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THE MESOPOTAMIAN CAMPAIGN:
The British Experience in Iraq in the First World War

by

Donald P. Carr
Major, U.S. Marine Corps

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

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Paper directed by CDR Charles Marineau
Faculty Member, Department of Operations

Approved by:

CDR Marineau 11 FEB 91
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The plan soon unravelled and it is here where the real value of the campaign can bear fruit. The lessons learned are salient today in the Persian Gulf as the Allied Coalition of twenty-eight nations squares off in the desert in Iraq. Although the hostilities are only weeks old, there is enough "anecdotal" evidence for some analysis.

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CHAPTER I

PREWAR POLITICS AND PLANNING

Turkey: The decline of the Ottoman Empire started with the Treaty of Carlowitz in 1699 and ended with the Greco-Turkish War at the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Before the defeat of the Ottomans by the Hapsburg dynasty in 1699, the empire extended from Oran, Algeria, across the southern and eastern Mediterranean Sea to Montenegro, Yugoslavia. It included most of North Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and most of the sea coasts on the Western Persian Gulf and Eastern Red Sea.¹

From 1699 to 1923, it was slowly whittled away to its present borders. But at the start of World War I, Turkey still had "empire". Her Middle East possessions were intact. They included Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and the east and west coasts of Arabia (except for Kuwait, which was a British protectorate). Under her umbrella, Turkey ruled all the Holy Cities of Islam--Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem.²

Politically at the start of the war, the country was an Islamic republic with many of the trappings of western democracies but the real power lay in the "Young Turks". The Young Turks was a phrase to describe the Party of Union and Progress. The principal players at the time were Talaat Bey Pasha (the Minister of the Interior and the real power prior to the outbreak of the war), Enver Pasha (the Minister of Defense and the real power once the war started), and Said Halim Pasha (the Grand Vizier).³

The war broke out in Europe in August of 1914 but even by October, Turkey was neutral. But in our present lexicon she was



"tilting" towards the Central Powers. Germany had gone to great lengths and expense to court the Young Turks with financial and military aid. Just after Turkey entered the war, the German propaganda machine spread the rumor that the Kaiser had embraced Islam. His new name, as is the custom when one becomes a true believer in Islam, was Hadji Mohammed Guilliano. (Hadji is the term applied to only those who have made a pilgrimage to Mecca.) Although this would seem an insult to the intelligence and reverence of Muslims, the Young Turks were not noted for their religious fervor. The intended hope of Turkey and the Central Powers was to gain support of Muslims around the globe. Further, Hadji Guilliano had a "dream" and a voice came from heaven for him to be the "Savior of Islam and the Sword of the Lord" to "Arise and Fight".⁴ (Now where have we heard this recently.) As the Defender of Islam, he called for a Jihad against the British and their allies.

This, of course, was not the real reason why Turkey entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. It did attempt to legitimize her position with her overwhelmingly Muslim population. The decision to ally herself with Germany could be seen as choosing between the lesser of two evils. The Entente (Great Britain, France, and Russia) pleaded with the Ottomans to remain neutral.

The British realized the importance of Turkey's geography. The Dardenelles and Bosphorus Straits were about the only key maritime land masses in the world the British did not control. The British also realized that Turkey possessed a large portion of

the world's oil supply in Iraq. Oil was essential to keep the Royal Navy afloat. The threat from German U-Boats and American "isolationism" put greater importance on keeping the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. From Iraq, Turkey could threaten Persian and Kuwaiti oil fields. Turkey was also in a strategic position to cut off Great Britain from India, her Jewel in the Crown.

The Triple Entente also had drawbacks from a Turkish point of view. Romanoff Russia had been one of Turkey's inveterate adversaries since the time of Catherine the Great. Britain and France were also wooing Greece, a more recent rival of Turkey.

In return for her neutrality, the only guarantee from the Entente was that Turkey would not be dismembered. The Entente would not guarantee her territorial boundaries. They also wished to "internationalize" the Straits, which in Tetaal Bey's view was just short of handing Constantinople over to the Russians. The Turks were far from being enamored with the Germans. But the Germans did offer more promise. Both Turkey and Germany had visions of expanding "Oriental Empire", of pushing the British out of the Suez Canal, controlling the gateway to the East, and of a Pan-Islamic sweep that would overrun India. The Turks were not wearing rose-colored glasses when envisioning these things. But at least the illusion of Grand Empire was a better prospect than what the Entente had to offer. Turkey's war aims were simple: Stay intact and pray for a German victory on the Western Front (i.e., don't lose too much of what they had).⁵

Great Britain: Much can be said for the British entry in the war. I will attempt to limit the scope. The economic realities



of the times required her to form entangling alliances. But unlike previous pacts, Britain made a commitment to France to send the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in the event that hostilities broke out. This was unprecedented in British history. She had never committed large ground forces in Europe in the past. Instead, she relied on buying her way into allegiances and avoiding the expense of a large army. Even at Waterloo, one of the greatest British victories in Europe, she only fielded 25,000 troops; the majority of the force was supplied by her allies. But her abrogating her long tradition of small standing armies was a result of the expense of the dreadnought navy. Large battleships required enormous funding. To keep her influence around the world she relied on France to share her maritime burden in the Mediterranean in exchange for the BEF to deploy to Europe.⁶

If global war broke out, the British Imperial General Staff saw the danger of Turkey aligning with the Central Powers. Turkey could cause the supply lines to Russia to come to a halt. The threat the Ottomans posed with her proximity to the Suez Canal and the Middle East could strangle the flow of oil and disrupt Sea Lines of Communication to India. The threat posed by an Islamic uprising incited by Turkey and spreading through Persia and Afghanistan to India (with a Muslim population of seventy million) was also taken very seriously.⁷

Countering these problems was a task both Great Britain and India examined very early. With a large commitment to the French of ground troops, an agreement was reached that India would share the burden of defending the Empire in the Orient. By 1912, plans

were on the shelf that committed Indian troops to the Western Front and to defend the oil fields in Abadan and Kuwait. It was also decided that Simla, India's version of Whitehall (Ministry of Defence), would be responsible for the conduct of the campaign in Mesopotamia, where the oil fields were. Both Whitehall and Simla agreed that India would supply, equip, and train the Indian Expeditionary Force "D" that would be tasked for the Campaign. These troops were comprised of British, Hindu, Muslim, and Chinese troops that made up the colonial armies at the time.⁹

Unfortunately, the events in Southern Asia did not cease to exist. Although on paper the Indian army was made up of seven and a half divisions (of which two and a half would be committed to the Western Front), it was really composed of six divisions and a brigade of cavalry.⁹ The bulk of these forces prior to the outbreak were preparing (and fighting) the "war" on the North-West Frontier. This is similar in some respects to NATO troops who were preparing to fight "the war in Central Europe" pulling up stakes and heading to Saudi Arabia. The Indian army was more concerned with keeping hostile tribes out of India and preparing for perceived incursion from Afghanistan.

CHAPTER II

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Turkey's Strategy: The Ottoman's fate would ultimately be settled in Europe.¹ Turkey was aware of her inferior military and economic capability to wage a protracted war, and acquiesced to the fact that the success of the Central Powers spelled her lot. To recap, Turkey would attempt to 1) Apply her military forces to maintaining her territorial boundaries, 2) Take advantage of any opportunities the Allies presented to expand her empire, and 3) Avoid at all costs any major military defeats.

This was not a long sought, well-planned war strategy that Turkey adopted years earlier like the Central and Allied war plans. Up until August 1914, the Turks were accepting military training for her army from the Germans and from the British for her navy. The Turkish parliament was pro-French and British, whereas the Young Turks were pro-German.²

A few events occurred during this time which tilted the balance in Germany's favor. First, the British failed to deliver on two warships that were promised. (The British needed them to enhance their own naval posture.) Second, The Germans cruisers, *Goeben* and *Breslau*, escaped soon after hostilities commenced into the Straits. They took refuge in Constantinople, a serious violation of Turkey's declared neutrality if they were allowed to repatriate. Coupled with the discussion of the Entente's other drawbacks from Chapter I, Enver Pasha remained "neutral" but prepared for war against the Triple Entente. "As one Belgian jurist proclaimed, 'Germany has captured Turkey.'"³ On October 31, 1914,

Enver Pasha would allow the German cruisers to attack the Black Sea port of Odessa and within two days all the Allied (Entente) Powers had declared war on Turkey.

British Strategy: The strategic objectives for the initial campaigning in Mesopotamia, hammered out before the war started and reaffirmed in August 1914 were 1) Secure the oil fields and protect British interests in the Northern Persian Gulf, 2) Secure the Sea Lines of Communications in the Persian Gulf to India, and 3) Secure the cooperation of the Sheiks of Mohemmerah and Kuwait.⁴

The first strategic objective was previously mentioned for its importance to an oil-burning navy. In early September, 1914, the Indian government sent a company of troops to secure the pipelines and facilities of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. It was obvious that this resulted in little more than an increased police action. If the Turks entered the war, they would be no match for the Ottoman forces stationed in the Basra vilayet.

What was required for this objective and the other two, was a credible force ready the moment war was declared to overwhelm would-be threats and show British resolve to the local Arab tribes. Only by impressing the Sheiks of Mohemmerah and Kuwait that the British were in control could Arab cooperation be assured. Without the help of these two Sheikdoms, the necessary manpower needed to keep the long pipelines and the facilities secure would be a drain on British manpower. At this juncture, manpower was a critical commodity.

Such decisive action would require forward deployment of the Indian Expeditionary Force "D" (IEF). Having already sent the two



and a half divisions to the Western Front in August, the IEF was literally scraped together from home guard units and the regular Indian Army elements that could be spared. By October, the IEF was deployed to Baherain so it could begin operations immediately if war was declared on Turkey.⁶

Turkish Operational Objectives: Remaining intact was the Turkish planned strategy. Operationally, it meant deciding on the disposition of her forces. With guidance from the Central Powers, Turkey planned to fortify the Straits of Dardenelle. This would shut off the southern supply route by sea to the Russians. The only recourse to supply Russia would be across Persia, who wished to remain neutral; from the north across the Sea of Norway (and from there the long trek to the Russian frontlines); or, across the Trans-Siberian Railroad which was subject to attacks both from the enemy and the weather.⁶

Second on the list of importance was the Caucasus. It was here that Turkey and Germany decided that they had their best chance of exploiting the weakness of the Russians.

The Sinai peninsula was a potential weakness for the British. With most of her manpower now deployed on the Western Front, the British troops guarding the Suez Canal were mostly colonial troops. Again it was felt by the Central Powers that here was another weakness that could reap tremendous success if exploited.

In Mesopotamia, where the Turkish military was very strong before the war, the Turks did not feel the threat from invasion was credible. Persia was remaining neutral and her own internal problems were more than she could handle. Although the deployment

of the IEF to Baherain was known, the Turks had already redeployed their forces, thinking that Great Britain would not be so bold as to open up another front while she was bogged down in France. The Battle of the Marne had just taken place and the losses of both the Germans and the Allies were astronomical. As such, Turkey stripped the vilayets of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul of the equivalent of an Army and an Army Corps. By the end of October, she had only twenty-two battalions left for the entire Mesopotamian area. The total Turkish forces amounted to 17,000 rifles, 380 sabers (cavalry), 44 field guns and 3 machine guns.⁷

British Operational Objectives: The strategic objectives for the IEF were translated into an amphibious landing in Fao, a small town on the mouth of the Shatt al Arab; securing Umm Qasr to the west as a staging area for follow on forces; and subsequently seizing Basra, the legendary port of Sinbad. The IEF would consolidate its defenses on the Shatt al Arab to assure the defense of the oil fields.

On October 4, 1914, British Brigadier General M. S. Delemain was ordered to move his forces to Baherain with instructions to prepare to reinforce the defenses around Abadan. He was also given secret orders to prepare for a landing in Mesopotamia, in the event war broke out between Turkey and Great Britain. After the naval bombardment of Odessa by the German cruisers on October 31, 1914, he was given the execute order.⁸ On November 2, 1914, Great Britain declared war on Turkey. That same day, British coastal and river patrol boats commenced bombardment of Turkish



gun positions. On November 3, 1914, Delamain's advance guard of the IEF commenced their landing at the town of Fao.

CHAPTER III

PHASE I OF THE CAMPAIGN

Delamain's forces consisted of 5,000 troops (1,000 British), 1200 animals (mostly mules) and two mountain batteries.

Delamain's landing was supported by British patrol boats. The landing force was supplied with 1000 rounds per rifle and 735 rounds of artillery shells per gun (eight guns total). The troops were dressed in the winter mountain uniform which was considered appropriate for the climate.¹ In short, they were adequately prepared for sustained operations.

Opposing Delamain was between 2,000 to 3,600 Turkish troops (including about 1000 gendarmes).² The Turkish commander in Mesopotamia had husbanded the bulk of his forces in the Baghdad area, seeing the Russian forces advancing through Persia as his main threat. From this day, until the Battle of Ctesiphon almost a year later, the Turks would steadily be pushed back.

The landing at Fao was nothing less than a success. The Turkish forces were rounded up in a matter of a few days with light casualties on both sides. The first wrinkle in the plan came from intelligence that the Turks were regrouping in the vicinity of Umm Qasr. The second wrinkle was the weather. Soon after the landing, winter rains came. It made the terrain virtually impassable. Delamain's last wrinkle was in his communication link. The wireless communications to India--the only link to Simla--was severely interrupted by thunderstorms in the regions. Not knowing the arrival date of the reinforcements, Delamain wisely chose to hold on to what he had.³

On the fourteenth of November, Lieutenant General Sir A. A. Barrett and his Sixth Division arrived. He assumed command of the Indian Expeditionary Force "D" and after conferring with Delamain, changed the plan. His decision was to go straight up the Shatt al Arab to Shamshamiya. This would link his forces with the Sheiks of Mohemmerah's force and the small British garrison at Abadan.⁴

In addition to Delamain's "wrinkles", Mohemmerah, the Sheik's town, was in a critical situation. Substantial Turkish forces from Baghdad and the remnants of Basra had assembled across the river from Mohemmerah. Barrett, realizing the importance not only of the Sheik's case, but the whole Arab view in the area, immediately commenced operations.

The Turks were busy not only near Mohemmerah, but were fortifying Basra and obstructing the Shatt al Arab near Shamshamiya. They constructed trench lines on the right bank of the Shatt al Arab. (Because the Tigris, Euphrates and Shatt al Arab meander, the "right" and "left" bank are used with the view looking downstream toward the Gulf as the reference.)⁵

Barrett disembarked the bulk of his infantry, two batteries and a squadron of cavalry. This was required for two reasons: 1) to reinforce Delamain's Brigade and 2) to lighten the load of the transport ships so they could cross the sand bars at the mouth of the Shatt al Arab. (See Table 1.) Barrett's Sixth Division consisted of about 7,000 troops.⁶

The British forces slugged their way up the right bank of the river towards Mohemmerah. They had made good use of their patrol boat gunnery. They also had better mobility because of the Royal

Navy river boats and improvising landing crafts from the local populace. These boats were called *bellums*.⁷ The British would make good use of these boats that ranged in size from one to twenty tons in capacity, with a relatively shallow draft.

The Turks were routed by the eighteenth of November with light British casualties (54 KIA, 434 WIA). The Turks who had amassed about 4600 troops by now suffered severely with losses between 1500 and 2000 dead or wounded and 150 taken prisoner.⁸

Two important lessons were learned early on by the British--mirage and mobility. The mirage is a phenomena experienced year round in the Mesopotamian plains. The mirage hampered targeting and battlefield intelligence. The illusions caused by the sun and the dust made it next to impossible to tell the size and activity of an enemy unit. Sometimes enemy units approached within 600 yards before forward observers and infantry could see the number of the enemy (with gross exaggerations usually) or whether the enemy was on foot or mounted.⁹

Mobility was hampered by the inundation from the rains and the flooding river. The greatest drop off in elevation is between northern Iraq and Baghdad. Between Baghdad and the Gulf, however the total drop was 100 to 200 feet. Most of the silt carried by the river deposited in this plain. The combination of the low drop-off, rains, and melting snow (from the distant mountains in the springtime) made the Basra vilayet a virtual quagmire in all directions.¹⁰ The lack of mobility and the mirage were lessons that every new unit would learn the hard way.



With Mohemmerah firmly in hand, Barrett turned his army towards Basra. The Turks had made things easy for him. The Turkish garrison, seeing their position untenable against a force with numerical superiority and mobility, preferred an orderly withdrawal. They abandoned Basra, having set afire to all war stocks they could not carry.

Seeing the burning stocks from down the river, Barrett moved his forces hastily into Basra. In addition to the desire to claim his objective, Barrett was anxious to establish British law and order. On the twenty-third of November, not even a day after the Turks pulled out, the Union Jack was flying over Basra. That same day a civilian and military government was established.¹¹

In April, 1915, the Turks made one momentous effort to recapture Basra. The British had over extended themselves by capturing Qurna, the legendary Garden of Eden, the town where the Tigris and Euphrates converge. Receiving intelligence that the Turks were massing their forces, Barrett quickly withdrew his forces from Qurna.

The Turks were led by Lieutenant Colonel Sulaiman Askari, a veteran soldier who earned his distant posting by falling out of favor with the "Young Turks". He had assembled nearly 6,000 Turkish troops and about 14,000 local Arab tribesmen. This was a sizable force compared to Barrett's 12,000 who were disbursed along the Shatt al Arab to the Gulf.¹²

Barrett assembled his forces (about 7,000 troops) in a town nine miles southwest of Basra called Shaiba. His troops had to wade most of the distance since the road was mostly underwater.

Supplies were ferried by *bellums* just slightly down stream. The inundation made reinforcement and communication extremely difficult.

Sulaiman Askari led his troops into battle on a stretcher, wounded at Qurna the week prior. He had intended to counter the British forces at Shaiba with the Arabs and once engaged would begin a long flanking movement to capture Basra. Unfortunately, after a very brief success of turning back the British cavalry and the first infantry charge, the Arabs were routed. They soon fled.

Just prior to the battle, British reinforcements did arrive. Now the tide was turned. Despite heavy losses, the British took the Turkish lines. Sulaiman Askari, still on his stretcher, called his officers together. Before them he cursed the Arabs for the treachery and then shot himself for having suffered such a humiliating defeat.¹³

The Turks retreated towards Kut al Arab, this time being harassed by the Arabs he once called allies. The local Arab preference was not for their fellow Muslims but for the side that was winning. This was habit the Arabs would maintain throughout the war.

Phase I of the Mesopotamian Campaign soon came to a close but not without some important events. Two days before the battle at Shaiba, General Sir John Nixon arrived to assume command of all British forces in Mesopotamia. Seeing the importance of Qurna and the next towns up the rivers, Nasiriya on the Euphrates and Amar on the Tigris, Nixon ordered operations for their capture.¹⁴

Both these towns were taken with sizable casualties not only from enemy action but the elements as well. The heat had become a factor at Shaiba and continued to take its toll. The British tactic, facing numerical parity against defensive positions and the extreme heat in the day time, was to attack at night. This had its requisite problems, but the IEF prevailed. (See Table 2.)

Kut al Amar was the last objective in this phase. It wasn't attacked until September because of the heat and dwindling supplies. After heavy fighting, it was captured. By now, both London and Bombay were satisfied that all objectives were met. Lower Mesopotamia was firmly in British hands.

The last significant event was the arrival of Major General Sir Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend, new commander of the Sixth Division at Amar. His name would surpass all others in the "Mesopotamia Muddle".



CHAPTER IV

PHASE II OF THE CAMPAIGN

At this point, it is worth recapping the events in the world. The Western Front was a stalemate as all pre-war planning ground to a halt. With the Russians clamoring for strategic relief and British forces "chewing barbed wire" in France, Churchill proposed to attack the Central Powers' flank by an amphibious landing at Gallipoli. In February, Churchill had attempted to break through with the Navy alone and discovered what Nelson had said a hundred years prior, "Ships do not attack forts."

The Russians had, however, successfully thrown the Turks out of the Caucasus. On almost every front the Turks were losing. However, at Gallipoli they soon had the British troops (mainly Australian, New Zealand, and South Africans) pinned down on the beaches.

The only good news the British public received were distorted successes in Mesopotamia. The action in this theater was considered a "picnic". That was far from the truth.

By now, the Indian Expeditionary Force "D" was two divisions strong. With other combat service support, it numbered around 45,000.¹ But this force was stretched to the limit. No substantial improvements had been made in the port facilities since the start of the campaign. Some ships anchored six weeks to await docking and lighterage craft to unload.²

Despite this, Nixon felt the urge to take the offensive again. The Turks had been beaten in every engagement, sometimes even when they outnumbered the British. The British had the



advantage of firepower and technology, especially in the air. By this time, British planes were in the theater and being effectively used for intelligence and to some extent directing fire.

Both Whitehall and Simla had made it a point to warn Nixon that he should not extend his position if it meant risking the gains already achieved. He was informed that there would be no reinforcements and that he may lose some of his forces to the operations in the Sinai. But neither War office went so far as to limit Nixon if the opportunity arose to gain an advantage.³

Almost since the day he stepped off the boat in Basra, though, both he and Sir Percy Cox, his civilian counterpart in Mesopotamia, had "their eyes on the minarets of Baghdad."⁴ After Kut al Amar was seized, Nixon ordered Townshend to capture Baghdad.

Townshend's telegram reply sums up the operational reality:

"The Army Commander does not seem to realise the weakness and danger of his line of communication. We are now some 380 miles from the sea and have only two weak divisions, including my own, in the country. There is my division to fight and Gorrings to hold the line of communication from Kut to the sea. There is no possible support to give me if I receive a check, and the consequences of a retreat are not to be imagined."⁵

But Townshend obeyed his orders dutifully. Fortunately, Townshend had requested that six months of supplies be staged at Amar (50 miles downstream from Kut) prior to his attack on Kut. Nixon and Simla authorized six weeks.⁶ On the fourth of October, 1915, Townshend set out after the Turks who were in a hasty retreat to Baghdad.

The Turks had prepared defenses around Ctesiphon, a town 28 miles from Baghdad. The Turks were now closer to their rail

lines, which, although not completed over the mountains, were a vast improvement compared to lines of communication in the Basra vilayet. Baghdad had been the center of their supply lines and troop concentrations since the start of the war.

Townshend's forces, who had seen almost a year of continuous battle, marching 90 miles from Kut prepared to engage an enemy force well prepared and with short supply lines. The fighting was ferocious. It lasted many days. Surprisingly, the British won the battle. Not so surprisingly, they had spent themselves and were not prepared for any counterattack. Townshend knew he was beat. Tethered at the end of a thin supply line, he hastily beat a retreat. This time the Turks would stay on his heels. Sending the river craft ahead with the sick and wounded, Townshend informed Nixon of the situation. His worst dreams had come true.

Back at Kut, Townshend quickly regrouped. He correctly analyzed his options. Further retreat would only end in his own destruction in detail by the Turks. Retreat would further jeopardize the British foothold in Mesopotamia. At Kut he had prepared defenses and sufficient supplies for six weeks. Having already successfully withstood a siege at Chitral (India) in 1898, he chose to stand and fight at Kut. At Kut, the Turks could not advance any further downstream without exposing their rear area and flanks to the British, so bypassing Kut was improbable. It was now December and the overflowing banks of the Tigris also made it impossible.⁷

Townshend hoped to gain time for Nixon to gather reinforcements for his relief. Nixon, who was supposed to be



giving forces up to assist in the Sinai, now had to tell Simla and Whitehall his dilemma. Two divisions from the Sinai were promised but they would not arrive for four weeks. Even then it would take almost another week to get into the area of operations.⁸

The siege of Kut, the attempts for its relief, and its subsequent fall, were bitter pills to swallow for the British. In April, 1916, the Union Jack was struck and the white flag was raised over Kut. The British Sixth Division surrendered to the Turks. This was over 8,000 men. In their attempts to relieve the siege, the British suffered over 18,000 casualties.⁹ This came on the heels of the British evacuation in Gallipoli, where the British incurred 250,000 casualties.

Nixon fortuitously suffered health problems and requested relief from his command. General Sir Stanley Maude was chosen to succeed Nixon. This was the silver lining to the British black cloud. Thus, Phase II of British Mesopotamia campaign came to an end.

CHAPTER V

THE FINAL PHASE OF THE WAR

The surrender at Kut and the evidence of the horrid treatment of British and Indian sick and wounded started an outcry in Great Britain. Whitehall stepped in and took control. The Mesopotamia Commission was established in London to investigate the conditions that led to the maltreatment of the wounded. (This was a political expedient that resulted in some good but remained ignorant of the true circumstances surrounding the events. It was a whitewash to appease Parliament, while not provoking Bombay.)¹

Whitehall also took control of the Campaign in Mesopotamia. Between Gallipoli and Kut, they realized that coordination of all the theaters was critical to winning the war. The "Westerners" were still firmly in control but even they admitted a united effort was still the best solution to avoid future disasters.

General Maude's appointment was approved by Whitehall. Although the London War Office would be in control, supply, personnel and equipment would still be furnished by India. Maude took maximum advantage of the political situation in London and Bombay. He correctly viewed the problem as one of sustainment and not of manpower. The number of troops battling for the relief of Kut was not limited to troops in the theater, but how many could be sustained on the front line at the end of the river supply line.

Maude set about immediately to increase the flow of food and munitions to the front line troops. Between April and November,

Maude had doubled the tonnage of supplies flowing up the Tigris. This was accomplished by buying and leasing every spare shallow draft boat in India and Great Britain.²

But river craft were relatively slow and the Tigris' path was fraught with sand bars and tricky currents that compounded the problem. Maude realized his only alternative was to build a rail line between Basra and his positions upstream on the river. This railway system would stretch all the way to Baghdad by the campaign's conclusion.

The other problem of sustainment was food. Even by this late date in the campaign, most food stuffs were imported from India. Maude called for additional engineers to improve land reclamation and the levee and dike systems so that local Arab farmers could produce more food. This obviously had the secondary benefit of winning the local populace over to the British. What the Turks had failed to do in hundreds of years of occupation, Maude accomplished in six months.³

With no substantial increase in troop strength, Maude commenced his offensive campaign in November 1916. By the following year, Maude had routed the Turks out of Baghdad. In his path he left the efficiency of British technology, building the railway, increasing the available farm land. Although Maude died soon after the capture of Baghdad, the mechanism he had implanted continued its juggernaut roll. By Armistice day, the British controlled all of Iraq.

The fighting was hard throughout. The only real difference in British operational strategy was Maude's refinement of the

sustainment of his forces. The final phase of the campaign was a tribute to Maude's drive, efficiency and *coup d'oeil*.



CHAPTER VI

LESSONS LEARNED/LESSONS APPLIED

Lessons Learned: Army Field Manual FM 100-5 has this to say about the culminating point:

"The key to success in an offensive campaign is to defeat the enemy before the offensive reaches what Clausewitz called its 'culminating point.' This culminating point is achieved when such a force on the offensive expends so much of its strength that it ceases to hold a significant advantage over the enemy. At that point the attacker either halts to avoid operating at a disadvantage or goes and risks becoming weaker than the defender.

Culminating points occur because the attacker must consume resources and commit forces as he moves into enemy territory fighting successive battles and engagements. He must protect his flanks and rear area, sustain his momentum with reserves, and extend his lines of supply."¹

There was little question that the British had reached their culminating point in taking Kut the first time. Townshend's telegram to Nixon was FM 100-5 World War I style.

But Nixon chose to risk the venture. What Nixon had done was to ignore enemy capability and focus on enemy intention. At the time he ordered the Sixth Division into its fatal operation to Baghdad, the British and Turkish forces were almost numerically equal. However, as Townshend progressed towards Baghdad, the Turkish line of communication became shorter and the British line of communication longer.

But there are no billboards signs along the route of march that say "This is your culminating point. Proceed at your own risk." A commander must decide for himself where this point is. He must also weigh the advantage he gains and the risks he takes if he decides to continue. In the case of the first attempt to capture Baghdad, Nixon felt the capture of Baghdad was worth the

risk, especially since the Turks had lost every prior major engagement.

Field Manual 100-5 also has an insight on the problem of sustainment which proved to be Nixon's Achilles' Heel. FM 100-5 states the important considerations influencing theater sustainment organization and planning are: forces available, theater infrastructure, host nation support, and establishment of the sustainment base and major sustainment systems (transportation, maintenance, supply, personnel and health services).² Up to Maude's appointment, these considerations were paid lip service. Maude, on the other hand, attacked these principals as zealously as he attacked the Turks. Using Arab workers and British engineers, he built the railway and rebuilt the dams and dikes. No operations were considered without first planning for sustainment.

In the principals of military warfare we select, allocate, and task air, sea, land, and space forces. We attempt to answer the questions: What forces are required to accomplish the assigned mission?; What forces are available?; What tasking must be given to ensure mission success?; and, Is the risk involved in committing those forces acceptable?

Both Nixon and Maude were faced with identical problems. Nixon failed: Maude succeeded. The number of troops fighting the battles did not increase. What did increase was combat service support personnel necessary to ensure mission success. The major improvements to the logistical infrastructure were available motorized river craft, and road and railway networks. The bulk of



the manpower was provided by the local population--the same population that Nixon failed to utilize.

In strategy and operations we also have a series of questions to answer: What military condition must be produced in the theater of war to achieve the strategic goal?; What sequence of action is most likely to produce that condition?; and, How should the resources be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?

This is where Nixon failed miserably. He had accomplished his strategic goals by April 1915. He had secured the oil and the region from Turkish control, the SLOC's were secure, and the local Arab populace was cooperating. The venture into Baghdad was militarily unnecessary. However, politically, the advance on Baghdad was seen as a positive step, at least in terms of world headlines. This is probably why Nixon was allowed to proceed, although both London and Bombay insist this was not their reasons for capturing Baghdad.

Maude's venture into Baghdad was definitely a political goal in attempt to : British prestige in the Middle East and around the world like Nixon, though, Maude focused on enemy capabilities, and planned accordingly. He ensured the allocation of resources for the sustainment of his offensive was in place before he took his first step.

Once in Baghdad, he was forced to extend to Mosul and to the West. In these regions, the Turks would be able to control the flow of water to the Baghdad area and possibly flood him out. He viewed inundation as a definite military capability. Fortunately

he was able to secure the critical areas before the Turks were able to realize their potential threat.

The failures and successes in Mesopotamia give a clear picture of the value of the planning process in campaigning. Planning, like air and sea power, may not win wars but it can certainly lose them.

Lessons Applied: Desert Storm is now three weeks old. It pits the 28 nation coalition against Iraq. Its predecessor, Desert Shield, started in August, 1990. Both operations seem to be guided at this juncture by both long term strategic goals established in the 1960's, and the immediate goals for the operations there now.

The long term goals are divided into strategic, economic and political aims. The strategic goal is to prevent any one regional power from being dominant. The economic goal is to maintain the flow of oil for the United States and its allies. The political goal is to promote regional stability through quiet diplomacy.

President Bush stated the strategic goals for operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm very shortly after the United States forces were committed to the area. These goals were in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. They are: First, the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; Second, the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government; Third, the security and stability for the Gulf; And fourth, the protection of American citizens abroad.³ The question is how do these goals relate to the size, structure and operations of the forces committed.



To accomplish the goals stated by President Bush, General Schwarzkopf sent in the 82nd Airborne Division, followed quickly by the First Marine Expeditionary Force and the Army's Twenty-fourth Mechanized Division. These units were selected from his force list and were immediately dispatched in accordance with pre-war staging plans. The plans were probably altered somewhat, but the mechanisms used to get them there were established long before the first Iraqi tanks crossed the Kuwaiti border.

The first and second goals were translated into economic sanctions on Iraq. For this, the Coalition Allies prevented any goods from coming into and out of Iraq and occupied Kuwait by interceptions of merchant shipping at sea.

It was clear at least to the President and the National Command Authority that these sanctions were not having their desired effect. Iraq announced its annexation of Kuwait, replaced the Republican Guard units that spearheaded the invasion with the Iraqi army. Iraq began a systematic pillage of the country while at the same time had the Iraqi army erect formidable defenses. These are not the actions of a country who is heeding the warnings of the United Nations.

In the long run, White House critics said, the sanctions would work. In the long run, Lord Maynard Keynes said, we are all dead. The sanctions may have eventually driven Iraq out of Kuwait, but there would have been no Kuwait left to restore. President Bush called on the United Nations once again to authorize offensive action to accomplish Iraq's removal.



Once again, General Schwarzkopf was faced with another decision. The selection, allocation and tasking would be different for offensive operations for land, sea, air and space forces. The questions of strategy and operations would also have to be rethought: What military condition must be produced in the theater of war to achieve the strategic goal?; What sequence of action is most likely to produce that condition?; How should the resources of the forces available be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?

General Schwarzkopf's mission was not the annihilation of the Iraqi army, the capitulation of Ba'th Party, or the removal of Saddam Hussein. His goals were stated succinctly by President Bush. So far, in Phase I and Phase II of Desert Storm, Stormin' Norman has followed his orders to the letter and spirit of Presidential guidance.

In Phase I of the campaign, the following operational goals were stated: Destruction of Iraq's Air Defense System (radars, runways and aircraft); destruction of command and control centers; destruction of his nuclear, biological and chemical production; and, the destruction of his missile capability. All these objectives are in concert with restoring the balance of power to the region or to facilitate further prosecution of the war (i.e., her air defense systems and command and control centers.)

Phase II of the campaign, also conducted mostly by air, centered on preparing the battlefield, destruction of the Republican Guard units, destruction of war supplies, and lines of



communications. Phase II also continued the destruction of Phase I targets.

Had Iraq elected to withdraw from Kuwait at the end of Phase I of the campaign, most of the objectives would have been met. The fact that weapons of mass destruction were first on the list was no coincidence. Reducing the levels of production of these weapons increases regional stability and the restoration of the balance of power.

The targets for Phase II concentrate on what Schwarzkopf believes to be the Iraqi center of gravity--the Republican Guard Units. Without the support of these troops, Saddam Hussein's control of the Iraqi government is degraded. Although it is doubtful if it will lead to his capitulation, he may be more inclined to listen to more moderate Iraqi leaders. (Conversely, they may have more courage to voice their thoughts with less fear of execution.)

Where all these things blend together is in planning and decision making. The two vital ingredients are enemy capability and own courses of action. Here, again, CENTCOM staffers have done their planning. The number one enemy capability that Iraq has demonstrated is her willingness to ignore the International Law of Armed Conflict and the Hague traditions and Geneva Conventions. Saddam Hussein has done everything he has said he would do--bomb population centers, expand the war through terrorism (to include environmental terrorism), and, in previous wars, use chemical and biological weapons.

So far, the Allied Coalition has countered all of these. The terrorism outside the theater will require the vigilance of each nation. But, in the theater, the results of western technology have been impressive.

Iraq will use all weapons of mass destruction at her disposal. The Allied Coalition is prepared to the greatest extent possible. However, reprisal for such use must be decided at the highest level. Reprisal may even take the form of new strategic goals. Given new goals, the sequence of action and subsequent planning must also change. There seems to be no reason to believe the resolve of the community of nations, the National Command Authority, the leadership in the theater will falter.

The day we achieve the stated goals of the President is the day offensive operations should cease. The peace we win may not be to everyone's liking. Ideally, we seek Iraq to assume her role as a responsible member in the community of nations. Pragmatically, we will accept Saddam Hussein put back in his bottle with his offensive capability reduced to the bare bones.

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TABLE 1

FACTORS AFFECTING NAVIGATION

Section of river	Length in miles	Average width in yards	Average depth in feet	
			Low Water	Flood
Basra to Qurna	46	600-270	10	45
Qurna to Ezra's Tomb	29	270-65	9	19.5
Ezra's Tomb to Qala Salih	28	70	5	13
Qala Salih to Amara	29	197	6.5	13
Amara to Kut al Amara	153	330	6.5	26
Kut al Amara to Baghdad	213	380	6.5	26

TABLE 2.

TEMPERATURES (FAHR.) OF DIFFERENT CENTERS IN MESOPOTAMIA

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Baghdad	High	75	84	99	99	109	119	120	121	117	108	95	81
	Low	21	30	33	44	50	63	71	69	56	48	29	18
Basra	High	80	83	92	100	114	111	114	114	109	101	92	77
	Low	24	31	40	52	59	70	71	69	58	53	36	30
Mosul	High	63	66	71	88	103	110	119	117	114	97	87	72
	Low	04	05	35	38	53	62	71	67	58	49	29	28

Source: Mobley, Brig. Gen. F.J., The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918. Vol. I. (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923) pp. 3 & 8.