MESOPOTAMIA, 1914-1918

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

CONTENTS
General Sources.....p.1
Specific Engagements
  -British Advance on Baghdad (1914-1915).....p.4
  -Kut.....p.4
  -After Kut.....p.5
Special Aspects.....p.7
  -Dunsterforce.....p.7
Commonwealth Perspective.....p.8
  Central Powers Perspective.....p.9
  Other.....p.8

GENERAL SOURCES

Early in the 20th century, as the British Navy began to shift from coal to oil, the oil-rich land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers became increasingly important to Empire strategy. Shortly after hostilities commenced in Europe, the War Office instructed the British Army to establish a presence in Mesopotamia to protect the Anglo-Persian pipeline. The campaign opened with the capture of a Turkish fort at Fao Landing on 6 Nov 1914, and the city of Basra two weeks later. Under the field command of General Charles V.F. Townshend, the British Indian Army met with some Ottoman resistance through the next summer, but it was not enough to satisfy the overall Turkish commander, Enver Pasha. Fearing the ultimate loss of Baghdad, he replaced his commander based in that city, Khalil Pasha, with elderly German General Colmar von der Gotz. He engaged Townshend at Ctesiphon, some 25 miles south of Baghdad, in November, but both forces retreated from the battlefield. Townshend fell back on Kut, which he fortified, but he found himself unable to resupply this isolated location.


Mesopotamia


Mesopotamia  


British strategy  


Dujaila Redoubt, Hannah, Baghdad and Palestine.  


Road/bridge building.  


Pontoons.  


Bridge building.  

SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENTS

-British Advance on Baghdad

On 12-14 April 1915, the Indian force easily captured Qurna, giving British planners the confidence to advance further, their goal being the capture of Baghdad. Two forces proceeded in that direction. General Charles V.F. Townshend headed up the Tigris, capturing Shaiba, a Turkish fort near Qurna, on 31 May and Amara on 3 Jun. In support of Townshend, Major General George F. Gorringe headed up the Euphrates, taking Nasiriya on 24 Jul, after a month of resistance.


-Kut

Townshend had miscalculated the overall strength of Turkish resistance forces that he would meet enroute to Baghdad. Reinforced in late summer, he was ordered to capture Kut-el-Amara. He accomplished this goal dividing the defenders of the Turkish stronghold at the confluence of the Tigris and Shatt-el-Hai Rivers on 27-28 Sep 1915. The Turks withdrew to Ctesiphon, which he attacked, only to be repulsed by a numerically superior force on 2-26 Nov. Townshend withdrew, fighting a rear guard action at Umm-at-Tubel on 1 Dec, arriving at the relative safety of Kut two days later. The Turks commenced siege operations on 7 Dec. Major General Gorringe unsuccessfully attempted to lift the siege south of the Tigris on 7 Mar 1916, and Townshend was ultimately forced to surrender on 29 Apr 1916.


After Kut

Coming four months after the British disaster at Gallipoli, Kut was a watershed of Empire operations in Mesopotamia. Debate in the War Office and HQ, British Indian Army, was not over how to but if offensive operations would continue at all. In August, Sir Frederick S. Maude had been assigned to Mesopotamia command, with orders to maintain a defensive posture. By late autumn, he received permission to renew the offensive. On 13 Dec 1916, he began an advance up both banks of the Tigris. He recaptured Kut in February and captured Baghdad on 11 Mar 1917. Maude died of cholera in November, and was replaced by General William Marshall, who renewed offensive operations in Feb 1918. Kifri, Hit (Khanaqin) and Sharkat were all taken by November, and he supplied support to the Dunsterville operation in Persia through the summer. Marshall accepted the surrender of Khalil Pasha on 30 Oct 1918. British troops occupied Mosul on 14 Nov after the armistice was signed, to secure the oil fields north of Baghdad.


SPECIAL ASPECTS


MacMunn, George. “River and rail communication, 1915-16


Perspective of British Journalist.


-Dunsterforce


BRITISH/COMMONWEALTH PERSPECTIVE


Originally published as With the Mechanical Transport in Mesopotamia.


Killed 21 Jun 1916 at Battle of Um El Hannah.


Central Powers Perspective


Other (American; Indian)


Davis, Edward. Papers. 2 Boxes. Arch. Includes papers from his service as U.S. military observer Allied forces in Macedonia and Mesopotamia, with the British Egyptian Expeditionary Force, with Allenby’s forces in Palestine in 1917 and with the Dunsterforce in Persia, 1918.


See also:
-the WWI section of Iran Overview in Iran.