

The Mesopotamian Front!

As Observed by Lieutenant Colonel Edward Davis, U.S. Cavalry, 1918

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From December 1914 until the end of World War I in 1918, the Indian Expeditionary Army (IEF), later renamed the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force (MEF), waged a multi-front campaign against Turkish forces under the able command of British General Sir Stanley Maude.¹ After almost 3 years of relative neglect in favor of the strategically more important Western, Balkan, and Palestine Fronts, as well as the incompetence at all levels of command and lack of inertia that characterized the first 3 years of campaigning in Mesopotamia, a combined British-Indian Expeditionary Force under the command of General Maude, eventually defeated a large Turkish force after he first reorganized his supply lines and his depleted forces received reinforcements from India and England.

Reinforced and resupplied, the IEF launched a multifront offensive against the combined Turkish-German forces positioned in front of the Turkish-controlled city of Baghdad. To observe the Indian (British) army in Mesopotamia in action, the U.S. War Department sent Lieutenant Colonel Edward Davis, U.S. Cavalry, in 1917 to the headquarters of General Maude, and the now-renamed Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. Prior to his assignment to the Mesopotamia Front, it might be noted that in 1916, Davis observed British General Edmund Allenby's operations in the Sinai in Palestine.

While somewhat dated, Davis' observations, collated into a report to the War Department, nevertheless serves as a useful guide to the difficulties General Sir William R. Marshall, General Maude's successor, faced on his march toward Baghdad. While Davis admitted that the War Department may not find information therein contained "pertinent to current operations then ongoing on the Western Front," he stressed that the report nonetheless serves as useful primer on an extremely important area of potential military operations.

Davis' report is broken down into several parts, including a geographic introduction to Mesopotamia with an overview of the country's major transportation routes; the composition and distribution of the MEF; a front-by-front military analysis; navigation on the Tigris; and an synopsis or resume of military operations on the Mesopotamian Front. While some of Davis' analyses are dated, the report serves as a useful reminder for U.S. Army planners of the problems associated with operating in Iraq. Readers will note that Davis makes specific reference in several instances to "a white battalion." These were the British troops interspersed with the native Indian troops of the MEF. Because of India's proximity to Mesopotamia, the British Imperial General Staff used the Indian troops in this far-flung portion of the Empire. Davis' report discusses the problems associated "insofar as movement over land and water along the Tigris-Euphrates Fronts" was concerned. Davis also discusses the "humanitarian" work accomplished by the MEF, as well as the political activity carried out by British military officers who worked among the Iraqi peoples.

One can see the "low-intensity conflict nature" of the final phase of the Mesopotamian campaign where British and Indian troops carried out extensive combined small-unit operations similar to the U.S. Army's ongoing operations against the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. In many cases, these operations were carried out with infantry, aircraft, cavalry, and armored cars. In sum, Davis' report is a reminder that oftentimes a war's name may change and the combatants may differ, but the manner in which it is fought is timeless.

Editors Note: To preserve authenticity, ARMOR did not edit the terminology used in Lieutenant Colonel Davis' journal.

The Report of LTC Edward Davis, dated 29 July 1918

Military Intelligence Branch: Executive Division

Subject: The Mesopotamian Front

To: Chief, Military Intelligence Branch-G5

From: Lieutenant Colonel Edward Davis, U.S. Cavalry
Military Observer

Date Submitted: July 12, 1918²

1. Although sometimes objectionable, it would seem that the narrative form is best suited for the purpose of this particular report, and it therefore will be used.

2. When I received orders to join the British army in Palestine, for duty as observer, in 1917, it occurred to me that here



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was an opportunity to serve as well in Mesopotamia, a Front which I had desired to visit when I was with the British army in the Sinai Peninsula in 1916, but which I had refrained from doing on account of a supposed lack of time and for other reasons. I felt that the government should have at least one officer with personal knowledge of all the Fronts, including the Mesopotamian Front and its related associations of India and Persia. Logically, as the Macedonian and Palestine Fronts, and the Egyptian War area had been under my observation during the preceding two years, the addition of the Mesopotamian area would be appropriate and would give me personal acquaintance with all the Fronts of the war, except the Italian, which I hoped might be subsequently added — and which has been. It appears now that I was probably mistaken in believing that the government would be able to utilize an officer with this comprehensive knowledge of all existing Fronts but there is always the possibility of a changed attitude, and, in any event my professional experiences have been immeasurably enriched, which is naturally a great personal satisfaction.

3. Immediately upon joining the British army in Palestine, I took up the question of going to Mesopotamia and in due course received an invitation from General Sir Stanley Maude to come to Baghdad with a view to service on that Front. Although death unfortunately removed Sir Stanley from the scene of his successful accomplishments, I interpreted his invitation as the wish likewise of his successor, General William R. Marshall. The brilliant success of the Palestine Campaign and the amount of professional material, which I gathered there as an observer, held me in that area for a longer time than I had expected, but this delay resulted eventually in good fortune because it enabled me to go to Mesopotamia in company with Major General Webb Gillman, Chief of Staff, Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force,

who had been Chief of Staff of the British Salonica Force until the Spring of 1917, and who happened to be one of my best friends. He had been in Egypt attending a conference with General Sir Reginald Wingate, the British Resident, General J.C. Smuts, and General Allenby. It was a great advantage as well as a great pleasure to accompany General Gillman from Egypt to Baghdad, not only because of his great knowledge of the Mesopotamian area and of the war situation in general, which made his perspective of real value, but because of his acquaintance with the places and the people with whom we came in contact.

Leaving Cairo March 3rd 1918, we arrived at Aden on March 9th and while there, inspected the small, but essential, Aden Front in company with the commanding general thereof. Aden will be made the subject of a separate report.

India

We arrived at Karachi, India, March 15th as it was necessary there to transfer to another steamer in order to get to Mesopotamia, and as no such steamer was to sail for several days, General Gillman took advantage of the interval to visit Delhi, the capital of India, for the purpose of conferring with the Viceroy and the commander in chief regarding the entire Eastern situation. General Gillman was kind enough to ask me to accompany him to Delhi, which I did as the guest of the government of India. During our brief stay in Delhi, I was received by the Viceroy and by the commander in chief, and had such an opportunity likewise to discuss the Eastern situation with various other officers pertaining to the Indian government and Indian army. Our trip to Delhi was across the Sinai Desert and the plains of Kajputana, while on their return journey. We were able to go north almost as far as Lahore, thus seeing something of the Punjab and the valley of the Indus River down to Karachi. In Karachi, we had sev-



eral talks with the commissioner in Sind, a man of life-long experience in India and as an able official of the government.

Persia

March 24th, we left Karachi on a transport that carried a battalion of the 124th Baluchistan Infantry, which was being sent to reinforce the British and Indian Detachments then in Southern Persia for the purpose of maintaining order in that area as against the plots and disturbances initiated by German agents. On March 27th, we landed this battalion at the port of Bandar Abbas, on the south shore of Persia near the entrance of the Persian Gulf. We went ashore with the battalion and met the Persian Lieutenant Governor of the District, and other officials.

The condition of Persia was chaotic; the government being very weak and vacillating, scarcely knowing which way to turn between the two contending forces of the Allies represented by the British authorities, and the Central Powers represented by a large numbers of agents. The Persians as a people are an unfortunate lot, without advantages as to character and education and greatly lacking in that quality of cohesion, which we call a national conscience. The British had given considerable encouragement and direction to a locally recruited force called the South Persian Rifles and had also sent into the country about 10,000 British Indian troops but, in spite of this, the tribes were far from tranquil.

Busrah — The Base

On March 31st, we arrived at Busrah, the Base of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, which lies 67 miles from the Persian Gulf up the Busrah River, or Shatt-al-Arab, the stream formed by the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates.³ Late in 1914, when the operations commenced on this

Front, Busrah was a small, sleepy, oriental town almost entirely landing, handling, sorting, and transshipping large quantities of stores. The anchorage for all steamers was in midstream. The country around Busrah is absolutely flat in all directions and is only two or three feet above the level of the river, which tends to overflow and flood the town from the north, while the backwater from the Persian Gulf makes the same threat from the southeast. All along the river are groves of date palms. There are several million of these trees in the Busrah area and they are the mainstay of the region in the line of remunerative productivity and local food supply. As the entire country is intersected by deep, muddy creeks and irrigation ditches, its conversion into a base was just that more difficult. There was only one road in the region that ran from the river town of Ashar back to Busrah proper, a distance of about two miles. Thus, in the early days of the Mesopotamian campaign, the inadequacy of Busrah as a base contributed in full measure to the unfortunate circumstances, which brought those early operations to an almost fruitless and regrettable conclusion.

Improvements At Busrah

At the time of my arrival, Busrah was in many respects a well-equipped and adequate base. Practically all the work was performed during the preceding 18 months. About one mile of fairly good landing stages had been constructed along the river, and at Magill, several miles up the river, excellent wharfage facilities were being installed along a river frontage that would permit 15 ocean-going steamers to tie up and work cargo at the same time, instead of anchoring in midstream and discharging and loading cargo by lighters. This is a very expensive project because every bit of the wood and metal used has to be imported from India or some more remote place.

To prevent the water from the Busrah River from flooding the many establishments of the base, a huge bund or dam has been built south and southeast of the town. Many roads have been built connecting the many elements of the base along the river front and a great belt road has been constructed and properly metalled, connecting the river area with the outlying groups of base camps, hospitals, and various other features. All of the stone and other material used in metalling this road had to be brought from India.

Before the war, there were very limited facilities at Busrah for the repair of the few steamers that were on the river, and of course these facilities were insufficient for the first inadequate river transport, which was provided for the Mesopotamian army in the early days. As part of the subsequent reorganization and in order to provide for the upkeep of the greatly increased number of river steamers, a large shipyard was installed at Busrah on which over six millions dollars had been spent. The yard comprises dry dock facilities for the river steamers, machine shops, foundries, and supply depots of various sorts.

As a part of the hospital establishment at Busrah, a herd of 1,000 milk cows is maintained. This wise provision emphasizes another inadequacy of Mesopotamia as it exists today, that is to say, no milk in any quantity is obtainable locally and the distance from India prohibits shipment of the commodity.

Abbadan

Coming up the river from the Persian Gulf, about 40 miles below Busrah, one saw the town of Abbadan, the site of the offices, works, storage-tanks, and general depot of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the institution that caused the Mesopotamian operations in the first instance; a subject which will be referred to in another paragraph.

Mesopotamian Railways

The distance from Busrah to Baghdad by river is 502 miles, but this distance has been somewhat shortened by the railways, which have been built for the supply of the army. The railways currently in operation consist of a standard gauge railway from Busrah to the west as far as the town of Nasiriyah on the Euphrates, which is used only to support troops in that vicinity; a standard gauge railway from Busrah up the right bank of the Tigris as far as Amara; a standard gauge railway from Kut-al-Amara up the left bank of the Tigris to Baghdad; a standard gauge line forms the Baghdad line from Baghdad west to the town of Dhibban, beyond Feluja, on the Euphrates; the original Eastern section of the "Berlin-Baghdad Ry," from Baghdad North to Samarra, this being a standard gauge railway of the latest and most substantial type; narrow gauge railways northeast from Baghdad to Baqubah and Shah Roban, where the grading has been completed over the Jebel Hamrin Hille to Kizil Robot, the idea being to carry the railway eventually on into Persia through Khan-i-Khin, Kasr-i-Shirin, Hamadan, and Kermanshah to Teheran, which, I believe, was the original idea of the Germans in connection with the main line of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. (At present, this is a narrow gauge line as far as Shah Roban, the work of converting it into a standard gauge having commenced at the Baghdad end before I left that place); and a standard gauge railway south from Baghdad toward Hilla and now completed as far as Museyib, this line will serve to bring out the prospective great grain yield from the region indicated.

Journey to Baghdad

In order to save time, my trip to Baghdad was not made by river steamer, but by rail to Amara, thence, by steamer to

Kut-el-Amara — the scene of General Townsend's surrender, thence, by rail to Baghdad where I arrived April 4th.

Composition and Distribution of the MEF

At this time, the disposition of the MEF could be marked by a half circle, with a radius of 90 miles drawn around Baghdad as a center, which would roughly coincide with selected lines of resistance in various sectors, though it must not be thought that this half circle represents a line held continuously. As a matter of fact, there is no contact between the various sectors or fronts, the presence of insuperable natural barriers in the form of desert country being sufficient to keep the enemy from penetrating between sectors. The troops were disposed as:

- Base and headquarters lines of communications at Busrah.
- Lines of communications divided into five areas all on the Tigris or Shatt-al-Arab, including Busra, Kurna, Amara, Kut-al-Amara, and Baghdad Advanced Base.
- GHQ at Baghdad.
- III Indian Army Corps (13th British Division, 14th Indian Division, 6th Indian Cavalry Brigade, and a detachment of armored cars) on the Eastern or Persian Fronts, occupying the Jebel Hamrin Hills north of the Teheran Road, and the regions Kizil Robot, Khan-i-Khin, Kasr-i-Shirin, and other points along the road into Persia with the ultimate object of prolonging the line through Persia to the Caspian Sea, via Teheran.
- Ist Indian Army Corps (17th and 18th Indian Divisions) on the Northern or Tigris Fronts, occupying lines on the right and left banks of the Tigris just north of Samarra.
- The 15th Indian Division, 11th Cavalry Brigade, and armored cars on the Western or Euphrates Fronts, with advanced headquarters at Khan Bagdadie about 130 miles up the river from Baghdad. This division has since been consolidated with the cavalry into what is called "The Euphrates Force."
- A brigade at Hilla and a corresponding detachment in the Kerbela-Nedjef Region, 60 to 80 miles south of Baghdad. This is the Southern Front.
- A cavalry division (half British Regulars and half Indian Cavalry) divided between the various fronts and employed wherever and whenever an offensive was to be undertaken.

These fronts are now supplied, at least in part, by standard gauge railways built by the British, except the section of the Berlin-Baghdad Ry.

The force on the four Fronts was equivalent to a little more than six combat divisions; the others were Indian divisions. An Indian division has one white battalion in each brigade. The total ration strength of the army was just about 400,000. When one sees the length and character of the lines of communications, this large ration strength is understood.

The corps artillery of each corps consisted of two batteries of 60 pounders and four batteries of 6-inch Howitzers.

The Tigris Front — Samarra

My journey in seeing all the Fronts began with the Tigris Front. Left Baghdad April 5th, by train, arriving 75 miles north of Samarra on the morning of April 6th. The day was spent in going over the trenches of the 17th and 18th Divisions, which have each a frontage to the north of about two miles, with their flanks then refused and extended some distances down the stream and parallel thereto. By extending the refused flank well down the river, great additional secu-

ity is obtained, should the enemy attempt to turn the flank, he would find himself at a prohibitive distance from water, while the British defending troops with their superior mechanical facilities and their proximity to the river would not be handicapped in this respect. These trenches look like the trenches on all the other fronts but here, as elsewhere, there are interesting local problems in the selections of positions. On the right bank of the Tigris, the trenches lie on high ground near the river, with an almost perfect field of fire to the north; further away from the river, the position trends south among rolling hills where much study has been necessary to ensure a proper sweep of fire along the ground in front.

On the left bank of the river, the works lie north of the present city of Samarra, which is a walled city. Along this bank lies 20 or 30 miles of ruins, marking the sites of ancient Samarra at various stages of its growth and decay. Among these ruins, which extend several miles north of Samarra, there are no structures of any considerable height, but there is an endless mass of heaps of bricks in a confused jumble, overgrown for the most part by a light turf. To select a proper line amidst this huge field of ruins, without going too far north of Samarra, was a very difficult task. About two miles east of Samarra, rises the Tomb of Julius, a huge tumulus about 200 feet high, rising from the level plain. The presence of this isolated elevation adds difficulty to the situation.

The Tigris was about 300 yards wide at Samarra, when I was there. The water had risen considerably and the storm of a few days before had carried away the pontoon bridge that the British had installed. Communications were maintained by steam launch and lighter. While this caused no embarrassment with regard to the supply of the division on the left bank, there was naturally some uneasiness regarding the question of transfer of heavy guns and troops, should occasion have risen for any such movement. However, at this time, the Turk was in a mood of great discouragement and had no effective force nearer than 50 miles. It was considered that he could not affect a surprise because the British cavalry patrols many miles to the front were an insurance against this. Aeroplane reconnaissance also assisted in this security. I use the term "assisted" because even in the great flat stretches of the Eastern Fronts, the lesson has been driven home that concentration can be effected and large bodies of troops can move without the knowledge of such activity being gained by aeroplane reconnaissance.

As the text above has indicated, the valley of the Tigris at a point so far north as Samarra loses the feature of extreme flatness. Here, ranges of hills about 100 feet in height come almost up to the river's bank in places, receding again until they are sometimes two or three miles back from the river. This is a very great change from the country below Baghdad, which is everywhere as flat as a billiard table.

In general, the feeling on the Tigris Front was one of quietude, the trenches being very lightly held and most of the time being devoted to instruction; although preparations were about to be undertaken for a thrust northeast across the Jebel-Hamrin hills, into the region of Kifri-Kirkuk, where it was hoped a considerable capture of Turkish soldiers and guns might be made and the entire triangle between the Jebel-Hamrin and the Persian border cleared of a considerable Turkish detachment, which had afforded for a long time a convenient rendezvous and a means of access to Western Persia for an active organization of German and Turkish political agents. This thrust northeast from Samarra was carried out later and pushed through with great success as far north as the Lesser Zab River.

With a view to being ready for any Turco-German attempt to push down the Tigris, the British had made extensive plans for holding the Samarra position with the same end in view. These plans arose from the double necessity of being prepared for an enemy offensive and at the same time sending two divisions to the Palestine Front.

It should be added that while there was at one time considerable information that there would be a Turco-German attempt to push down the Tigris, the evidence in hand at the present time indicates that they have little intention of doing so and that it would take them a very long time to prepare for it after they reach such a decision.

Berlin-Baghdad Railway

My journey to Samarra was over the only section of the Berlin-Baghdad railway that the Germans built in Mesopotamia. I inspected this section on this occasion and also saw the terminal facilities at Baghdad on the other occasions.

The first material for this section was landed at Baghdad in June 1912; work was commenced about a month later and was completed in the latter part of 1914. In the meantime, a branch had been surveyed from Baghdad northeast to Khan-i-Khin on the western side of Persia in that rather indefinable region, which is more or less correctly referred to as Lower Kurdistan. However, there is no evidence that any work, other than survey, was done on this Khan-i-Khin Branch.

The Baghdad-Samarra section of this railway is very substantially built. The road bed is heavily ballasted; concrete culverts are established over all streams; the rails and cross ties are of the heaviest and the best steel employed for such purposes; the attachment of the rails to the cross ties and the fishplates is most thoroughly done. Switches, turntables, engine houses, station houses, platforms, and all the appurtenances of a railway system are built of the very best material and in a very substantial manner. The Turks in their retreat made some effort to ensure complete destruction of all rolling stock and other necessities of operation, but they did their work so stupidly and carelessly that the British were able to restore the railway to running order, with considerable rolling stock, including at least six first-class German locomotives, within a few weeks time.

The Euphrates Front

On the night of April 7th, I left Samarra and arrived at Baghdad April 8th, leaving that place the same day for the Euphrates Front, going by rail as far as railhead at Dhibban, from which place on April 9th I proceeded by automobile to Ramadie and on April 10th by automobile to a point a little west of Khan-Bagdadie, which is 130 miles up the Euphrates from Baghdad.

The Euphrates Front, at the time of my visit, was in what might be called a fluid condition. The 15th Indian Division and the 11th Cavalry Brigade, with a reinforcement of armoured cars and some heavy guns, had just reached out from Hit as far as Khan-Bagdadie and captured the entire 50th Turkish Division during an operation.

During this round-up of the 50th Division, a very creditable piece of work was done by an American, who held at that time a commission in the British army, to wit: Captain Kermit Roosevelt, of the Light Armoured Motor Car Brigade.⁴ These armoured motor cars made a successful effort to recapture two British officers of considerable rank who had been taken prisoners by the Turks when they had been forced to descend during an aeroplane flight over the Turkish lines, and who were being sent under escort to Aleppo at the time

of the battle of Khan-Bagdadie. Learning the whereabouts of these officers after the battle, the British division commander sent the armoured car brigade up the Euphrates, which they followed to a point 75 miles about Ana, or just about half way from Baghdad to Aleppo. During this push up the Euphrates, a part of the British forces chanced to encounter a very important German agent. They captured him, but left most of his baggage, together with a lot of papers, scattered about the bivouac where they had captured him. Later, Captain Roosevelt came along in his car, saw these papers, recognized the importance of them, gathered them up, and later turned them over to the appropriate staff officer. Upon careful examination, the papers proved to be of the very greatest importance and Captain Roosevelt was, for this act and for other instances of admirable conduct, suitably rewarded. I might add appropriately, that Captain Roosevelt by his work with the armoured cars, as well as by his generally admirable conduct, made a very favourable impression on the officers of the British Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, all of whom spoke of him in terms of the greatest praise.

The main British position on the Euphrates prior to General Brooking's advance had been at Ramadi, about 75 miles up the Euphrates from Baghdad. I went over the Ramadi position, but a description of the same is of little importance now. The trenches were the same in appearance as on all the fronts. I have walked through scores of miles of them without seeing any especially important points of superiority on one front as opposed to another. The Ramadi position lies on the right bank of the Euphrates and covers the west and south sides of the town. The positions were well selected and the work very thoroughly done. I also went over to the fields of the two battles for the possession of Ramadi.

The battle at Khan-Bagdadie, which resulted in the capture of the entire 50th Turkish Division, was fought in the hills of the right bank of the Euphrates. These hills are very jagged, rough, and irregular in direction, having no definite trend, although there are several fairly well defined ridges running back at right angles from the river. The Turkish commander made a very great mistake in sticking to these hills so long that General Brooking's cavalry was able to get round behind him, blocking the only road north by which he could retreat. The Cavalry commander had the armoured cars with him and was later reinforced by 1,500 infantry soldiers who were sent forward in Ford cars. It was a very definite and clean-cut victory.

A feature of the upper Euphrates region beginning about 40 miles up the river from Baghdad is the high range of hills seen for the most part on the right bank. As on the Tigris at Samarra, the presence of these hills is a great change from the Irak Arabi — as the country south of Baghdad is called in order to distinguish it from Mesopotamia proper, which lies entirely between the Tigris and Euphrates north of Baghdad. Beginning opposite Dhippan and continuing up the right bank of the Euphrates, as far as I went, that is at Khan-Bagdadie, the hills are exceedingly rich in gypsum, so much



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so that the hillsides flash in many places with the reflected sunrays. At the town of Hit, there are large deposits of bitumen.

The feeling on the Euphrates Front was a very natural air of great elation following a most complete and easy victory. I spent the best part of one day with the advanced headquarters of the 15th Division at Khan Bagdadie and there, as well as at points further south, I saw the Turkish prisoners brought in. The physical appearance of these prisoners is shown fairly well by the photographs which will be forwarded.⁵ Most of them were in good physical condition, although some were thin and sick looking. Their resources as to food had been very slim, as it is slow work floating it down the river from Aleppo, and the Turk is exceedingly inefficient regarding all his management of supplies. Several hundred Turkish horses and carts were captured. The conditions of the horses was very poor — most of them being so thin that they could have been of little use for draught purposes.

Several hundred Armenian refugees also came under my observation on this front. They had been passed down the Euphrates river and were billeted, in a way, among the Arab villages along the river as far south as Khan-Bagdadie. The almost complete extermination of the Turkish-Euphrates Force by the action at Khan-Bagdadie made these Armenians masters of their own fortunes for the moment, and most of them accepted the British invitation to move further south where they could be protected and cared for. Most of these Armenians were in a very good humor when I saw them, but this was a temporary and significant mood due to the elation resulting from the change in their condition and from the fact that most of them were enjoying the luxury of a first ride in a Ford car. In a few instances, Armenians had decided to continue their life among the Arabs, but these were cases where individual arrangements had evidently been made.

On April 11th, while returning to Baghdad, I visited the 11th Cavalry Brigade, which I had also seen on April 9th. This brigade consisted of the 7th British Hussars and the "Guides Corps" Cavalry Regiment of the Indian army. This was the brigade, which had contributed the essential element to the capture of the Turkish 50th Division. The brigade has

a most excellent esprit-de-corps and gave the impression of great efficiency.

I arrived in Baghdad the night of April 11th from the Euphrates Front, and left on the morning of the 12th from the Hilla-Babylon, or Southern Front, making this trip in an automobile and arriving at brigade headquarters near Hilla on the night of the 12th.

At that time, the two features of the Southern Front were the German inspired hostility of the inhabitants of Nedjeh, and the great agricultural revival in effect under the British director of local resources at Hilla. The hostility of the people of Nedjeh was embarrassing to British authorities, because the Shi'a sector of Mohammedans regard Kerbula and Nedjeh as holy places. The hostility of the tribes in the neighborhood of Nedjeh is the only serious native threat that has arisen within the British zone of activity, and as it might easily develop into a very troublesome factor along their lines of communications, the authorities wished to suppress it but felt that very great tact was necessary, in order that they might not be accused of damaging or violating any of the holy places. A crisis was caused by the murder of a British political officer who was stationed in Nedjeh with a very small guard. The plan, which was being carried out at the time of my visit, was that of blockade. The offending city was surrounded by the larger part of a brigade and this shut off all supplies from outside, which would ultimately force the surrender of the murderers. In addition to this blockade feature, however, the authorities were preparing an assaulting force for use, if necessary. The assault was to be directed against only a small quarter of the city, where the murder had taken place and where there were no holy places. It was to be carried out by infantry soldiers armed only with hand grenades, their action to be preceded by very low flying bomb-dropping aeroplanes. I am not informed if that ultimately took place, but the plans indicated ultimate success in obtaining possession of the murderers of the political officer, and after that, the complete pacification of this particular sector of the Euphrates. This pacification is important, because the best route for the railway from Busrah to Baghdad is along the line originally surveyed by the Germans, that is to say, along the right bank of the Euphrates.

It is in this Euphrates region — 60 to 80 miles south of Baghdad — that the British are making very great agricultural efforts which are intended, beginning with the year 1918, to feed the entire British Mesopotamian Force, in so far as cereals and forage for men and animals.

Throughout the Southern Front, one observed considerable agricultural activity, and the splendid crops of growing grain throughout the Hilla Babylon area indicated the tremendous possibilities of the whole Mesopotamian country. The great canal system of the ancient Babylon days are still very much in evidence, so much so that as one moves across the country, one seems to see on every hand miniature mountain ranges, but these are in reality only the walls of the ancient canals traversing the countryside on every hand. The condition of these walls, which are merely dirt embankments, is so good that hundreds of miles of irrigation facilities can be recovered merely by repair, without reconstruction.

The British authorities are very much alive [aware] of these possibilities and have accomplished a great deal through the agency of their department of local resources. While motor-ing back to Baghdad from the Southern Front, I visited the Hindie-Barrage (Hindiyah). This substantial engineering work is in the form of a weir across the Hindie branch of the Euphrates and regulates and corrects the flow of the river so as to throw a sufficient amount of water into the Hilla

branch. This correction was a very great necessity, because by 1910, the Hilla District had begun to suffer very seriously from lack of water, so necessary in that great fertile area. The work was done by a British company and was completed in 1914. It is unique, in that efforts by the Turkish government to improve anything have been marvelously few and far between.

The Persian, or Eastern Front

Having returned to Baghdad on the night of April 13th from the Southern Front, I left there on the morning of the 14th by automobile for the Eastern Front, arriving the same day at the Headquarters of the 14th Division at Kizil-Robat, 70 miles northeast of Baghdad in the first valley east of the Jebel-Hamrin hills. Opposite Kizil Robat, the Turkish lines are several miles distant across the Diala River in the angle of the two branches thereof. In order to see the Turk at this point, one must take a considerable journey across "no man's land," and this we did the same afternoon with a detachment of armoured cars. Accompanied by four British officers, pertaining to the local forces, I crossed the Diala River and went with the armoured cars north to the hills in the vicinity of Kara Tepe. We encountered no Turkish patrols and were able to get right up to their line of outposts, and having made our own observations after the manner of a patrol, we returned across this wide "no man's land."

The 14th Division was the nucleus, at that time, of the elements that were moving into Persia, a movement which had been somewhat delayed on account of the snow in the passes of the Persian mountains and by reason of difficulties pertaining to supplies.

On the morning of the 15th, I continued by motor along the road through Khan-i-Khin, and on to Kasr-i-Shirin in Persia, where I found the 36th Infantry Brigade and a regiment of Hussars. This latter cavalry regiment had sent one section still farther forward into Persia. From Kizil-Robat to Kasr-i-Shirin the road is, for the most part, through high but well-rounded hills, and much work is being done here by way of road improvement and preparations for the railway line, which will be put through here before long. The road is protected by a line of outposts and by patrols over toward the north, where the Turk at that time held the other bank of the Diala River. This region is in that somewhat ill defined borderland between Persia and Turkey, and the inhabitants are for the most part Kurds. They are a lazy and very dirty lot. The town of Kasr-i-Shirin, although the site of the ruins of some of the most magnificent structures pertaining to the days of Persia's glory, is itself one of the dirtiest towns in the East. It is the dirtiest place I have seen. From the hills above Kasr-i-Shirin, one saw the snow on the mountain passes further east — the snow that delayed the British advance. From among these mountains, however, the considerable stores of fuel in the form of wood. The supply obtained was really only just sufficient for the 30th Brigade, but it was unique in that the firewood for the rest of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Forces was imported from India.

The situation along this Eastern Front was one of expectancy, in that the troops were all anxious to move forward, but the conditions of the roads at that time of the year made the contemplated advance to the Caspian Sea by way of the Teheran road a matter of too much difficulty. The Turk, in the area across the Diala, was very lacking in enterprise and took very little advantage of the many opportunities to raid and interrupt the British lines of communications along the road between Kizil-Robat and Kasr-i-Shirin. To keep the natives quiet, the British were employing a number of Kurdish irregular horsemen in patrolling the road and surrounding

country. These Kurdish horsemen are a very picturesque and wild looking lot — probably ready to serve on one side quite as quickly as on the other.

The Old Russian Front

This region is the southern end of the old Russian Front of the days when the appearance of Russian troops in this part of Persia caused the Allies to have such great expectations. However, this Russian advance was merely a great fake. It did far more harm than good to the cause of the Allies.

The Russian force, which came down here, had no supply line behind it and lived off the country. Whatever they needed, they took from the villages and towns. This included firewood, which they obtained by tearing down the houses of the people. In every way, looting and all sorts of violations mark their expeditions. It would be very difficult to decide whether the Russians or the Turks did the greatest damage in Western Persia and Lower Kurdistan. The British, as they advanced East after the withdrawal of the Russians, found the Persians unfriendly. The Persians said, "You are the Allies of these Russians, are you not?" The British, of course, had to answer in the affirmative. Upon this, the Persians exhibited an attitude of unfriendliness, saying, "We find it difficult to be friendly with those who are Allies of such people as the Russians." I was reliably informed that the discipline of these Russians was practically nil.

The British tried to effect an improvement by detailing liaison officers, but these officers found themselves practically helpless. One of them stated that the Russian inefficiency was so great that they marched without advance or flank guards and made camp without outposts, with the result that they were frequently shot into and suffered losses from the Kurdish tribesmen, who hovered near these indifferent Russian troops.

After the withdrawal of the main Russian force, a detachment of about 1,200 of them decided to remain behind and fight with the British troops. They were refitted and supplied with rations and ammunition by the British, but were so lazy and worthless that they would consume as much of their rations as they could, wherever they happened to be, and when ordered to march, abandoned whatever supplies they had rather than expend the energy necessary to carry the supplies with them. At their next camp, they would loot the surrounding villages in order to get whatever food they needed. They also abandoned the greater part of their equipment. After a little of this, the British authorities decided that it was useless and wasteful to maintain this Russian detachment, and it was accordingly disbanded and started back North toward Russia.

On April 16th, I motored back to Baqubah (3rd Indian Army Corps Headquarters), stopping en route at Shah-Roban, where I had the good fortune to see the 6th Cavalry Brigade, the advanced element of which I had seen at Kasr-i-Shirin. On April 17th, I returned to Baghdad and left there on my return to Europe, the night of April 19th, going all the way to Busrah by Tigris River steamer. I arrived at Busrah the night of April 22nd and after several days as the guest of the inspector general of the lines of communications; I took another steamer on April 26th, arriving in Koweit Bay in the Northwest corner of the Persian Gulf on April 27th. There, I transferred to a transport, carrying Indian troops from Mesopotamia to Palestine and proceeded on my voyage to Suez, touching en route at Muscat, but not at Aden.

Navigation on the Tigris

While the Tigris River is of great assistance in the transportation of supplies, its course is so crooked and its channel is

so subject to change that it is far from being a good or reliable means of communication. Owing to the sinuosity of its course, one travels 502 miles in going from Busrah to Baghdad by river, whereas the distance by railway, when the line is completed, will be little more than half that distance. The river steamers employed are practically all of the side wheel and stern wheel type of the sort employed on the Mississippi, the Ohio, and other rivers of America. They are all now equipped with oil burning engines and are divided into three general classes as to size, varying from 100 to 250 feet in length, with corresponding power and carrying capacity. They are seldom used singly but carry habitually a barge on each side. These barges are of the same length as the steamers and most of them are roofed or provided with canopies so that men and animals are carried very comfortably and protected so far as possible from the extreme heat of this region. It is a fact, and not at all an exaggeration, that the Tigris is so crooked that in going around some of the curves, the barge on the one side strikes the bank and the whole tow caroms off across the stream and sticks the other side, thus bumping around the curve. As the mud of the bank is very soft and slippery, no damage is done. At all of the bands where the river is so narrow that this bumping is habitual, the mud on the banks is worn very slick and shiny, where the sides of barges have polished it.

On my trip down stream from Baghdad to Busrah, I experienced the sensation of this bumping process with considerable interest and amusement. One of the worst curves in the river is the "Devil's Elbow," which is located in "The Narrows," not far above Kurna, which later place, according to local tradition was the site of the "Garden of Eden."

Another striking feature in connection with the sinuosity of the Tigris is that, at various points, one can see the smoke of river steamers at all four cardinal points of the compass; they are all on the Tigris but they seem to be scattered all over the landscape. It is not unusual to observe an average of one steamer temporarily stuck in the mud, in each of these areas of the lines of communications. As a rule, passing steamers dislodge the unfortunate one after a greater or less length of time. While the river is habitually smooth, there are variations in its calmness, for instance, on my trip down, the wind, late one afternoon, blew up waves that would have done credit to the high seas; and this is probably 50 miles North of Kut-al-Amara. The personnel of the river service are entirely under the control of the inspector general of the lines of communications and navy personnel are not employed at all.

Resume of Operations

One of the highest authorities of the British army informed me that the Mesopotamian Campaign had its origins officially in the decision of the British to protect the pipelines and properties of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. This company has valuable oil fields in the Ahwaz District, about 100 miles up the valley of the Karun river, which runs down the south-western corner of Persia and empties into the Busrah river at the town of Muhammerah, about 25 miles South of Busrah. To affect this protection, in anticipation of Turkish hostilities, the British sent a Poona Brigade to the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf in October 1914. This brigade, with subsequent reinforcements, captured Fao, the Turkish fort and cable station at the mouth of the Busrah River. Then followed the evacuation of Busrah, by the Turks and the subsequent British pressure, which drove the Turks up the Tigris; Kurna, Amara and, Kut-el-Amara being captured in sequence. Then followed General Townsend's ill-advised ad-

vance on Baghdad with one division. He was victorious in the battle of Ctesiphon, 20 miles southeast of Baghdad, but the Turks counter attacked (sic) with heavy reinforcements, driving Townsend's back to Kut-el-Amara, where he was surrounded, barely having time to get his cavalry away on the afternoon before the Turks cut him off. Then followed the unsuccessful and grossly mismanaged operations for the relief of Kut-el-Amara. I had a view of the positions which figured in these operations, namely at Falayah, Abu-Roman, Sannayat, Es-Sinn, and Dujailah, and the town of Kut-el-Amara itself; but an extended account of these features need not be incorporated in this report. It suffices to say that the British advances had to be across country as flat as a billiard table, under a burning sun from which the soldiers had almost no protection; and during a part of the time their trenches came dangerously near inundation from the river and the marshes. One of their greatest difficulties pertained to artillery observation, which was rendered futile at times by the presence of mirage; the only means of observation during these operations was the observation ladder. A complete and searching review of this campaign can be found in the report of "The Mesopotamian Commission," published by the British Government in July 1917.

General Sir Stanley Maude next appeared upon the scene and saw to it that the Mesopotamian army was plentifully reinforced and properly equipped before undertaking the operations, which terminated so successfully in the capture of Baghdad and the securing of a proper line of resistance on the East, North, and West, then at an average distance of 30 to 40 miles in each direction.

The features of General Maude's success were as follows:

- His army was decidedly superior to the Turkish force in number of men and weight and number of guns and strikingly superior in every sort of mechanical equipment having to do with the transport of supplies and the comfort and protection of troops.
- His preparations for each advance were marked by the most painstaking attention to detail, most of which General Maude supervised in person and had a remarkably intimate knowledge with regard thereto.
- Every advance involved, to some extent, a heavy frontal attack; this was unavoidable in this region. Even when he turned the Turks out of Kut-el-Amara, his extreme left had to make a frontal attack in forcing a passage over the Tigris River at the Shumran Bend, West of Kut, where the losses were serious.
- His successes were gained at the price of very heavy losses. All the information indicates that his average losses were between 60 and 65 percent.
- This average loss of 60 to 65 percent was also suffered in the operations east of Baghdad as late as the middle of 1917, namely, at the southern end of the Jebel-Hamrin Hills; in the attack on Tekrit, north of Samarra; and in the first and unsuccessful attack of Ramadi about 60 miles up the Euphrates.

Later Operations

Operations subsequent to those above-mentioned have been characterized, on the other hand, by remarkably small losses on the part of the British and by very heavy losses on the part of the Turks, as to prisoners and guns captured. This change in the degree of Turkish resistance is undoubtedly due to deterioration in the numbers and quality of their personnel and in the skill of their leadership. Another reason for the

decrease in British losses in these comparatively recent operations is the fact that they have been selected and optional enterprises, prepared at leisure and with great care. They have also profited by the expensive lessons of the past.

Employment of Cavalry

While the cavalry of the MEF was not so numerous nor so essential, and did not operate on so vast a scale as did the cavalry of the Palestine army, it was employed effectively and was the essential element in some of the most important operations. A detailed description of these various cavalry operations need not be included in this report. The Khan-Bagdadie enterprise of General Brooking can be referred to as a type. I was not fortunate enough to be in Mesopotamia at the time of any large cavalry operations, but I was in the finale of the Khan-Bagdadie show and saw something of the cavalry in general. At a later date, many of the cavalry records of the MEF may be placed in my hands, when, at a time of leisure, I shall be able to compile or review them. For the moment, one records herein, for the benefit of the U.S. Cavalry, certain conclusions, which are drawn from a knowledge of the work of the British cavalry in the Mesopotamia area. These conclusions are as follows:

- Under conditions of Mesopotamian terrain, there was no need for the employment of a large body of cavalry on an independent mission of reconnaissance — strategical as opposed to tactical reconnaissance. This was partially true in Palestine.
- There was no proper opportunity in this area for successful employment of mounted shock action of cavalry versus cavalry, because Turkish cavalry was so poorly mounted and otherwise so weak that they avoided meeting a mounted attack or, if they had to meet it, they did so with dismounted fire action. This was exactly the case in Palestine, also.
- The Mesopotamian conclusion was that cavalry could not be expected to attack a position held by the infantry by purely dismounted action with any hope of success, as they were neither armed nor trained for such employment; but, this conclusion should be looked upon by the U.S. Cavalry as an error, or phenomenon peculiar to Mesopotamia, as contrasted with the Palestine experience, because, as I have heretofore reported, the Palestine cavalry habitually attacked infantry dismounted, although it also achieved some very brilliant victories by mounted shock action against infantry and guns. The difference between these conclusions on these two fronts is due to the fact that on the Palestine Front, the Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) mounted troops, being trained in dismounted action, set an example, which was ultimately followed by the British Yeomary, who although armed with sword, as well as with rifle, finally became successful in the dismounted attack. It is no exaggeration to say that the cavalry of the Palestine army fought dismounted just as well as the infantry; and the cavalry of the Mesopotamian army would have achieved a similar degree of dismounted efficiency had there been in that theatre of war a cavalry leader of modern ideas, sufficiently high in rank to have forced his idea upon the army.

• As to armament, it was concluded that the sword or sabre is superior to the lance, the latter being merely an encumbrance to the cavalry soldier in the majority of his work. This fact was also generally admitted in the Palestine army, where the lance was not used and was only recommended by a few officers of the old British cavalry who were hopelessly blind as to modern conditions. The U.S. Cavalry, except in

the cases of a few rare individuals, perceived that the lance was out of date more than 50 years ago.

- Another Mesopotamian conclusion is that the cavalry soldier should carry a bayonet and that the rifle should be slung on the back of the trooper, using perhaps a short bucket with the purpose of keeping most of the weight off the troopers back. It will be recalled that the Australian and New Zealand troopers had a bucket of this type when they first came to Egypt, and that they discarded it long before the Jerusalem campaign, finding that it was better for them to carry the rifle sling on the back, without the additional support of the bucket.

- The existing instructions for the training of cavalry for shock action are now being cut down, so that more time can be devoted to instructions in other points which are found to be more important in view of modern experience.

- More training in night marching, especially in order to carry out the effective pursuit of an enemy who makes it his practice to withdraw at night, by anticipating him at some suitable position astride his line of retreat.

- The Vickers guns of a machine gun squadron with their rapid and sustained fire for considerable periods may be regarded as a reserve of firepower in the hands of the cavalry commander. They were found most useful in holding definite positions, in supporting cavalry by covering or indirect fire, and in holding strong points for determined defense. The flat nature of the ground in this theater did not lend itself to the free and safe use of overhead covering fire from these guns in a purely offensive and fast moving action, so advantageously as did the more broken and rolling terrain of Palestine.

- The Regimental Hotchkiss guns, while more mobile than the Vickers machine guns, could not produce such sustained or effective fire. They were regarded as a supplement to, not as a substitute for the Vickers machine guns. They were usefully employed nearer the enemy and in lighter and quicker work, always with their units, and were especially useful with patrols or smaller detached bodies. In purely dismounted action, they were employed in the same manner as Lewis guns with infantry. Exactly similar conclusions were reached in Palestine with regard to the employment of the Hotchkiss and the Vickers guns.

- Armored cars were employed in cooperation with cavalry in Mesopotamia, with striking success. As bad ground is the only thing which will stop them and a direct hit by a shell is the only thing they have to fear, the advantages of having armored cars to work in cooperation with cavalry are obvious, but one must bear in mind that the terrain of Mesopotamia was ideal in most places for the armored cars, while in Palestine, because of difficult terrain, the armored cars were of little value and were not much used. In Mesopotamia, these cars were invaluable for carrying out long and rapid independent reconnaissance or close tactical reconnaissance or positions. They tempted the enemy to open fire at once; and in a short time, induced him to disclose his dispositions, strength, and guns, generally with no damage at all to the cars. They were of great value in dealing with irregulars, mounted or dismounted, and also against bodies of hostile cavalry and were also the most convenient and economical form of escort for other motor vehicles, that is to say, motor convoys, motor ambulances, and so forth. In cooperation with dismounted cavalry and in covering the retirement of cavalry from dismounted positions, they have also proved of great value.

- In a flat and featureless country, it appears that a cavalry brigade (U.S. Regiment) can work very effectively with an allotment of two batteries of eight cars each.

- For cavalry to defend itself against hostile armored cars, it was concluded that the best method was for the horse artillery to come rapidly into action with HE shells, while the cavalry cleared the field for the artillery, taking advantage of any obstacles or available cover.

- It was concluded that in broken country, the best formation when under artillery fire, is "troop columns" (U.S. platoon columns) at irregular intervals and distances; while in open and flat country the best forms were found to be "extended columns of squadrons" (U.S. columns of troops) at 100 to 200 yards, or greater distances.

- Training in the use of the bayonet and instruction in the sitting and digging of trenches, both night and day, were considered essential for cavalry in order to enable it to hold on to an important position, until the arrival of the infantry.

- It was thought that the horse artillery guns of the cavalry should be 18-pounders, rather than 13-pounders, and that the guns should have a maximum range of 9,000 yards and be capable of firing effective shrapnel at 7,000 yards; that the weight behind the teams should not exceed 34 cwt. It will be recalled that the cavalry of the Palestine army discarded the 18-pounder and adopted the 13-pounder. When I arrived in Mesopotamia, I found that there they had discarded the 13-pounder and were being re-equipped with the 18-pounder. There were reasons for this diametrically opposed decision. The Palestine cavalry, on finding the 18-pounder too heavy in the zone of the Sinai Desert, and when the Turks started to retreat from lower Palestine, they desired the maximum of mobility in order that their guns might keep up during the pursuit. Furthermore, in Palestine, there was a good deal of heavy work in dragging guns uphill. Also, the spirit of the Palestine horse artillery was, from the first, that of the offensive and the initiative. On the other hand, during the earlier operations in Mesopotamia, the cavalry was engaged with the infantry in a long period of uncompromising trench warfare and found their 13-pounders of no particular value because they were constantly outranged. This caused the 13-pounder to lose favour from the beginning. Later, when the pursuit of the Turk started, it was over terrain where a heavier gun could have been moved with equal rapidity, and so a general desire arose for a heavier gun.

Tactical and Supply Employment of Ford Cars

The Ford car was used on several occasions in Mesopotamia for the transportation of infantry soldiers in large numbers, in cooperation with the cavalry, for the purpose of gaining the enemy's flank or rear. On that flat terrain and with favourable weather, the scheme works perfectly. Ford cars were also used as supply columns for the cavalry and made possible their long marches. The forage and baggage came into camp promptly, and this contributed greatly to celerity of movement and comfort for man and beast. Another ruse of the Ford cars was in the supplying of water to the combatant troops.

The "Hush-Hush Brigade"

In company with a British Major General, I had the opportunity to inspect a battalion of this unique organization, composed very largely of soldiers of fortune from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, and Russia. These men had been recruited throughout the Allied forces, and by virtue of their previous experience and reso-

lute characters, were considered specially fitted for their mission.

The "H.H. Brigade" was organized at Baghdad and sent into Persia for the purpose of working up into various parts of the Caucasus, with the view of serving as nuclei in various parts, for Armenian, Georgian, and other military organizations, which it was hoped might be established. There was great hope at the time of my visit that these men would be able to venture successfully into the region mentioned, but I am inclined to think that very great obstacles were encountered in the way of Turco-German troops and agents, so that probably the enterprise has not been successful. The officers and men were equipped as British troops; and were altogether the most efficient looking crowd of high-class patriotic, and altogether worthy cutthroats and desperadoes that I have even seen — they were superb. The battalion commander knew something of America and was referred to among his intimates as "Pistol Pete."

Persian Occupation

The British intention, when I was in Mesopotamia, was to occupy the road from Baghdad on through Persia, via Kasr-i-Shirin, Hamadan, and Teheran to the Caspian Sea, in order to cut off as effectually as possible the inroads of Turco-German agents and bands of irregulars en route to Southern Persia for the purpose of stirring up trouble among the tribes. This extension of the British right will be a very considerable undertaking, involving as it does the garrisoning of some 600 to 700 miles of road and a consequent extension of the lines of communications over difficult country. In this connection, it is the intention of the British to push their Baghdad-Kizil Road railway as far into Persia as time and circumstances permit and necessitates.

Mesopotamia as a War Prize

Mesopotamia is the biggest prize of the war. The soil is rich, its extent is vast, a system of irrigation can be installed with little difficulty, and great productivity will ensue almost everywhere, once water is supplied. To a very great extent, the ancient system of irrigation is still in existence and only needs repair in order to restore the land to all the richness of the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

All along the Upper Euphrates are rich deposits of gypsum while there are at Hit, bitumen wells. These deposits of bitumen have been worked by the natives for a time "whence the memory of man runneth not to the contrary." Modern methods will result in a considerable establishment here, and it happens that bitumen is a product that will serve as a multitude of purposes in this part of the East today, just as the ruins of Babylon show its considerable use in ancient times. Some coal has been found beyond the Jebel-Hamrin hills northeast of Samarra.

The region of the Tigris and Euphrates possesses all the potential wealth of ancient days; its present condition of poverty being due, not only to the blight of Turkish government, which would ruin anything, but due to the fact that successive wars and other misfortunes have deprived the region of a population.⁶ It is, in a way, an empty country.

Among many British authorities, the idea is gaining strength that Mesopotamia will be a good place for the surplus population of India. Some others with whom I've talked were positive that the region should be kept for the Arab, whom it was thought could be developed in time, and who, under the greater percentage of increase, which would mark the hygi-

enic teachings of a good government, might provide sufficient population for this region at as fast a rate as the projects of irrigation could be developed.

Summary

The 1918 British campaign in Mesopotamia, as observed by Lieutenant Colonel Davis, serves as a reminder that any successful military operation in Iraq will require a well-organized logistical infrastructure, troops trained in quick, mobile operations, and a force structure capable of dealing with a multitude of problems — both military and civil — not unlike the ongoing operations in Afghanistan. The campaign in the so-called "Garden of Eden" serves also as a reminder to the pitfalls that Iraq's road and rail network, beset by a decade of neglect, due in large part to the post-Desert Storm economic sanctions placed on her by the United Nations, may be as bad as they were in 1918, and thus unusable from a military standpoint. As for the requirements for a military campaign in Iraq, Lieutenant Colonel Davis' observations reinforce the need for a quick-hitting, mobile force capable of covering Iraq's vast space. Like the cavalry of 1918, armor will once again lead the charge, as it did during Operation Desert Storm, in February 1991.

Notes

¹General Maude died of cholera on 18 November 1917, prior to Lieutenant Colonel Davis' arrival in the spring of 1918. For the best overall account of the Mesopotamian campaign, see A.J. Barker, *The Bastard War: The Mesopotamian Campaign of 1914-1918*, The Dial Press, NY, 1967, p. 374; For an up-to-date view of the Mesopotamian campaign, see Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* Associated University Press, Rutherford, NJ, 1994.

²See Report of Lieutenant Colonel Edward Davis, U.S. Cavalry, Military Observer to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, G-5, dated 12 July 1918, Subject: "The Mesopotamian Front," Washington, DC, National Archives, Military Intelligence Branch Records, Accession No. 2017-20, dated 29 July 1918, copy 1 of 3.

³Lieutenant Colonel Davis is referring here to the city of Basra, located at the mouth of the Shat-al-Arab leading into the Tigris River Basin.

⁴Captain Kermit Roosevelt was the son of former President Theodore Roosevelt; see Captain Roosevelt's account of the Mesopotamian Campaign in his semi-autobiographical account, *War in the Garden of Eden*, Charles Scribner, Inc., NY, 1919.

⁵The photographs Lieutenant Colonel Davis mentioned here were not attached to this report in possession of the author.

⁶This was before oil was discovered in 1927 in what is now Iraq.

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