

AWM4
Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War

Formation Headquarters

Item number: 1/6/28 Part 2

Title: General Staff, General
Headquarters, Egyptian
Expeditionary Force

August 1918



AWM4-1/6/28PART2

From: - AKABA.

To :- G.H.Q.

305 cipher.

2/8/18.

Desp. 1800.
Recd. 2215.

Following is weekly summary.

On 26th TABIA EL HAMAHR(?) situated between MAAN and JERDUN was re-occupied by Turks with a strong force. On 27th Arabs tried to retake it without success. Arab losses were 3 killed and 10 wounded. Reported by deserters that Turks lost 6 killed and 17? wounded as a result of heavy and accurate Arab bombardment.

On 28th, Arabs captured a party of Turkish Engineers engaged in repairing telegraph line north of JERDUN.

Between 28th and 30th Turkish deserters mostly from JERDUN arrived at Arab Headquarters. Main Arab position as in last report. Sherifian artillery has subjected MAAN to heavy bombardment with good results.

On 27th Arab camp at TAHUNA raided by 3 enemy aeroplanes which dropped bombs killing 1 officer and wounding 3 officers and (?) men.

On 1st, TAHUNA was again raided by 4 enemy machines, (?) Bedouins killed and 4 regular army wounded and a number of animals killed.

Continuation to follow.

From :- Akaba.

To :- Hedghog, repeated Jeddah and G.H.Q.,

2/8/18.

Desp. 1930.

3/8/18.

Recd. 0600.

Continuation of 305 August 2nd.

It is reported by deserters that four enemy aeroplanes are now based at KUTRANI but this is uncertain. On 27th and 29th our machines raided MAAN, According to deserters 2 ? Turks were killed and 4 wounded. On 28th, from 250 to 300 Turkish reinforcements arrived in MAAN from the North, accompanied by a convoy of about 50 animals. A machine gun company accompanied this party. On approach of this column the Bedouins East of the railway retired. Railway is now strong between MAAN and JURDUN and demolition is prevented by night patrols.

Breaks between JURDUN and ANEIZAH Station have (not?) yet been repaired or the line between ANEIZAH Station and JURDUN.

From :- Troopers, LONDON (WAROFCIRC)

To :- Chief, Eypforce.

63609 cipher.H.W.Personal. 3/8/18. Desp. 1815.
4/8/18. Recd. 1200.

It is essential in order that we may maintain close personal touch which is impossible by letter owing to distance that we should be able to exchange wires in which opinions expressed would not be regarded as having official character. These wires should be prefixed en clair "H.W.Personal" and should be addressed to Sir H. Wilson by name. There will be no circulation of these wires in the War Office, and in any official telegram they should not be quoted. If the contents can be sent in the ordinary way, this method should not be used.

From :- EGYPFORCE.

To :- Troopers, LONDON.

E.A.1557. cipher Aug, 9th. 10/8/18. Desp.10/8/18.
0040.

Your 57909 of 7/5/18.

Can I be informed please, of AUSTRALIAN Government's reply, as the position as regards reinforcements is serious. Monthly discharges from hospital number 600 at present, while the number of sick evacuated monthly is approximately 1200. Thus 600 a month is the net loss without taking battle casualties into account. Only 67 officers and 1616 O.R's will be available as reinforcements when certain drafts required to complete units to strength have left depot, and many of these are only partially trained. Thus all reserves in the country will be used up by the end of September, and possibly earlier in the event of any heavy fighting occurring, unless of course reinforcements arrive from AUSTRALIA in the meantime. It is hoped the sick rate will drop in October and that there will be an increase in the number returning from hospital, but even so net monthly wastage from all causes is estimated at from 300 to 400.

Monthly drafts of 400 are, I consider, necessary for several months to come, in addition to the men required to form third regiment of converted camel brigade, and in view of the fact that drafts arrive with little training I hope first draft may arrive early in September.

From :- XXth Corps.

To :- G.H.Q.,

G.536.

13/8/18.

Desp. 1827.
- Recd. 1910.

In continuation of G.529.

Raid on ridge EL BURJ to H.21 was carried out by three battalions of 29th Brigade under cover of artillery bombardment. Attack completely surprised enemy. 17 officers, including 1 battalion commander and 193 O.R. unwounded and 29 wounded, captured, also 13 machine guns. Enemy killed estimated at 150.

Attacking units report many enemy wounded, which they were unable to remove, left on ground.

Our casualties in above attack approximately 10 O.R. killed and 75 O.R. wounded.

Enemy artillery fire was weak and ineffective.

Total garrison of ridge estimated at 600 to 700 of 33rd and 126th Regiments.

In conjunction with above, 60th Division raided:-

- (1) TURMUS AYA, killing about 20 and capturing 6 Turks.
- (2) Kh.AMURIEH, where 2 machine guns were captured, and 50 Turks estimated to have been killed.
- (3) KEEN'S Knoll, C.5.Q.29.a., where 2 prisoners were captured.
- (4) FIFE KNOLL, C.5.L.6.d. FORFAR HILL, C.5.Q.8.a. and BIDSTON HILL, C.5.q.14.b., from all of which enemy fled before raiding party could reach them.

60th Division casualties approximately 45.

Total captured in last night's operations:-
17 officers, 230 O.R., 15 machine guns.

Quiet day on front.

SECRET & PRIORITY.

From : } AKABA.

To :- G.H.Q.

38113/173 cipher

13/8/18.

Desp. 1155.
Recd. 1300.

Urgent from Dawnay. Buxton has arrived at JAFAR with his men and camels in good condition.. Original second objective will therefore be adhered to provided factor of date permits. This operation is rendered most desirable by latest information regarding enemy intentions in TAFIL area --?-- (by indicating --?-- that route originally selected for return to BIR SABA may be closed shortly, while a delay of 5 days would be involved by alternative route via WHEIDA and GHARANDEL. Column, provided Northern Route is open, would reach BIR SABA August 30th, or September 4th if Southern Route was substituted. Please under these circumstances, wire urgently whether you authorise operation as mid-day on the 17th is the latest date on which column must leave BAIR. If you approve R.F.C. should be instructed, please, that on August 20th and 21st we shall require co-operation on lines arranged. Addressed G.H.Q., repeated Hedghog and Perardua CAIRO.

From: - Troopers, LONDON.

To :- Eypforce.

64409 cipher A.G.1.

15/8/18. Desp. 1600.

16/8/18. Recd. 0645.

Your E.A.1557 August 9th. We have not yet received a reply from the Australian Government to whom this question was referred. We have asked them to expedite reply. In the meantime, it is not quite clear to us how you have come to the conclusion that your reserves for Australian units will be used up by the end of September. The monthly? wastage of 600 per month during August and September and 400 during October should apparently be met by the 1616 other ranks you now report as available for reinforcements.

In addition to this, are you taking credit for 200 reinforcements per month to be received from AUSTRALIA during August and September who should be trained and available in time to meet the normal wastage in November?

From :- EGYPFORCE.

To :- TROOPERS LONDON.

E.A.1580 cipher.

17/8/18.

Desp. 1800.

Your 64409 of 15/8/18.

Available reinforcements should last till end of October allowing for a net wastage of 600 a month in August and September and 400 in October from sickness alone. This, however, does not allow for battle casualties. In consequence, reinforcements may only last till end of September. See my E.A.1489 of 24/7/18.

Credit was not taken for 200 reinforcements per month due to arrive in August and September. According to above calculations these would be absorbed in October.

As drafts arrive at irregular intervals and require considerable period of training on arrival it is essential that I should have a minimum balance of 200 men at any one time and this would be obtained if the draft due in September and each subsequent month is raised from 200 to 400.

Z/58/26/1.

General Staff,
Hejaz Operations.

With reference to your G.S.1 dated 18th August enclosing two copies of a letter addressed to General Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force, Middle East, I am directed to inform you that the Commander-in-Chief sanctions the proposed operations in so far as it relates to the raising of the BENI SAKHR and BELQA tribes and to the occupation of MADEBA but after this has been accomplished no attempt is to be made to open up a route to JERICHO.

Aerial co-operation between the 10th and 15th September will be provided for as requested and in addition a daily motor boat service across the DEAD SEA from RUJM EL BAHR to any point on the East coast you may select will be arranged. The point selected should be notified to General Headquarters.

Captain Hornby will be kept informed of the situation at MAAN and in the SALT - AMMAN area and also of any information received of Colonel Lawrence's movements.

Lieut.Colonel.
General Staff.

G.H.Q., E.E.F.,
21/8/18.

From :- Troopers, LONDON.

To :- EGYPTFORCE.

65149 cipher.

27/8/18.

Desp. 1530.
Recd. 2235.

Your E.A.1546 August 7th and War Office
63996 August 9th. It is shown by review of
recruiting situation that we cannot provide from home
Jewish reinforcements to maintain more than two
Jewish Battalions at most. The proposal to maintain
a complete Jewish Brigade cannot be sanctioned therefore
unless there is an assured supply from local sources
sufficient to maintain two additional Jewish
Battalions.

SECRET PRIORITY.

From :- Commandant,

To :- G.H.Q., repeated Hedghog.

485 cipher.

28/8/18.

Desp. 1000.
Recd. 1130.

According to plan Imperial Camel Corps reached MUAKHAR Aug. 20th. Column was discovered by hostile aircraft during that morning also forward reconnaissance found approaches to KISSIR trickily occupied by BENI HAMIDA Arabs from whom Turks were collecting taxes covered by 3 strong mounted posts. This situation is making surprise impossible and heavy casualties would be inevitable. BUXTON in complete agreement with LAWRENCE decided that, in view of his instructions, cost of operations would not warrant attempt. Column accordingly withdrew evening of 20th reaching BAIR 26th. It will be due BIR SABA September 4th returning via GHEIDA and GHARANDEL. Regret to report Lieutenant Robert ROWAN, Scottish Horse seconded I.C.C. was accidentally killed on 22nd by discharge of a rifle which a native camel driver dropped.

Z/96/08.

Minutes of the Commander-in-Chief's Conference held
at General Headquarters at 1100 on
23-8-18.

1. General Buckley in reviewing the general situation stated that there had been no material change since the last conference held on 29/7/18.
2. The Commander-in-Chief discussed the forthcoming operations with Corps Commanders, and the plan as set out in the attached letter No. Z/96/5 was decided on.-

The following points were discussed:-

- (a) Whether the right division of the XXIst Corps should remain under the command of the General Officers Commanding, XXIst Corps on reaching the line ARARA - BIDIEH - WADI KANAH or should be transferred to General Officer Commanding, XXth Corps.
It was decided that this would be dependent upon the course of operations, but that the XXth and XXIst Corps must take the contingency into consideration in drawing up their plans.
- (b) General Officer Commanding, XXth Corps hoped that General Chaytor's Force would be able to advance as far as the WADI FUSAIL in order to protect the Right Flank of the XXth Corps by denying the enemy the use of the WADI FUSAIL - AKRAEEH road.
General Chaytor said that he would have one Cavalry Brigade and two Battalions available for this purpose.
The Commander-in-Chief stated that he did not wish General Chaytor to run any risk of losing possession of the JORDAN Bridgeheads but left it to his discretion to carry out this operation if circumstances permitted.
- (c) It was pointed out that General Officers Commanding, XXth or XXIst Corps must be prepared to send detachments along the NABLUS - HEISAN and the MESSUDIIEH - AFULEH roads and to follow up and drive the enemy into the arms of the Cavalry.
- (d) It is hoped to provide the Desert Mounted Corps with a section of Mountain Guns with mounted personnel.

/(e)

(e) Owing to the great distance from railhead at which the Desert Mounted Corps and detachments of the XXIst Corps may be operating in the initial stages of the operations it may be necessary for troops to live on the country for several days.

(f) The Corps Commanders were asked to ensure that during the advance no Turkish telegraph poles or other signal material were removed or destroyed as this would greatly hamper the rapid establishment of signal communication.

3. GRANT OF LEAVE. The normal scale of leave to EGYPT will be granted till the last possible moment, officers being recalled in sufficient time before operations begin.

As regards leave to ENGLAND, vacancies will be allotted as usual and serial numbers issued. D.Q.M.G. will issue orders that no embarkation will take place after a certain date and that the concentration order issued before embarkation is not sent out.

4. The Commander-in-Chief stated that he wished troops of the Desert Mounted Corps to carry the minimum amount of equipment and kit considered necessary for operations and asked General Officer Commanding Desert Mounted Corps to submit a list of essentials.

The attention of the General Officer Commanding Desert Mounted Corps was drawn to the fact that men still left their rifles in their buckets when dismounted. The Commander-in-Chief directed that this practice must cease.

5. SECURITY. The Commander-in-Chief directed that information concerning operations was only to be communicated to those officers to whom such information was essential, and in no case to officers below regimental and battalions commanders until the latest possible moment.

No documents relating to operations were to be taken into battle by officers or men.

G.H.Q., E.E.F.,
23/8/18.

Z/96/017.

General Officer Commanding,
XXth Corps.
XXIst Corps.
Desert Mounted Corps.

With reference to Z/96/017 of 26/8/18.

1. The reason, to be given for the withdrawal of Small Box Respirators, is that owing to the long period during which they have been in use it has been decided to overhaul them, with a view to replacing those which have deteriorated from supplies arriving shortly from home.
2. Instructions should be issued that men's names are to be written clearly on the outside.
3. Gas Officers and N.C.O's should be withdrawn to supervise the storage of S.B.R's with a view to their being overhauled.

(Sgd.) J. SPENCER,
Lt.Col. G.S.,
for Major-General,
Chief of the General Staff.
Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

G.H.Q., E.E.F.,
29/8/18.

Z/96/12.

General Officer Commanding,
Desert Mounted Corps.
XXth Corps.
XXIst Corps.
Inspector,
Palestine Lines of Communication.

1. Reference Minutes of Commander-in-Chief's Conference forwarded under my Z/96/08 of 24th August, Major-General Sir E.W.C.Chaytor, K.C.M.G., C.B., commanding "Chaytor's Force", will on Z-3 day, assume command of the sector of the line now allotted to the General Officer Commanding Desert Mounted Corps, who will make all arrangements for the relief.

Major-General Sir E.W.C.Chaytor, K.C.M.G., C.B., will be ordered by General Officer Commanding Desert Mounted Corps to report assumption of command to General Headquarters by cipher wire.

2. On relief by Chaytor's Force, Advanced Headquarters Desert Mounted Corps will be established near the present XXIst Corps Headquarters. Arrangements for allotment of an area to be made between General Officer Commanding XXIst Corps and General Officer Commanding Desert Mounted Corps.

Major-General,
Chief of the General Staff,
Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

G.H.Q., E.E.F.,
30/8/18.