

to release troops who had come from Palestine and Transjordan.

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

Advance into Syria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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