building up the Command into a fighting organization in so short a time.

The Commanders Tenth Army, 3 and 21 Corps and their subordinate Commanders have given wholehearted co-operation in the training and equipment of their formations and in overcoming difficulties inherent in their re-organization.

The Commanders of the L of C Areas and Sub-Areas in carrying out their tasks deserve credit for what they have accomplished under conditions of great distances, bad weather and communications.

In General Anders, Commanding the Polish Army in the East, I have found a most willing collaborator who carries great prestige with his troops and who has worked tirelessly to get his troops into line with British methods.

General Connolly of the United States Persian Gulf Service Command has shown willing co-operation and understanding in the taking over of the Persian L of C by the American forces on their recent arrival.

I found in Air Vice Marshal H. de Crespigny, Royal Air Force, a willing co-operator in the preparation of the plans for the defence of North Persia and am much indebted to him for his sound advice on all matters affecting our two services.

Commodore C. F. Hamill, Royal Navy, Senior Naval Officer Persian Gulf, rendered most valuable service not only in the control and allotment of shipping between the various Persian Gulf ports but also by the ready manner in which he met emergency demands for sea transport.

I am also much indebted to Mr. J. A. de C. Hamilton of the Minister of State's Branch Office in Baghdad for his help and advice on many subjects for which civil and military responsibilities overlap.

Throughout my period in the command the willing co-operation of His Majesty's Embassy in Baghdad and the Legation in Teheran have been of the greatest assistance.

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