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R.A.F. NARRATIVE

OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

MAY 1941

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH (1)

AIR MINISTRY

G.81960

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. Officers of the Army and the Royal Air Force are referred to by the Rank which they held at the time of the Campaign.
2. Distances mentioned in the text and footnotes are "as the crow flies".

## CHRONOLOGY OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS

(1941)

- 1 April Units of R.A.F. in 'Iraq:-  
No. 4 Service Flying Training School } Habbaniya  
Communication Flight }  
No. 244 (Bomber) Squadron - Shaibah
- 2 April H.R.H. The Regent of 'Iraq fled from Baghdad
- 3 April Rashid Ali seized the Government by a coup d'état
- 8 April No. 4 S.F.T.S. formed into 5 Operational Squadrons
- 17 April (and sub-sequent dates) Arrival at Shaibah (by No. 31 (Transport) Squadron R.A.F.) of 1st Bn. King's Own Royal Regiment
- 18 April Arrival by sea of British reinforcements at Basra
- 29 April Evacuation of British women and children from Baghdad to Habbaniya
- 30 April 'Iraqi Troops invested Habbaniya
- 1 May (and sub-sequent dates) Evacuation by air of British women and children from Habbaniya  
Reinforcements of 'Iraqi Troops moved to Habbaniya  
Arrival at Shaibah of No. 70 (Bomber) Squadron Detachment R.A.F.
- 2 May Commencement of hostilities and siege of Habbaniya  
Arrival at Shaibah of No. 30 (Bomber) Squadron Detachment, R.A.F.  
'Iraqi Troops moved to Rutbah
- 3 May Arrival at Habbaniya of No. 203 (G.R.) Squadron Detachment, R.A.F.  
Concentration of British troops and R.A.F. at H.4 (Rutbah area) from Palestine
- 5 May British troops occupied H.3 (Rutbah area)
- 6 May End of siege of Habbaniya  
Action at Sin El Dhibban  
R.A.F. reinforced by 6 Swordfish aircraft of Fleet Air Arm at Shaibah
- 7 May R.A.F. 'strafed' enemy aircraft at Baquba (3 enemy aircraft burned and others damaged); and bombed Rashid and Washash aerodromes  
Formation of "Habforce" in Palestine for Ops. in 'Iraq
- 8 May (and sub-sequent dates) R.A.F. attacked Shahraban aerodrome (9 enemy aircraft set on fire). Also bombed Rashid aerodrome  
Arrival at Habbaniya of No. 94 (Fighter) Squadron Detachment, R.A.F.
- 9 May R.A.F. bombed Rutbah fort

10 May R.A.F. bombed Mosul and Quaragan aerodromes

11 May Capture of Rutbah fort

11/12 May Nos. 37 and 70 (Bomber) Squadron Detachments, R.A.F. returned to Egypt

12 May (and subsequent dates) Arrival at Habbaniya of No. 84 (Bomber) Squadron Detachment, R.A.F.

13 May Appearance of German aircraft

13/14 May R.A.F. bombed Mosul - Aleppo Railway

16 May German aircraft bombed Habbaniya

18 May Arrival of "Kingcol" (flying column of "Habforce") at Habbaniya

19 May Capture of Falluja

20 May R.A.F. bombed Rashid aerodrome  
German aircraft bombed Habbaniya (5 R.A.F. aircraft destroyed by fire and several damaged)

22 May Enemy counter-attack on Falluja repulsed  
R.A.F. bombed petrol dump at Cassel's Post (1,000,000 gallons destroyed)  
German aircraft bombed Habbaniya: (damage to buildings and casualties)

25 May R.A.F. attacked Mosul and Baquba aerodromes (2 enemy aircraft burned and others damaged)  
R.A.F. bombed Ramadi

28/30 May Advance on Baghdad

29 May Appearance of Italian aircraft

30 May Rashid Ali fled from Baghdad; and the 'Iraqi asked for an Armistice

31 May Armistice signed - End of hostilities

## I. INTRODUCTORY

### Brief Sketch of 'Iraq, 1919-1939

At the close of the Great War (1914-1919) Mesopotamia (known since 1921 as 'Iraq) was under British military occupation, and in May 1920 Great Britain formally accepted a Mandate over that country from the League of Nations.

"Short  
History of  
the R.A.F."  
Air Publica-  
tion 125  
(Revised  
1936)

Report on  
Middle East  
Conference  
At Cairo.

An important item of our air policy was a proposal that Units of the Royal Air Force should be substituted for our military forces but for the time being this was impracticable until suitable aircraft and the necessary trained personnel could be provided. In March 1921 this matter was further considered at a Conference held at Cairo for the purpose of examining the position of Mandated and other territories in the Middle East. At this Conference the Chief of the Air Staff submitted a scheme for the defence and control of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air Force. The scheme was approved in principle and the Conference further recommended the provision of an all-British military and commercial air route from Egypt to India (and ultimately Australia) via Mesopotamia.

"Short  
History of  
the R.A.F."  
Air Publica-  
tion 125  
(Revised  
1936).

The assumption of the control of Mesopotamia ('Iraq) by the Royal Air Force did not take place until October 1922 when Air Vice-Marshal Sir John Salmond was appointed G.O.C. of the military and air forces in that country.<sup>1</sup> In the same month (October) a Treaty of Alliance was made between Great Britain and 'Iraq for a period of 20 years but this Treaty was not ratified. Meanwhile, in August 1921, the Emir Faisul (the third son of ex-King Hussein of the Hedjaz) had been elected King of 'Iraq.

In 1922 trouble broke out with irregular Turkish forces and the Kurdish tribes in northern 'Iraq, which penetrated to within forty miles of Kirkuk.<sup>2</sup> Air action was taken to repel the invaders but by December (1922) the relations between

1. A small military force of one Brigade and one Pack Battery was maintained in 'Iraq and Sir J. Salmond was gazetted a Temporary Major-General in consideration of his control of these units.
2. Situated approx. 145 miles north of Baghdad.

Great Britain and Turkey had become very strained. The Turkish Government now laid claim to the vilayet of Mosul<sup>1</sup> and concentrated considerable forces in the north-west of that area, but these were repulsed by British forces and the R.A.F. In the autumn of 1924 the situation again became critical: a Mosul Conference held at Constantinople proved abortive and the matter was referred to the League of Nations. The League established a provisional boundary (in November 1924), which resulted in the restoration of normal conditions, but in 1925 the situation in the Mosul area again became threatening. However, in December of that year the League of Nations reached a unanimous decision on the frontier question of 'Iraq. An agreement with Turkey followed, and in June 1926 a Treaty settling the whole problem was signed at Angora between the British, Turkish and 'Iraqi Governments. In December 1927 a Treaty between Great Britain and 'Iraq formally recognised 'Iraq as an independent state.

While these events were in progress serious trouble had occurred in Kurdistan with Sheikh Mahmud and his followers. This chieftan had been Governor of Sulaimanyia<sup>2</sup> under the Turkish administration, and in 1919 he had been made Governor of Southern Kurdistan by the British Government. In May (1919) he revolted but was defeated and interned in India, and later he was allowed to reside at Kuwait. In September 1922 Sheikh Mahmud was reinstated as Governor of Southern Kurdistan as being the only person by whom British authority could be exercised in that area, but in 1923 it became known that he was preparing (with Turkish assistance) to attack Kirkuk and to instigate a general rising in 'Iraq. Imperial troops assisted by the Royal Air Force and the 'Iraq Levies<sup>3</sup> drove back the insurgents and occupied Sulaimanyia, and Sheikh Mahmud fled to Persia.

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1. The town of Mosul is situated approx. 95 miles north-west of Kirkuk.
  2. Situated approx. 60 miles east of Kirkuk.
  3. The 'Iraq Levies were recruited from 'Iraq and Assyrians under command of British Officers.

During the next few years Sheikh Mahmud made several attempts to regain control of Kurdistan. In 1924 he declared a Jihad (holy war) against Great Britain and the Assyrian residents of 'Iraq and he then occupied Sulaimanyia. A force of forty-two aircraft of the R.A.F. was sent against him which bombed Sulaimanyia<sup>1</sup>, and Sheikh Mahmud again fled to Persia. In the Spring of 1927 Mahmud again gave trouble and in June intensive air action by the R.A.F. was taken against him.

Meanwhile there had been disturbances in other parts of 'Iraq, particularly by the incursions of the Akhwan tribe from the Nejd territory<sup>2</sup> which necessitated the patrolling of the Nejd frontier by the R.A.F. Operations continued intermittently in this area from 1924 until May 1928 when the Nejd ruler, King Ibn Sau'd, undertook to restrain his tribesmen from raiding the 'Iraq frontier. In the meantime (in 1924) disturbances had occurred amongst some sections of the Albu Nashi tribe in the Diwaniyah<sup>3</sup> area resulting in several villages being bombed (after the usual warning) by the R.A.F.

In 1927 Sheikh Ahmad of Barzan, a chieftan of Central Kurdistan, who had repeatedly opposed the 'Iraqi Government, was forced to flee on the occupation of Barzan by a force of 'Iraq Levies assisted by the R.A.F.

On 30 June 1930 a new Treaty was made between Great Britain and 'Iraq as equal and independent states: this Treaty was to endure for 25 years and to take effect from the admission of 'Iraq to the League of Nations.<sup>4</sup> By the terms of the Treaty it was agreed inter alia -

- (1) That each country should aid the other in the event of either becoming engaged in war, and that in the event of an imminent menace of war the two countries should concert together in measures of defence.

Treaty of  
Alliance  
between  
Great  
Britain  
and 'Iraq  
(Treaty  
Series No.  
15 - 1931)

1. Severe damage was inflicted to the town but there were no casualties among the inhabitants who (having been warned by proclamations) had abandoned the town.
2. Between 'Iraq and Trans-Jordan.
3. Situated approx. 96 miles south-east of Baghdad.
4. 'Iraq was admitted to the League in October 1932.

- 4.
- (2) That, although the 'Iraqi Government should be responsible for the internal order of the country and for its defence against external aggression, Great Britain should be granted air bases (a) in the Basra area and (b) at a place to be selected by the British Government west of the Euphrates River, on the understanding that the presence of British forces maintained at these air bases should not constitute an "occupation" or in any way prejudice the sovereignty of 'Iraq.

An Annexure to the Treaty provided inter alia -

- (1) That the British Government should maintain forces at Hinaidi<sup>1</sup> and at Mosul for a period of five years after the Treaty came into force, and at the expiration of this period it should be permitted to station its forces at the air bases mentioned above for which the 'Iraqi Government would grant leases for the duration of the Alliance.
- (2) That the 'Iraqi Government should provide forces for the defence of the R.A.F. air bases, and
- (3) That the 'Iraqi Government would give all facilities for the movement of British forces in transit across 'Iraq and for the transport and storage of all supplies and equipment as might be required during their passage across 'Iraq.

"Short  
History  
of the  
R.A.F."  
Air Publication 125  
(Revised  
1936)

In the autumn of 1930 trouble again occurred in Southern Kurdistan when Sheikh Mahmud made a final attempt to make himself Head of a Kurdish state. Operations were undertaken by the 'Iraqi Army with R.A.F. co-operation and in May 1931 Mahmud surrendered and was flown by the R.A.F. to Ur.

In the Spring of 1932 the 'Iraqi Government took further action to assert its authority over the Barzan district. In these operations a Flight of the Royal 'Iraqi Air Force<sup>2</sup> co-operated with the R.A.F., but after the 'Iraqi Army had sustained a reverse the R.A.F. took control of the operations

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1. Situated approx. 8 miles south-east of Baghdad.  
2. 'Iraq now had its own Army and Air Force.

which resulted in the defeat of the tribesmen and the establishment of civil administration throughout the area.

In September 1933 King Faisul died: he was succeeded by his son Ghazi I - a young man of 21. During this year (1933) disturbances occurred among the Assyrian population of 'Iraq. These disturbances, which were put down ruthlessly by the 'Iraqi Government, severely strained the loyalty to Great Britain of the Assyrian Companies of the 'Iraq Levies but they remained firm in their attachment to us.

R.A.F. Ops.  
'Iraq.  
1932/1937  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/7/4)

During 1935-6 the Rani Huchaim tribal confederation in the Diwaniya area rebelled against the Government. 'Iraqi troops and the Royal 'Iraqi Air Force operated against the insurgents and peace was eventually restored. Meanwhile disaffection occurred in the Barzan and Qurna areas and also among the Yezidi tribe. The 'Iraqi Government did not, however, invoke the assistance of the R.A.F., and as there were no threats to British interests the question of intervention by the British garrison did not arise.

In October 1936 a military coup d'état took place which resulted in the formation of a Nationalist Government. The new régime expressed its intention of observing the provisions of the Anglo-'Iraq Treaty of 1932.

On the tragic death of King Ghazi in April 1939 his infant son, Faisul II, became King under the regency of his uncle H.R.H. The Emir Abdulla Illah<sup>1</sup>.

#### Political Situation April 1941

The political events which led to the 'Iraq rebellion of 1941 were largely the outcome of extensive propaganda which had been disseminated in 'Iraq since 1933 by the Axis Powers.

R.A.F.  
Combined  
Intelligence  
Centre Iraq  
(2.5.41 -  
28.2.45)  
Form 540  
Appxs 1 & 20

In every sphere, commercial, cultural, and political, German influence had been skilfully expanded: a local Nazi party and an 'Iraqi Youth Movement (modelled on Nazi lines) were formed, several newspapers were subsidised so as to render them pro-German in outlook, and special care was taken to influence the

1. King Ghazi was killed in a motor accident: his son Faisul II was born on 2 May 1935.

'Iraqi educational authorities. In 1937 the 'Iraqi Director-General of Education visited Germany where he was given an official reception, and in the following year an 'Iraqi delegation attended the Nuremburg Rally. Moreover, 'Iraqi students who had reached a certain standard of proficiency in the German language were offered free educational facilities in Germany. German propaganda was also extended to the 'Iraqi medical profession, and in 1937 the Principal of the Royal Hospital and Dean of the 'Iraqi Medical Faculty visited Germany and received an official welcome. Meanwhile 'Iraqi doctors who had been trained in Germany spread Nazi propaganda among the medical students. On the outbreak of the War in 1939 and the (official) severance of diplomatic relations between 'Iraq and Germany, the Germans transferred most of their propaganda organisation to the Italian legation whose members were admirably situated to act as agents and couriers, and when in 1939 the Japanese opened a legation in Baghdad - ostensibly to develop trade between 'Iraq and Japan - their legation soon became another centre of Axis propaganda. Meanwhile in October 1939 the notorious ex-Mufti of Jerusalem - accompanied by a number of Palestinian and Syrian adherents - arrived at Baghdad and associated himself with the Italian legation.

Air H.Q.  
Iraq.  
Air Staff  
Branch.  
Form 540  
Appx 6/4/40/1  
(Intell.  
Summary No.  
14). Entry  
of 6 Apl.41.

In March 1940 the Prime Minister, Nuri Pasha, resigned and Rashid Ali Al Gailani accepted the Premiership at the request of the Regent. Rashid Ali had considerable experience as a politician. A lawyer by profession he became a Judge in the 'Iraqi Court of Appeal (1921) and he was made Minister of the Interior in 1925 - from which he resigned on his election as President of the Chamber of Deputies. In 1927 he again became Minister of the Interior, and in 1929 he founded the Hizb Al Ikha (Brotherhood Party) which he joined to the Hizb Al Watani (National Party) in opposition to the Government. In 1930 he resigned with other Opposition members and in 1932 he was appointed Chief Chamberlain and Private Secretary to King Faisul. On the resignation of the Prime Minister, Naji Shawkat,

in 1933 Rashid Ali became Prime Minister, but resigned seven months later. In 1935 he again became Minister of the Interior and also Acting Minister of Justice. On the formation of the Nationalist Government in 1926 Rashid Ali withdrew to Syria with the former Premier (Yassin Pasha). He returned in September 1938 but was arrested and deported. The deportation order was, however, cancelled on the appointment of Nuri Pasha as Prime Minister in 1939 and Rashid Ali then became Rais of the Royal Diwan.

Ibid  
Appx. 31/8/40/1  
(Intell.  
Summary  
No. 35)  
Entry of  
31 Aug. '40  
Ibid  
Appx. 1/2/41/1  
(Intell.  
Summary  
No. 5)  
Entry of  
1 Feb. '41.

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entries  
of 2 and  
4 Apl. '41

S/Ldr.  
Dudgeon's  
'The  
Defence of  
Habbaniya"<sup>1</sup>  
(A.H.B.II  
J.3/2)

In August 1940 there were grounds for believing that Rashid Ali was reaching some form of rapprochement with the Axis Powers, and during the ensuing months his pro-Axis sympathies became considerably more marked. In January 1941 several of the Ministers resigned and were replaced by pro-Axis sympathisers, but by the end of that month the political situation had become entirely chaotic and Rashid Ali resigned. Thereafter he conspired with four Generals of the Army - (known as "the Golden Square") and, backed by German gold, he seized the supreme power by a coup d'état on 3 April (1941) and proclaimed himself "Chief of the National Defence Government". The lawful Regent, N.R.H. The Emir Abdulla Illah, fled from Baghdad to the Royal Air Force station at Habbaniya whence he was flown to the port of Basra and took refuge in H.M.S. "Cockchafer". Rashid Ali now proceeded to stir up anti-British feeling, especially among the junior officers of the 'Iraqi Army, with the result that the army and many of the people of the towns, who were subjected to his propaganda, divided their sympathies between Germany and their own country. On the other hand the rural population was largely apathetic and was, no doubt, waiting for some visible sign of British counter-measures against the rebel government.

The 'Iraq rebellion occurred at the very time when our forces were withdrawing from Greece under the tremendous pressure of the German intervention (on the failure of Italy to conquer that country); we were also being forced back from Cyrenaica by

1. This is an account written by S/Ldr. A.E. Dudgeon from his personal experiences at Habbaniya during the operations.

Rommel and his "Afrika Korps", and within a few weeks we were to be compelled to evacuate Crete. The trouble in 'Iraq could, therefore, have hardly occurred at a more inauspicious moment for with two adverse campaigns on our hands (and the imminent prospect of a third in Crete), the inauguration of a fresh campaign in the Middle East was anything but welcome. Yet it was essential that 'Iraq should be held for upon it depended in a great measure the output of the northern oil-fields, and a hostile government in 'Iraq might well preclude our forces from protecting the Persian oil-fields should these at any time be threatened. Moreover, the air route to India passed through 'Iraq to Basra and thence along the Persian Gulf, and it was of the first importance that this vital link with India and the East should be preserved inviolate.

#### Strength and Dispositions of the Royal Air Force

A.C.M.  
Longmore's  
Despatch  
"Royal Air  
Force -  
Middle  
East"  
1 Jan. to  
3 May 41

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
Report  
"Ops in  
Iraq" 2  
to 31  
May 41.  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

In April (1941) the only units of the Royal Air Force in 'Iraq (under command of the A.O.C., Air Vice-Marshal H.G. Smart, O.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C.) were No. 4 Service Flying Training School<sup>1</sup> at Habbaniya, No. 244 (Bomber) Squadron (Vincents) at Shaibah (situated some sixteen miles south-west of Basra), and a Communication Flight of 3 Valentias at Habbaniya. No. 4 S.F.T.S. was equipped with 32 Audaxes, 8 Gordons, 29 Oxfords, 9 Gladiators and 1 Blenheim I, and some Hart trainers. The total number of all these aircraft which might be employed operationally was 96, but of these the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. (with the exception of the 9 Gladiators and the single Blenheim I) were of obsolete or purely training types. In addition to these aircraft the Royal Air Force was provided with one Armoured Car Company (comprising 18 armoured vehicles) at Habbaniya and seven Companies of the 'Iraq Levies.

#### Strength of the Royal 'Iraqi Air Force

The Royal 'Iraqi Air Force consisted of seven Squadrons, a Flying Training School and an Aircraft Depot. The serviceable aircraft of these Squadrons approximated some 60 machines and

1. Hereafter referred to as No. 4 S.F.T.S. It had been transferred from Abu Sueir (Egypt) to Habbaniya in September 1939 in accordance with a recommendation of the Overseas Command Conference held at Cairo in November 1938 that this transfer should take place in the event of war. (File S.4715 of 24 Oct. 1938 and H.Q., R.A.F., M.E. Form 540, Entry of 30 Sep. 1939 - "Training").

comprised various types including Pegasus-engined Audaxes, Vincents, Gladiators, Breda 65's, Northrop 8's, Savoia 79's and D.H. Moths.<sup>1</sup>

Of these, the Northrops, Savoias and Pegasus-engined Audaxes constituted the bombing units while the Gladiators and six-gun Bredas provided an efficient fighter force. With the exception of the Vincents of No. 244 (Bomber) Squadron and the Gladiators and single Blenheim of No. 4 S.F.T.S. the aircraft of the Royal 'Iraqi Air Force were of superior performance to those of the Royal Air Force.

#### Habbaniya

Under the terms of the Anglo-'Iraq Treaty of 1930<sup>2</sup> the British Government undertook to evacuate their air forces at Hinaidi and Mosul within five years of the coming into force of the Treaty (1932) and to move the R.A.F. units from thence to a base to be selected west of the Euphrates. Several sites were investigated for this purpose and (in June 1932) a site was chosen near the village of El Dhibban some fifty miles west of Baghdad. This site was located between a bend of the Euphrates and the Habbaniya Plateau - so called from its proximity to the Habbaniya Lake which lies near the west bank of the river. This large sheet of water (some two hundred miles in area) formed a convenient landing place for flying-boats of the air route from Egypt to India. The village of El Dhibban was connected with Baghdad by an existing road to the township of Falluja<sup>3</sup> and thence across the desert to Baghdad.

In August 1933 the construction of this new air base was approved: the first permanent buildings were finished in July 1934, the whole work being completed in 1937. The lay-out extended for some two and a half miles along the river and included a large cantonment for R.A.F. civilian employees (European and Indian) and their families and the families of several Companies of the 'Iraq Levies.

1. A complete summary of the strength and locations of the units of the Royal 'Iraqi Air Force - as at 15 February 1941 (transcribed from Air H.Q. 'Iraq, Form 540, Entry of 31 March 1941, Appx. 8/3/41) is given in Appendix "A".
2. See page 4 supra. (The air base in the Basra area was selected at Shaibah).
3. Situated approx. 11 miles east of Habbaniya.

File S30006  
Parts I-III  
and  
R.A.F.Ops:  
Iraq 1932-7  
Chaps. VIII  
and XII  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/7/4)

The principal features of the R.A.F. station (the Headquarters of the R.A.F. in 'Iraq) were a high water tower, an aerodrome with tarmac runways 600/800 yards long and 50 yards wide with six hangars (300 feet by 150 feet), an Aircraft Depot with two repair shops, a Supply Depot and Fuel and Ammunition Dumps, a Hospital and a Meteorological Station, in addition to the usual administrative offices and barrack blocks. The station was considered a model of its kind; it had all the amenities of a peacetime cantonment with a polo ground, golf course, social club and swimming pool, and rows of shady trees which were planted along the neatly laid out avenues.

On its northern and eastern boundaries the station was protected by the Euphrates but on the south and west it possessed no natural artificial barriers in the event of an assault by ground troops, and moreover it was dominated by the Plateau from which a hostile force could launch an attack with virtual impunity. Furthermore, all the essential services such as the water supply, sanitation and cooking facilities were powered by electricity dependent on one power station which was sited in an extremely vulnerable position. In fact, Habbaniya was designed as a purely peace-time station, its only artificial defence being a seven mile perimeter of steel fencing for protection against marauders.<sup>1</sup> In April 1941

A-V-H  
D'Albiac's  
Report  
"Ops in  
'Iraq, 2 to  
31 May '41.  
(A.H.B.  
III J3/3)

1. The question of the strategic position of Habbaniya had been discussed at a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence on 28 July 1933 in consideration of a point raised at a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee that the site was unsound strategically. The Secretary of State for War, Lord Hailsham, was apprehensive as to "the difficulty and dangers of extricating the Royal Air Force in the event of trouble in 'Iraq" which would be located (at Habbaniya) 600 miles from the Mediterranean and 400 miles from Basra, whereas an air base on the coast (e.g. Basra) would be secure from a military aspect and could be easily evacuated, (File S.30006, Part III). Lord Hailsham was, however, envisaging a situation which might arise if 'Iraq itself were unfriendly, but - as pointed out by the Secretary of State for Air, Lord Londonderry - such a situation was not contemplated when the Committee of Imperial Defence discussed the matter. (Letter: Lord Hailsham to Lord Londonderry and Lord Londonderry's reply: of 10 and 12 Oct. 1933: Ibid). It may be added that such a situation would in any case appear to be beyond the terms of reference for while the Anglo-'Iraq Treaty was in force no hostile act by the 'Iraqi Government against our forces could reasonably be contemplated and would, no doubt, never have occurred but for the outbreak of war with the Axis Powers. Similarly, the question of the defences of Habbaniya (except, perhaps, against recalcitrant tribesmen who, it was reasonable to suppose, would be suppressed by the 'Iraqi Government) was a matter of little consequence, our forces being adequately safeguarded by the existence of the Treaty.

the line of communication to Basra had not been established thus compelling the garrison to rely upon its own resources in the event of an attack.

In addition to Habbaniya the Royal Air Force had stations at Shaibah and Basra and a Base Supplies and Transport Depot at Basra.

#### Arrival of British Troops

General  
Wavell's  
Despatch  
"Ops in  
Iraq" etc.  
May to  
June 1941  
of 27 Oct.  
'41, W.O.  
File  
0178  
1247

The disquieting occurrences at Baghdad in April 1941 decided H.M. Government to send troops to 'Iraq, and for this purpose a convoy of troops which was on its way from Karachi (India) to Malaya was diverted to Basra. These forces comprised the H.Q. of the 10th Indian Division, the 3rd Field Regiment R.A. and the 20th Infantry Brigade, under command of Major-General W.A.K. Fraser, C.B., O.B.E., D.S.O., M.V.O., M.C. (commanding the 10th Indian Infantry Division). On 16 April the British Ambassador informed Rashid Ali that our Government intended to avail itself of the facilities granted under the Anglo-'Iraq Treaty for the passage of troops through the 'Iraqi lines of communication and that the disembarkation of these troops would take place at Basra in the immediate future. As Rashid Ali had accepted the obligations of the Treaty on his assumption of office he could only agree to the disembarkation unless he was prepared to offer armed resistance which was, presumably, too drastic a step for him to take without direct material support from the Axis Powers which, at that time, he lacked. The matter was debated on the next day (17 April) at a joint meeting of the 'Iraqi Cabinet and Defence Council which decided that permission should be given for the disembarkation. The convoy (with Naval escort) arrived on 18 April and the disembarkation of the troops took place without incident under cover of the Vincent aircraft of No. 244 Squadron from Shaibah, six Audax and four Gordon aircraft having also been sent to Shaibah as a reserve force in case that base were attacked.

Ibid  
Appx. 16/4/41  
41/3  
Entry of  
16 Apl. '41 .  
Air H.Q.  
Iraq. Form  
540. Entry  
of 17 Apl. '41  
and subse-  
quent dates.

In addition to these forces 400 men of the 1st Battalion The King's Own Royal Regiment were flown from Karachi to Shaibah by Douglas and Valentia aircraft of No. 31 (Transport) Squadron, and arrived on 17 and 24 April. They were then flown to Habbaniya.

### Preparations at Habbaniya

S/Ldr.  
Dudgeon's  
"The  
Defence  
of  
Habbaniya"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/2)

In the meantime preparations against possible hostilities had been made at Habbaniya which included putting No. 4 S.F.T.S. on a War footing. The personnel of the School consisted of a small body of instructors (including some members of the Royal Greek Air Force)<sup>1</sup> a number of pupils and ground personnel. Some thirty-five of the instructors were pilots but they had done no more than circuits and landings for some time while a few of them had either flown very little for some years past or had completed an excessive amount of operational flying and had been sent to Habbaniya for a well-earned rest. As it so happened the initial training course was nearing its end and all the training aircraft which could be utilised in an operational capacity were now fitted to carry extra bomb loads. The Audaxes - which normally carried a war load of 20 lb bombs - were equipped with universal racks which enabled them to carry two 250 lb bombs, and an ingenious fitment was made to the Oxfords which allowed them to carry eight 20 lb bombs.<sup>2</sup> The Gordons - which were target-towing aircraft - were fitted with universal racks and, like the Audaxes, could now carry a load of two 250 lb bombs. On the completion of these adjustments satisfactory test flights were made, and an extensive course of instruction in bomb-aiming and air gunnery was begun for those pupils who were normally about to start on the advanced training course.

Air H.Q.  
Iraq  
Repair &  
Maintenance  
Branch.  
Form 540  
Entries of  
12/13  
Apl. '41.

### Precautionary Measures by the R.A.F.

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entries of  
2 April '41,  
and sub-  
sequent  
dates

Meanwhile on 2 April (the day on which H.R.H. The Regent fled from Baghdad) armoured car patrols and observation posts were established on the Habbaniya - Falluja road as a precautionary measure. On the same day Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O. (who was succeeding Sir Basil Newton, K.C.M.G. as H.M.

1. In January (1941) a scheme for training pilots of the Royal Greek Air Force was inaugurated and some Greek officers with a number of pupils were sent to the School. (Air H.Q. Iraq Form 540, Entries of 1 Jan.41 and subsequent dates).
2. The Oxfords were supposed to be unsuitable for carrying bombs of any useful weight because the tail fins of the 20 lb. bombs fouled the rear end of the bomb well. The new fitment consisted of a small distance piece to lower the rear end of the rack which allowed the tail fins to project about 1½ inches below the fuselage and thus clear the obstruction. (S/Ldr. Dudgeon's "The Defence of Habbaniya" - A.H.B. II.J3/2).

Ambassador to 'Iraq) arrived at Habbaniya by a British Overseas Airways Corporation flying-boat and proceeded to Baghdad. On the following day (3 April) aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. made reconnaissance patrols between Ramadi<sup>1</sup> and Baghdad, and these reconnaissances - in addition to the armoured car patrols - were continued during the next few days.

S/Ldr.  
Dudgeon's  
"The Defence  
of Habbaniya"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/2)

About this time a large scale photographic mosaic was made of Baghdad city and of Rashid (Baghdad) aerodrome by one of the Oxford aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. A photograph was also taken of Falluja by an Audax aircraft and most of the possible targets within striking range were catalogued. Meanwhile at Habbaniya the golf course - on which the bunkers were flattened - was joined to the polo ground thereby forming an additional aircraft dispersal ground.

#### Supply and Maintenance

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
(Supplies  
and  
Transport  
Branch)  
Entries  
of 10/12  
and 30  
Apl.41

As already stated the Base Supplies and Transport Depot of the Royal Air Force was situated at Basra. In case of hostilities the following precautionary measures were taken to ensure that the necessary supplies of food and petrol would be available at Shaibah and Habbaniya:-

Rations On 10 April a sub-supply depot was formed at Shaibah and three months reserve rations were transferred there, and on the next day all reserve rations (except two months supplies for the personnel at Basra<sup>2</sup>) were also sent to Shaibah. Meanwhile an order was sent to India for 45,000 rations at Field Service scale. At Habbaniya the personnel consisted of 2,200 troops and some 9,000 civilians (Europeans, Indians, and Assyrians). On 30 April an inventory of rations was made and a scale drawn up in case of a curtailment of supplies from Basra.

Fuel The D.T.D. petrol stocks at Shaibah were increased to 24,000 gallons, and 10,000 gallons of 100 Octane fuel were laid down for mixing with D.T.D. 230 petrol so as

1. A township situated approximately 15 miles west of Habbaniya.  
2. From 14 May the Army undertook the supply of food for the Basra area.

to produce 90 Octane petrol if required. On 30 April a further 50,000 gallons of D.T.D. 230 petrol were laid down at Shaibah and 25,000 gallons at Basra in anticipation of operational requirements.

The existing stocks of petrol at Habbaniya were (apparently) sufficient. The petrol was kept in two petrol storage compounds (known as "A" and "B") from which the tankers for refuelling aircraft were supplied.

The Aircraft Depot for the Royal Air Force, 'Iraq, (situated at Habbaniya) was capable of performing major overhauls and repairs. Replenishment of aircraft for 'Iraq was made normally by R.A.F. Headquarters, Middle East.

#### The R.A.F. and Reinforcement

As a result of reports of considerable movements of 'Iraqi troops in the Basra and Baghdad areas on 8 April, five Squadrons and one Flight of Gladiators (totalling 48 aircraft) were formed from No. 4 S.F.T.S. and made practice flights over Ramadi and Falluja. Reconnaissance patrols were thenceforward carried out daily as the political situation deteriorated.

Meanwhile on 6 April the A.O.C. 'Iraq had requested Air Headquarters, Middle East, that immediate consideration should be given to the question of land and air reinforcements, but in view of the situation in Libya and the German attacks on Yugo-Slavia and Greece no reinforcements could be spared. On 14 April the A.O.C. 'Iraq again requested reinforcements of one bomber Squadron and one (modern) fighter Flight for a few days in case Rashid Ali decided to oppose the landing of British troops at Basra.<sup>1</sup> As all the Middle East aircraft were actively engaged on critical operations none could be spared for 'Iraq but the A.O.C.-in-C., Air Marshal Sir A.M. Longmore, K.C.B., D.S.O., promised a small reinforcement in the event of Rashid Ali making active opposition to the landing of the troops. On the following day (15 April)

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry  
6 Apl.41  
Appx.  
6/4/41/2  
Air H.Q.  
M.E.  
Form 540  
Entry of  
7 Apl.  
Appx.15  
Ibid  
Entry of  
14 Apl.41  
Appx.32

1. See page 11 supra.

File  
A.O.C.-  
in-C/2  
Part IV  
Signal A.  
491 of  
16 Apl. '41  
to C.A.S.

Ibid:  
Signal X.  
836 of  
15 Apl. 41  
From  
C.A.S.

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
19 Apl. 41

the A.O.C.-in-C. decided to send a reinforcement of nine Wellingtons and six Gladiators before the anticipated evacuation of Greece - which was then almost a certainty - would have time to influence the 'Iraqi Government, and to visit Habbaniya himself on 17 April, although he did not consider that Rashid Ali would in fact resort to active opposition. The Air Ministry, however, did not agree to these proposals: they could not understand how the Wellingtons and Gladiators could be spared, especially as the A.O.C.-in-C. did not anticipate any opposition from Rashid Ali, and they considered that the A.O.C. 'Iraq had a considerable number of aircraft which could be used if necessary. The A.O.C.-in-C. therefore cancelled the move of the Wellingtons to Habbaniya but sent the six Gladiators (escorted by one Wellington with spares etc.) as the only aircraft at Habbaniya were those of No. 4 S.F.T.S. and the situation was hourly becoming more threatening. The six Gladiators and the Wellington arrived at Habbaniya on 19 April having been delayed en route owing to bad weather and to a damaged tail wing of the Wellington.

#### Course of Events from 21 April

Meanwhile two further convoy ships with ancillary troops of the first convoy were expected to arrive at Basra on 28 April. On 21 April the British Ambassador received a note from the 'Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs that no further British troops were to be landed at Basra until the main force (which had disembarked on 18 April<sup>1</sup>) had passed across the frontier out of 'Iraq. Nevertheless it was decided that the landing of these ancillary troops should proceed and that retaliatory action should be taken by H.M. ships if the passage of the convoy up river were opposed.<sup>2</sup>

1. See page 11 *supra*.

2. The port of Basra is situated on the Shatt-al-Arab River (formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates at Al Qurna) approx. 48 miles from the coast. H.M. ships "Cockchafer", "Yarra" and "Falmouth" were ordered to proceed up river to cover the passage of the convoy to Basra. The landing of the troops was sanctioned by the British Foreign Office which authorised the use of force, if necessary. (Ibid Appx. 29/4/41/2 to Form 540, Entry of 29 Apl. '41).

Ibid  
Appx. 29/  
4/41/1 to  
Form 540  
Entry of  
29 Apl. '41

On 29 April the convoy reached Basra without any opposition.

In the meantime, on 27 April, Colonel Roberts (G.S.O.1, 10th Indian Division) had arrived at Habbaniya by air from Basra, and during the next two days the Battalion of the King's Own Royal Regiment was flown to Habbaniya from Shaibah. Meanwhile the air striking force at Shaibah had been strengthened (at the request of the G.O.C., General Fraser) by a Detachment of three Gladiators of No. 4 S.F.T.S.

Ibid  
Form 540  
Entries of  
26 - 29  
Apl. '41

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
Report  
"Ops in 'Iraq"  
2 - 31 May '41  
(A.H.B.)  
II J.3/3)  
and  
Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entries of  
29 Apl '41,  
and sub-  
sequent  
dates.

In view of the increasing tension the British Ambassador had advised all British women and children to leave Baghdad, and on 29 April - after the Ambassador had obtained Rashid Ali's consent to the evacuation - some 230 women and children were conveyed to Habbaniya, mainly in Royal Air Force transport while an Oxford aircraft from No. 4 S.F.T.S. (fitted with wireless and in communication with Habbaniya) kept continuous watch over the convoy. During that night a considerable force of the 'Iraqi army comprising Mechanised Artillery, Bren gun carriers, armoured cars and lorry-borne Infantry moved out from Baghdad and by dawn (on 30 April) was in possession of the plateau to the south of the Habbaniya cantonment.

S/Ldr.  
Dudgeon's  
"The Defence  
of Habbaniya"  
(A.H.B.)  
II J.3/2)

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
30 Apl. '41

The appearance of the 'Iraqi troops necessitated prompt action on the part of the garrison. No. 4 S.F.T.S. was immediately placed on a war basis by moving the Oxfords and Gladiators to the end of the row of hangars furthest from the plateau while the Audaxes were moved to the polo ground to operate from there. The aircraft were then loaded with bombs and one machine was sent to reconnoitre the plateau to obtain information of the composition of the 'Iraqi forces. Meanwhile a message was sent to Shaibah recalling the three Gladiators and also three Audaxes which had been sent there on detachment.

Early in the morning the Commander of the 'Iraqi force sent one of his officers to the A.O.C. with the demand that no movements either ground or air were to take place from the cantonment. This demand could not, of course, be entertained and in spite of every effort made by the A.O.C. with the 'Iraqi

Commander and also by the British Ambassador (who was kept informed by wireless communication with the A.O.C. of the course of events) with the 'Iraqi authorities at Baghdad, the 'Iraqi troops investing Habbaniya refused to withdraw. In fact during these abortive negotiations reconnaissance flights by No. 4 S.F.T.S. aircraft reported that the 'Iraqi forces threatening Habbaniya were being increased by a steady flow of reinforcements and that their troops had also occupied Falluja.

Ibid  
Appx. 30/4/  
41/4  
Entry of  
30 Apl.'41

At 08.55 hours the A.O.C. 'Iraq signalled the A.O.C.-in-C. Middle East reporting the situation and requesting an immediate directive and information as to the possibility of reinforcements.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the British Ambassador had signalled the Foreign Office that he considered the 'Iraqi threat as an act of war which justified immediate air action and that he was demanding an immediate withdrawal of the 'Iraqi forces.<sup>2</sup>

Ibid  
Appx. 30/4/  
41/5

A-C-M  
Longmore's  
Despatch  
"Royal Air  
Force Mid:  
East"  
1 Jan.'41 to  
3 May '41  
and  
A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
Report.  
"Ops in

In response to the A.O.C's signal a detachment of eight Wellingtons of No. 70 (Bomber) Squadron was ordered from Egypt to Shaibah and arrived on the following day (1 May). They were followed on the next day (2 May) by a detachment of ten Wellingtons of No. 37 (Bomber) Squadron also from Egypt, and other reinforcements arrived at Habbaniya on 3 May and subsequent dates.<sup>3</sup> Group Captain Macdonald was sent by Air

1. The A.O.C. had considered issuing an ultimatum for withdrawal to the 'Iraqi Commander, but in view of our policy up to that time and the improbability of receiving early reinforcements he had decided to defer taking offensive action until the 'Iraqis opened fire. (Ibid).
2. The full text of this signal is as follows:-  
"Regent unreasonable, A.O.C. 'Iraq has my fullest support. I would like to go further and consider this threatening as an act of war which justifies immediate air action. I would prefer not to try and persuade 'Iraqis to withdraw their force. It will only postpone the evil day. This country has been in preparation of fifth column devised for some time and nothing but sharpest lesson will give us a chance of restoring control in our favour. Further, Germans may arrive any day and soon it may be too late to act. The 'Iraq Government by this provocative action has given us a fine chance of acting forcibly with full justification and I hope we shall not let it slip. I do not recommend any action at Basra at present unless provocation is given. In expressing these views I have had no time to consult G.O.C. or A.O.C. Pending your decision whether issue should be forced I am protesting strongly to 'Iraq Government and while reserving full right to further action I am demanding immediate withdrawal of force."
3. On 3 May a Detachment of four Blenheim IV's of No. 203 (General Reconnaissance) Sqdn. arrived at Habbaniya from Egypt, and thereafter a Detachment of six Gladiators and seven Hurricanes of No. 94 (Fighter) Sqdn. from Egypt and of No. 84 (Bomber) Sqdn. (comprising thirteen Blenheim IV's) from Palestine. (Ibid).

'Iraq 2 - 31  
May '41"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

Headquarters, Middle East, as O.C. Air Forces at Shaibah (under the A.O.C. 'Iraq) to act independently in the event of communications being disrupted between Shaibah and Habbaniya.

Meanwhile a warning order was issued to all units at Habbaniya stating that 'Iraqi troops (including Artillery, tanks and armoured cars) had surrounded the cantonment and that the units as detailed in the order would stand by to counter-attack outside the cantonment should the necessity arise. The three Gladiators which had been sent to Shaibah on 26 April were sent back to Habbaniya and arrived in the afternoon. In the meantime 'Iraqi reinforcements were still arriving and air reconnaissance reports showed that the positions which the rebel forces occupied on the plateau and at Falluja were being extended and strengthened. During the night various transport movements of the 'Iraqi were seen but no attack was offered; meanwhile all posts around the cantonment perimeter were manned and the mobile units were on call at the shortest notice.

At dawn the next day (1 May) our aircraft made a further reconnaissance to report on the disposition and movements of the 'Iraqi forces while defence measures in and around the cantonment were being perfected. At the same time the first convoy of the evacuated British women and children were flown to Basra in Douglas aircraft of No. 31 (Transport) Squadron<sup>1</sup> and Valentias of the Communication Flight. Meanwhile the A.O.C. had received a copy of a directive signal from the Foreign Office to our Ambassador which stated - "The position must be restored. 'Iraqi troops must be withdrawn without delay. You have full authority to take any steps you think necessary to ensure this, including air attack. A.O.C. must act on own authority if you have no direct communication with him". After further communication with the Ambassador and conferences by the A.O.C. and his senior officers it was decided to attack the 'Iraqi at dawn on the following morning without issuing an ultimatum. The decision not to issue an ultimatum was due to the fear that

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Appx. 1/5/  
41/2 to  
Form 540  
Entry of  
1 May '41

1. This Sqdn. had brought the K.O.R.R. from India (see page 11 supra).

any warning of our intentions would be used by the investing forces as an opportunity to forestall the attack and might well lead to the 'Iraqi denying the Royal Air Force the use of their bomber aircraft which were their only real offensive weapon.<sup>1</sup>

#### Plan of Operations

The primary object of the Habbaniya garrison was to drive the 'Iraqi forces sufficiently far from the cantonment to prevent them from subjecting it to continuous artillery bombardment. With this end in view orders were issued that all available aircraft at Habbaniya were to maintain continuous attacks on local objectives throughout the coming day (2 May), priority of objectives being guns, A.F.V's, armoured cars, road convoys and troop concentrations; and the O.C. Air Forces, Shaibah, was instructed to employ the Wellingtons of Nos. 37 and 70 Squadron Detachments in bombing local targets throughout the day as often as possible, the same priority of targets being given as at Habbaniya. After all preparations for the attack had been made the A.O.C. received the following signal from the Prime Minister:- "If you have to strike, strike hard. Use all necessary force".

#### General Outline of Operations During the Rebellion.

The military operations during the course of the 'Iraq rebellion fall into three main phases, namely:-

1. The siege of Habbaniya and the action at Sin El Dhibban.<sup>2</sup>
2. The capture of Falluja.
3. The advance on Baghdad (culminating in the request by the 'Iraqis for an armistice).

In the first phase the major part of the operations devolved upon the Royal Air Force, and during the second and third phases a considerable part of the main effort had to be directed against the 'Iraqi army in support of our ground

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
1 May '41

Ibid  
Appx. 1/5/41/  
23 to  
Form 540  
Entry of  
1 May '41

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
Report  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
2-31 May '41  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

1. The detailed development of the situation from the arrival of the 'Iraqi forces at Habbaniya until the outbreak of hostilities on 2 May is given in diary form in Appendix "B" (transcribed from Appendix "C" of A-V-M D'Albiac's Report "Ops in 'Iraq", 2 - 31 May '41. (A.H.B. II J3/3).)
2. Situated approximately 1½ miles south-east of Habbaniya.

forces owing to their numerical weakness, and also to the great importance of re-establishing the Regent in Baghdad at an early date. While these military phases were in progress there were also two distinct phases in the air situation, viz:-

1. The neutralisation and virtual destruction of the 'Iraqi Air Force (which was accomplished after six days' operations).
2. The intervention of the German Air Force after the action at Sin El Dhibban, its neutralisation by the Royal Air Force and its final elimination on the collapse of the 'Iraqi revolutionary government.

#### Air Defence of Habbaniya

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
10 May '41  
Appx. 10/5/  
41/3

In the unavoidable absence of an organised advanced Observer Screen to report the approach of enemy aircraft, a system of Roof Spotting was inaugurated, the Spotter's post being on the top of the Air Headquarters building. In order to ensure that the standing fighter patrol over Habbaniya was informed without delay of the approach of enemy aircraft the system was improved (on 10 May) as follows:-

The Spotter's post was linked by a direct telephone line to the Radio Telephony Ground Station<sup>1</sup> to which the Spotter was to report the approximate position, height and course of approaching enemy aircraft (or the bursting of bombs in the cantonment if the attacking aircraft had not been seen). The Radio Telephony Ground Station would then pass the information to the standing fighter patrol in the air.

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1. This telephone line was also connected to No. 17 anti-aircraft gun position.

## II - THE SIEGE OF HABBANIYA

By the morning of 2 May our air reconnaissances had estimated that the 'Iraqi forces in the vicinity of Habbaniya were as follows:-

One Infantry Brigade plus two Mechanised Battalions  
 One Mechanised Artillery Brigade (twelve 3.7" howitzers)  
 One Field Artillery Brigade (twelve 18 prs. and four 4.5" Howitzers)  
 One Mechanised Machine Gun Company  
 One Anti-Aircraft/Anti-Tank Battery  
 One Mechanised Signal Company  
 Twelve Armoured Cars.

The forces were disposed mainly on the plateau and astride the Baghdad road, with two (or more) guns north of the Euphrates and some troops (possibly one Company of Infantry) at Falluja. There was also one Brigade of Field Artillery (horse-drawn) en route from Baghdad to Falluja.

A-V-M  
 D'Albiac's  
 Report  
 "Ops in  
 'Iraq" 2 -  
 31 May 41  
 (A.H.B.  
 II J3/3)

The British ground forces at Habbaniya comprised:-

One (weak) Battalion of the K.O.R.R.  
 Six companies of the 'Iraq Levies (only four of which, the Assyrian Companies, could be considered reliable)  
 Three Sections of R.A.F. Armoured Cars  
 One composite Company of R.A.F. personnel formed into a Mobile Infantry Reserve

There were also a small number of trench mortars, but no guns.

The total of these forces approximated 2,200 men and 18 Armoured Cars; they were placed under the command of Colonel Roberts who remained at Habbaniya during the siege.

As already stated, the Royal Air Force at Habbaniya consisted of the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. and the three Valentias of the Communication Flight. On the previous day (1 May) the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. were formed into an Air Striking Force under command of the O.C. No. 4 S.F.T.S., the squadrons being re-formed as follows:-

Ibid  
and  
 Air H.Q.  
 'Iraq Sub-  
 Form 540  
 (Repairs &  
 Maintenance  
 Branch)  
 Entry of  
 1 May 41

"A" Squadron - Oxfords and Gordons  
 "B" Squadron - Audaxes  
 "C" Squadron - Audaxes  
 "D" Squadron - Gladiators

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
Report  
"Ops in  
Iraq" 2 -  
31 May 41  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

The O.C. of the Air Striking Force (Group Captain Saville) was given operational control of all aircraft at Habbaniya and of any reinforcements which might be sent there, while Group Captain Macdonald commanded (under the A.O.C.) the reinforcing Detachments of Nos. 37 and 70 Squadrons (Wellingtons) at Shaibah.<sup>1</sup>

Ibid

The situation of the Habbaniya garrison was by no means favourable: the 'Iraqi ground forces were in considerably greater strength both in numbers and equipment and they occupied strong tactical dispositions dominating the cantonment which (as already stated) was designed as a purely peace-time station.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand the 'Iraqi Air Force, though superior in the efficiency of their aircraft to the Royal Air Force, was not considered to be a serious menace.

#### The Commencement of Hostilities<sup>3</sup>

Before dawn (2 May) all the available aircraft at Habbaniya were flying over the enemy's positions endeavouring to locate the principal targets for the forthcoming attack, and at 05.00 hours the operations began with a bombardment by a force composed of 18 Audaxes, 9 Oxfords and 6 Gordons assisted by 3 Wellingtons of No. 70 Squadron Detachment which had been flown up from Shaibah. Within a few minutes the enemy replied by shelling the aerodrome and cantonment with their 18 pdr: guns and 4.5" howitzers and with anti-aircraft fire at our aircraft which were flying at about 1,000 feet to ensure accuracy of their bombing. Several of our aircraft received bullets through their cockpits and one of the Oxfords was shot down in flames, the instructor pilot and his crew of two pupils being killed. The pupils who were acting as bomb aimers and rear gunners were very accurate in their attacks and carried out their work with commendable skill and efficiency.

1. No. 244 Sqdn. (at Shaibah) was under the operational control of the G.O.C. troops, Basra.
2. A sketch map of the enemy's dispositions as at 20.00 hours on 1 May is appended. 'Air H.Q. 'Iraq - Entry of 1 May 41 - Appx. 1/5/41/19).
3. The authorities consulted on the siege of Habbaniya are Air H.Q. 'Iraq, Form 540 and Appxs; A-V-M D'Albiac's Report "Ops in 'Iraq' 2 - 31 May 41 (A.H.B. II J3/3), S/Ldr. Dudgeon's "The defence of Habbaniya" (A.H.B. II J3/2), and Forms 540/541 of the Sqdns. concerned.

Several of the aircraft crews were wounded but all managed to get their aircraft back to the aerodrome. One of the pilots was shot through the jaw but in spite of his dangerous injury he returned and made a successful landing. The pilot of an Audax received three bullets through his shoulder, but his observer (who had also been wounded) noticed that the aircraft was getting out of control and succeeded in pulling the pilot back into an upright position: the pilot - who was semi-conscious and could only use his left hand - managed to land the Audax safely and then fainted. By this time most of our aircraft had been hit and one Audax returned to the landing-ground with 52 bullet holes.

Meanwhile the Wellingtons had attacked enemy positions commanding the camp with 25 lb and 40 lb G.P. bombs which were dropped from a height of 2,000 feet inflicting serious damage on the enemy. (The total weight of the bombs dropped was 22,000 lbs). All the Wellingtons sustained minor damage from bullets and one made a forced landing on the aerodrome. An attempt to save this aircraft was made by a tractor driver with only the protection of an armoured car on either side of his tractor. He drove into the middle of the aerodrome under heavy shell fire and managed to fix a rope round the tail wheel of the aircraft, but before towing could be started the aircraft received a direct hit and burst into flames and had to be abandoned. The tractor was put out of action but the driver escaped in one of the armoured cars. Immediately afterwards the bombs in the aircraft exploded and the machine was blown to pieces.

By about 07.00 hours the enemy's shelling had become less intense due to some of their guns having been put out of action by our bombing, and by 10.30 hours their guns were firing intermittently. The aerodrome was still in use but several of our aircraft had been destroyed and our casualties in personnel numbered about forty including four pilots and two observers. Some casualties had also occurred among the King's Own Royal Regiment from a shell which landed in one of the trenches. By

that time some enemy aircraft had arrived and had bombed and machine-gunned the camp but without much success.<sup>1</sup> The enemy's morale was considerably higher than had been anticipated and owing to the garrison's lack of artillery the losses of our aircraft were increasing rapidly. Meanwhile our aircraft kept up as heavy a pressure on the enemy as was possible considering our losses both in aircraft and personnel. The courage and devotion to duty displayed by our comparatively untrained pilots and air crews had a considerable effect on the general morale of the station.

Meanwhile the normal activities at the station were precluded and as all civilian labour was detailed in the civil cantonment the work of the Supply Depot - particularly with regard to petrol for refuelling aircraft - was brought to a standstill. However the C.O. of the Depot, (Acting Squadron Leader F.B. King) - assisted by Flight Lieutenant Lees<sup>2</sup> who was sent to take charge of No. "B" Petrol Compound - succeeded in refuelling the tankers although they were exposed to machine-gun and shell fire.

By mid-day the attacks of the enemy's Bredas, Northrops, Savoias and Gladiators had achieved some moral effect on the garrison: this was particularly noticeable in the case of the Northrops which owing to their superior speed were immune from interception by our remaining six serviceable Gladiators, the only fighter aircraft available. One of the Gladiators did, however, intercept a Savoia but, unfortunately, the Gladiator's guns jammed at the critical moment and the Savoia escaped. Meanwhile the hangars were being shelled fairly consistently and although our grounded aircraft were hidden from the enemy behind the hangars several of the machines were riddled with splinters. Those aircraft which were on the polo ground were in better case as they were screened from enemy observation by trees in the camp but none the less they received considerable shelling. The Oxfords, Gladiators and Gordons, which were using the main aerodrome, had to be very quick when taking the air: they were started up behind the

1. In a low level bombing attack the enemy used 20 lb H.E. bombs which, it was believed, had been purchased from the British. (Air H.Q. 'Iraq, Armament Branch, Form 540, Entry of 2 May 41).

2. Flight Lieutenant Lees was the Movements Staff Officer.

hangars and then took off by opening their throttles while still inside the perimeter gates, shot out on to the aerodrome already well under way, irrespective of the wind, and then made a steep climbing turn away from the plateau as soon as they were airborne. On returning to the aerodrome the approach was made over the camp with a steep turn between the hangars to avoid the enemy pom-poms, and a landing made on the taxiing strip, the aircraft turning inside the gates and round a corner of one of the hangars at about 20 m.p.h.

Meanwhile four Wellingtons of No. 37 Squadron Detachment had arrived over Habbaniya and had attacked enemy gun positions, M/T and armoured vehicles concentrated on the escarpment south of the camp. Level and shallow dive attacks were made with 250 lb H.E. bombs from 4,000 to 1,000 feet, over 9,000 lbs of bombs being dropped. Hits were scored on a gun position, armoured lorries and a tank; none of the Wellingtons was damaged.

At 16.00 hours an urgent request for reinforcements of Hurricanes was sent to Air Headquarters, Middle East. Twenty-two of our aircraft had been put out of action and also the emergency wireless station. A reply was received that six Fighter Blenheims<sup>1</sup> would be sent as soon as possible from Air Headquarters, Palestine and Trans-Jordan. (In fact four of these aircraft arrived on the following day - 3 May).

At 18.00 hours five Wellingtons of No. 70 Squadron Detachment attacked enemy gun positions overlooking the camp with 250 lb. G.P. bombs: two of the guns were silenced and the Wellingtons then dived down and machine-gunned them. One of the Wellingtons was damaged and landed at Habbaniya; it was repaired (under enemy artillery fire) and was ready for flying before dawn the next morning.

At 21.15 hours a signal was sent to Shaibah giving operational orders for the Wellingtons for the following day. By that time the enemy had ceased their attacks but they showed no signs of retiring from their positions.

1. From No. 203 Squadron Detachment.

During the first day of the siege the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. had made 193 sorties, and had dropped  $16\frac{1}{2}$  tons of bombs, and the Wellingtons of Nos. 37 and 70 Squadrons had made 4 and 13 sorties respectively and had dropped some 4 tons and 15 tons of bombs.<sup>1</sup> Our aircraft losses (destroyed) at Habbaniya were one Wellington, one Gordon and one Oxford on the ground, and one Oxford and one Hart in the air; several other aircraft had been damaged. Our casualties were 13 dead and 29 wounded, including 4 personnel of the 'Iraq Levies and 9 civilians. On the same day (2 May) two Vincents of No. 244 Squadron (Shaibah) had attacked and cut the Shaibah - Ur Railway at Ghubaishya<sup>2</sup>, destroyed a machine-gun nest and attacked enemy troop concentrations and trenches, dropping over 2,000 lbs of bombs.<sup>3</sup> Heavy anti-aircraft fire was encountered and one of our aircraft was shot down, its crew being rescued by the other Vincent. Two other Vincents raided enemy entrenchments at Qurnat Ali<sup>4</sup>; one of these Vincents was also lost.

At the end of this first day's operations the morale of the enemy forces still appeared to be very high in spite of the heavy air bombardment to which they had been subjected, and it was evident that they had no intention of withdrawing. At the same time it was clear that the enemy's guns were much less of a danger than had been feared and it seemed improbable that the enemy would make a determined assault on the camp. During the next few days, therefore, a proportion of the 'R.A.F.'s main effort was directed against the enemy Air Force and the bases and lines of communication of their Army. The successful attack by No. 244 Squadron on the Shaibah - Ur Railway was emulated by Wellingtons on Rashid aerodrome and the "bund" at Falluja,<sup>5</sup> and by Blenheim Fighters (of No. 205 Squadron Detachment) against

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1. The types of bombs dropped by the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. during the siege are not recorded, but presumably they used the types of bombs mentioned on page 12 supra.
  2. Situated approx. 39 miles north-west of Shaibah.
  3. The type of bombs and height from which dropped by this Squadron are not recorded.
  4. Situated approx. 12 miles of Shaibah.
  5. With the object of flooding the Habbaniya - Falluja road and thus disrupting the enemy's lines of communication.

aircraft at Rashid aerodrome, Baghdad airport and other important enemy centres.

Second Day of the Siege (3 May)

In the early hours of the morning of 3 May the enemy shelled the camp with their 4.5" howitzers but ceased at 05.00 hours. Shortly before this every available aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. began attacks on the enemy which they maintained throughout the day. Four Wellingtons of No. 70 Squadron Detachment from Shaibah co-operated by maintaining a protective patrol over Habbaniya from 11.00 to 19.15 hours and by bombing the bridge at Falluja and enemy positions on the Habbaniya plateau with 250 lb G.P. bombs from 3,500 to 1,000 feet. Hits were scored on gun positions and M/T on the Habbaniya plateau and buildings on the side of the bridge-head at Falluja were destroyed. In the meantime three Wellingtons of No. 37 Squadron Detachment had raided Rashid aerodrome at dawn, with 250 lb, 120 lb, and containers of 40 lb bombs from 6,000 to 1,000 feet obtaining direct hits on a building in the magazine and on a large petrol dump. Several enemy fighters attacked the Wellingtons which shot down one of them and damaged another. Meanwhile another Wellington of this Detachment proceeded to Habbaniya and bombed enemy gun positions and transport and machine-gunned enemy trenches. During the morning enemy Savoias bombed<sup>1</sup> and machine-gunned Habbaniya camp but with little effect, and in the early afternoon the four Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment (which had arrived earlier in the morning and had now been refuelled) carried out standing protective patrols of two hours' duration each over the Habbaniya area. Owing to the R.A.F.'s bombing the enemy had reduced their shelling of the cantonment to a minimum. Meanwhile the Vincents of No. 244 Squadron (at Shaibah) had made reconnaissances of Zu Bair,<sup>2</sup> Qurmat Ali and the Shaibah - Ur Railway encountering slight anti-aircraft opposition.

1. The enemy used 112 lb bombs from a height of about 8,000 feet: the main damage caused was the fracture of one water main
2. Situated approx. 9 miles south of Basra.

In the afternoon instructions were sent to the O.C.

Shaibah for one Wellington to arrive over the enemy's gun positions round Habbaniya before dawn every day, and to remain until relieved by another Wellington. On the receipt of a reply from the O.C. Shaibah that he had arranged to carry out another attack on the Rashid aerodrome next morning, further instructions were sent to him indicating that any spare effort should be directed against the enemy's camp at Washash,<sup>1</sup> the chief target to be the magazine; that special precautions were to be taken to avoid the King's and the Regent's Palaces where members of the 'Iraq Royal Family were residing, and that pamphlets should be dropped in the Baghdad area during the return flight.

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
3 May 41  
Appx. 3/5/  
41/2

Meanwhile the British Ambassador at Baghdad had signalled to Habbaniya that 'Iraqi officials had demanded the dismantling of his wireless set; a postscript to the signal stated that the officials had just arrived to confiscate all his wireless apparatus, and requested that information from Habbaniya should be dropped on the Embassy from the air. This was the last communication that the Habbaniya garrison received from the Ambassador.

Ibid  
Appx. 3/5/  
41/7

At 16.15 hours a copy of a personal signal from the Chief of Air Staff to the A.O.C.-in-C., Middle East, was received by the A.O.C., 'Iraq. This signal suggested that after consultation with General Wavell (C.-in-C. Middle East) the A.O.C.-in-C. should consider threatening that if the enemy attempted to set foot in Habbaniya R.A.F. Station, Baghdad would be bombed and that Rashid Ali would be responsible for the inevitable destruction to that city. To this the A.O.C. replied that it was almost certain this threat would be ineffective and would be considered by the 'Iraqi as a sign of weakness; that the bombing of Baghdad would unite the whole of 'Iraq against the British forces, and that there were indications that many of the 'Iraq tribes were at present on the British side, and that his intention was to drop delay-action bombs on the enemy gun positions on the Habbaniya plateau and in the village of Sin El Dhibban to embarrass the enemy during the hours of darkness.

Ibid  
Appx. 3/5/  
41/8

1. Situated on the western outskirts of Baghdad.

File  
A.O.C.-in-C/2  
Part IV  
Signal A.  
453 of  
3 May to  
C.A.S.

The Acting A.O.C.-in-C.<sup>1</sup> discussed this matter with General Wavell who felt that the threat of bombing Baghdad should not be made if offers of mediation - which had been made by the Turkish and Egyptian Governments - were likely to be considered by the British Government. The Acting A.O.C.-in-C. agreed with General Wavell: he considered it was unlikely that a sustained or heavy bombing attack on Baghdad would be practicable especially as the stocks of bombs at Shaibah were running low. Moreover the British Ambassador at Cairo was averse to the bombing of Baghdad in view of the effect which such action might have on Egypt and Cairo.

During this day's operations the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. made 119 sorties and dropped some 12 tons of bombs. Their losses were one Oxford destroyed on the ground by shell fire and one Audax severely damaged,<sup>2</sup> while the enemy's losses were one Savoia shot down (unconfirmed) at Habbaniya, and one fighter aircraft at Rashid.

#### Third Day of the Siege (4 May)

During the night (3/4 May) the cantonment was subjected to intermittent shelling which became intensive before dawn. Night raids by our ground forces had made contact with the enemy but their morale remained unshaken and they still maintained their positions. They occupied trenches in broken ground and only manned their guns when not threatened from the air. Our aircraft continued their operations throughout the day uninterrupted by either shell fire or aerial attack. Meanwhile 8 Wellingtons of No. 37 Squadron Detachment had bombed the Rashid aerodrome by level and shallow dive attacks with 250 lb H.E. bombs and containers of 40 lb bombs from 5,000 to 1,500 feet on hangars, workshops, offices and other buildings which were also machine-gunned: several hits and near misses were obtained on dispersed aircraft, a total of 15,718 lbs weight of bombs being dropped. The Wellingtons were intercepted by enemy aircraft two of which were believed to have been shot down; one enemy aircraft was destroyed

1. Air Vice-Marshal Tedder, C.B.  
2. This aircraft had to be written off.

on the ground and some 24 others were damaged, and one Wellington was reported missing. On the return journey 24,000 pamphlets (which had been drafted in Arabic by our Ambassador and the text wirelessly to Habbaniya on 1 May) were dropped over the Baghdad area.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile two other Wellingtons of the same Detachment on standing patrol over Habbaniya dropped 4,136 lbs of bombs on enemy gun positions.

From 11.00 hours to 19.15 hours three Wellingtons of No. 70 Squadron Detachment carried out a protective bombing patrol over Habbaniya, each aircraft carrying eighteen 112 lb bombs. Two of these Wellingtons also attacked the enemy's military headquarters at Diwiniya. A total of 4,136 lbs of bombs were dropped during all these operations. Meanwhile two Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment had made successful attacks on Rashid aerodrome and the Baghdad airport. At Rashid one enemy Savoia, one Breda and one P-Audax<sup>2</sup> were front-gunned, the last named catching fire, and at Baghdad one enemy Gladiator and three P-Audaxes were hit. A third Blenheim Fighter of this Detachment made a photographic reconnaissance of the Mosul, Kirkuk and Baghdad aerodromes and successfully "ground-strafed" two enemy P-Audaxes at Mosul, and two Blenheims of the same Detachment carried out fighter patrols over Habbaniya.

The aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. attacked the enemy throughout the day: three of the Oxfords (flying in V formation) carried out pattern bombing from a height of 4,000 feet on enemy positions on the plateau, while the Audaxes dive-bombed with 250 lb bombs (fused at 11 seconds to allow for diving and greater accuracy). In all 53 sorties were made and 3½ tons of bombs dropped on enemy gun positions, troops and transport: a photographic reconnaissance of the Habbaniya area was also carried out.

At 22.30 hours a Vincent of No. 244 Squadron, which had arrived from Shaibah with one R.A. artificer, took off on

1. A translation of this pamphlet is given in Appendix "C" (transcribed from Air H.Q. 'Iraq, Entry of 1 May 41 - Appx. 1/5/41/22).

2. i.e. Pegasus-engined Audax.

its return to Shaibah with Wing Commander Jope-Slade (the head of Air H.Q. 'Iraq "I" branch) who carried important secret documents and specie. This aircraft lost its route in the darkness and crashed off Buniyan Island at the Head of the Persian Gulf; the pilot was rescued but Wing Commander Jope-Slade and the air gunner were drowned.

Meanwhile it had been found that the scale of bombing on enemy gun positions at Habbaniya could be reduced considerably without danger provided that constant air patrols were maintained over them. Accordingly on the night of this third day of the siege (4/5 May) continuous patrols were instituted by No. 4 S.F.T.S. which prevented the enemy using the cover of darkness to shell the camp. The method adopted for these night flying patrols was as follows:- While the moon was up the Audaxes "night flew" from their station on the polo ground, but when there was no moon the Oxforas flew from the main aerodrome, making a "blind" take-off and landing with the aid of the aircraft's landing-lamp which was switched on when the altimeter showed 50 feet, and switched off immediately the aircraft touched down.

#### Food Supplies

In the meantime the stock of food in the Civil cantonment was decreasing rapidly. The whole position was reviewed and it was found that although the troops (British, Indian and Levies) could be rationed at the full rate for a period of four months the civilians had only a five days' supply remaining. It was therefore decided that the Royal Air Force should take over the feeding of the civilians, and the troops (whose food stocks would thereby be greatly depleted) were placed upon a reduced ration.

#### Fourth Day of the Siege (5 May)

During the night (4/5 May) our ground forces made contact with the enemy and carried out a successful raid inflicting some losses on the enemy with hand grenades. The enemy began shelling the camp just before dawn but ceased as soon as the R.A.F. patrols went up. At dawn, an enemy anti-tank

gun close to and on the north side of the aerodrome, which had been shelling the Communication Flight's area, was spotted by our aircraft and silenced by a well-directed bomb. Soon afterwards the Douglas aircraft of No. 31 (Transport) Squadron arrived from Shaibah with further personnel of the K.O.R.R. and returned with more British women and children evacuees. Meanwhile the attacks made by aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. achieved some bombing successes with hits on guns and mechanical transport and with machine-gun 'strafes' on enemy personnel.

With the shelling of the camp and the bombing by enemy aircraft and anti-aircraft fire, the casualties to No. 4 S.F.T.S. aircraft had increased considerably, only 19 Audaxes, 20 Oxfords, 3 Gordons, 6 Gladiators, one Valentin and one Blenheim I, and 3 Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment being available for service for this day's operations. However, the personnel of the Repair and Maintenance Depot were using their utmost endeavours to re-service damaged aircraft, and owing to their efforts the number of serviceable aircraft from day to day never fell below fifty. The reinforcement of the 4 Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment was a useful asset to the garrison and had a marked restraining effect on the frequency and strength of the enemy's air raids. On one occasion one of the Blenheims on standing patrol encountered one of two enemy P-Audaxes which were bombing the camp. The P-Audax at once dived to ground level pursued by the Blenheim which quickly overhauled it and shot it down into the river. This episode was seen by the other P-Audax which made off for safety, while the Blenheim returned to its patrol wagging its wings in triumph.

The improvised Squadrons of No. 4 S.F.T.S. adopted their own methods of attack on enemy positions, that of the Gordons being especially successful in their raids on gun positions and other small targets. Their method was to carry two 250 lb bombs (without the usual safety devices but fitted with a seven second delay fuze) and having climbed to about 3,000 feet to go into a nearly vertical dive until a speed of 200 n.p.h. was reached and

then flatten out, using all available cover such as gullies and rises in the ground. The aircraft would then "lay" the bombs like eggs from a height of about ten feet, its own speed and the delayed action of the fuzes enabling it to get clear before the bombs exploded. One of the enemy's pom-poms which had been brought right up to the edge of the aerodrome was deterred from firing by this ingenious method, the Gordon hiding behind the marker's hut on the cantonment rifle range on its approach.

At this stage of the siege the enemy's general lack of enterprise coupled with the continuous air attacks by the garrison and the offensive action every night of its Infantry patrols produced a curious reversal of the tactical situation. Although Habbaniya was cut off from outside assistance, except by air, the garrison was now in effect besieging the enemy investing forces on the plateau. The enemy were faced with formidable administrative difficulties for all their ammunition, supplies, rations and water had to be brought up from Falluja in the face of the air superiority which the R.A.F. had by this time achieved. At first this was done at night, but the garrison's night air patrols severely hampered these activities, and the enemy's administrative difficulties were now assuming almost insurmountable proportions. Moreover, the continual aerial bombardment and "strafing" to which their troops were exposed had the effect of lowering their morale.

In the afternoon (5 May) a further convoy of British women and children were flown to Shaibah in three Douglas aircraft which had arrived with a further reinforcement of the K.O.R.R. The same evening instructions were sent to Shaibah cancelling the anti-artillery day patrols of the Wellingtons at Habbaniya and instituting a night patrol over the area with a request that only gun positions seen firing should be bombed as our Infantry patrols would now be in close contact with enemy positions. Instructions were also sent to Shaibah ordering offensives against the enemy's Army and Air Force by attacks on main military and air bases, magazines etc., care being taken to avoid the risk of bombing 'Iraqi civilians.

During this fourth day of the siege aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. made 80 sorties and dropped nearly 4 tons of bombs on gun positions, M.T., armoured cars and troops in the Habbaniya area, several direct hits and near misses being registered. The Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment made four sorties and dropped 640 lbs of 20 lb bombs on local targets; they also 'ground-strafted' Rashid aerodrome and Baghdad airport: at Rashid one Savoia, one Breda and one P-Audax were machine-gunned (the P-Audax catching fire), and at Baghdad one Gladiator and three P-Audaxes were attacked effectively. In the afternoon one of the Blenheims made a photographic reconnaissance of Mosul, Kirkuk and Baghdad and 'ground-strafted' successfully two P-Audaxes at Mosul. Meanwhile one Valentia of the Communication Flight bombed the Takiya "bund" near Falluja but registered near misses, and one Wellington of No. 37 Squadron Detachment on patrol over Habbaniya dropped four 250 lb bombs on enemy transport, and machine-gunned M.T. while making shallow dive attacks: during its return to Shaibah the Wellington scored a direct hit on the enemy barracks at Hilla.<sup>1</sup>

The End of the Siege and The Action at Sin El Dhibban (6 May)

During the night (5/6 May) the enemy began to evacuate their positions and our air reconnaissances at dawn found that they had already abandoned the plateau overlooking the cantonment. Armoured cars and infantry patrols were at once sent out in pursuit and encountered the enemy who were holding strong positions covering the Falluja road and in the village of Sin El Dhibban. These positions were attacked by our ground and air forces, and after a sharp encounter the enemy retreated to the area round the Canal Turn beyond Sin El Dhibban, pursued by our aircraft. During the fight at Sin El Dhibban the Audaxes of No. 4 S.F.T.S. carried out accurate and effective close support bombing. In the course of "mopping up" operations 12 'Iraqi officers and over 300 other ranks were taken prisoner and brought into the camp.

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1. Situated approx. 60 miles south of Baghdad.

Meanwhile during the morning four Douglas aircraft had arrived at Habbaniya from Shaibah with some Royal Artillery personnel and some ammunition for two 4.5 inch howitzers - relics of the last war - which occupied an ornamental position outside the Aircraft Depot at Habbaniya. These two guns had been reconditions by the R.A. artificer (who had arrived by air on 4 May) and they were used effectively at the later stages of the action at Sin El Dhibban. The moral effect of these weapons was also considerable as the 'Iraqi believed that guns as well as reinforcements were being brought up by air to Habbaniya.

In the meantime six Valentias of No. 31 (Transport) Squadron had left Shaibah on the same morning (6 May) with the remaining personnel of the K.O.R.R., but only two of these aircraft arrived at Habbaniya the others having lost their way. Of these, one landed at point K.<sup>1</sup> and was set on fire by its crew to avoid capture by the enemy; the other three were forced to land at Hit<sup>2</sup> for lack of petrol. A Valentia of the (Habbaniya) Communication Flight, carrying 300 gallons of petrol and escorted by one Blenheim Fighter, rescued these stranded aircraft.

During the afternoon enemy aircraft made three bombing attacks on Habbaniya which resulted in the destruction of one Gladiator, one Audax and one Oxford, and one Blenheim severely damaged, but there were no casualties to personnel. Meanwhile air reconnaissance had reported enemy reinforcements leaving Falluja and coming down the road to the Canal Turn. These forces, consisting of motorised Infantry and guns, advanced towards Sin El Dhibban but were met with a concentrated attack of low-bombing and machine-gunning by thirty-nine aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. and one Blenheim Fighter of No. 203 Squadron Detachment. A large number of the vehicles in the

- 
1. Situated near Haditha (approx. 85 miles north-west of Habbaniya) at the junction of the Haifa and Tripoli (Syria) Oil pipe lines from Kirkuk.
  2. Situated approx. 45 miles north-west of Habbaniya.

enemy's convoy were blown up by the bombs or destroyed by fire and when the last of our aircraft left the scene the pilot reported that the road was a solid sheet of flame for about 250 yards with ammunition exploding and armoured cars and lorries burning fiercely. The charred and battered remnants of this convoy which littered the road between Falluja and the Canal Turn remained for several weeks afterwards as evidence of the enemy's defeat.

By this time our ground forces had extended their "mopping up" operations and prisoners now numbered 26 'Iraqi officers and 409 other ranks, bringing the total estimated enemy casualties to 1,000 men. The casualties of our ground forces were one officer and six other ranks killed and two officers and ten other ranks wounded, all of the K.O.R.R.

On the same day (6 May) six Wellingtons of No. 37 Squadron Detachment flew over Baghdad and dropped 36,000 pamphlets. They then split into two formations of three and attacked Rashid aerodrome with sticks of 250 lb bombs from 6,000 feet dropping over 7 tons of bombs on workshops, buildings and hangars. One hangar was destroyed by fire, one enemy Douglas aircraft was destroyed by a direct hit, and several other enemy aircraft were damaged. Meanwhile five Wellingtons of No. 70 Squadron Detachment bombed the enemy's aerodrome at Washash (at the western outskirts of Baghdad) dropping 6 tons of bombs from 7,000 feet on the barracks and the magazine, and scoring a direct hit on the latter which caused a violent explosion. Anti-aircraft fire was encountered, and one of our pilots was wounded in the arm while flying over the target.

During this day's operations aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. made 139 sorties and dropped 9 tons of bombs; their losses were one Audax shot down by anti-aircraft fire.

In the evening a message from Habbaniya giving a resumé of events to date was dropped on the British Embassy at Baghdad by a Gladiator. (This was the first message to the Embassy since the siege began). Meanwhile the A.O.C. had received a message of encouragement from the Air Ministry that

Entry of  
6 May 41  
Appx. 6/5/  
41/8

all possible military and political action was being taken to relieve Habbaniya.

The night of 6/7 May passed without incident and on the following morning (7 May) our ground forces took up the positions which they had occupied on the previous evening and began to salve the war material left by the enemy. This included seven 3.7 inch howitzers, two anti-tank guns, three 20 m.m. anti-aircraft guns, forty-five Bren and eighteen Vickers guns, three Hotchkiss machine-guns, ten armoured cars, one light tank and three 'Dragons', a number of motor vehicles of various types and a great quantity of rifles, machine-gun spares and ammunition. Meanwhile air patrols of No. 4 S.F.T.S. reconnoitred in front of the advanced positions of our ground forces and attacked enemy aircraft and isolated bodies of their troops, making 62 sorties and dropping nearly 2 tons of bombs on enemy positions. During these operations our aircraft destroyed one Savoia and one Northrop which were grounded: two of our aircraft failed to return. Meanwhile Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment made standing patrols over Habbaniya, and one Blenheim Fighter made an offensive reconnaissance of the enemy's landing-grounds at Baquba<sup>1</sup> and Sharaban<sup>2</sup>. At Baquba twenty-one enemy aircraft were caught on the ground and were all machine-gunned. The Blenheim then returned to Habbaniya for more ammunition and - with another Blenheim - escorted Audaxes and Oxfords of No. 4 S.F.T.S. in a second raid on Baquba during which three enemy aircraft were set on fire and the remainder bombed: one of our Audaxes failed to return.

During the same morning two enemy P-Audaxes bombed Habbaniya camp causing slight damage and a few casualties; one of these aircraft was shot down by the Blenheim Fighter on patrol. Meanwhile three Vincents of No. 244 Squadron (Shaibah) made reconnaissance flights in local areas and dropped pamphlets, and three Wellingtons of No. 37 Squadron Detachment attacked

1. Situated (on the railway) approx. 30 miles north-north-west of Baghdad.
2. Situated approx. 55 miles north-east of Baghdad.

Baghdad airport with sticks of 250 lb bombs from 6,000 feet (over 3 tons of bombs being dropped), and dropping 2,700 pamphlets. Several buildings on the airport were demolished: no opposition was encountered. In the afternoon three Wellingtons of No. 70 Squadron Detachment attacked Washash aerodrome resulting in hits on hangars and administrative buildings, and one Wellington of the same Detachment bombed Rashid aerodrome starting a large fire in a petrol dump.

While these operations were in progress the remainder of the English women and children (evacuees) and 19 hospital cases were flown to Basra in Valentia and Douglas aircraft. The hospital was now cleared of evacuees (many of whom had been accommodated therein) and this provided the necessary space for the reception of casualties. The evacuation by air of a number of (British) Indian women and children was effected during 9 and 10 May. These and other evacuations by air which had already taken place were accomplished without any casualties being sustained - a circumstance which was largely due to the fact that whenever a convoy of evacuees was about to leave, a heavy air attack was first made on the enemy guns, and R.A.F. armoured cars went out from the cantonment to cover the take-off of our convoying aircraft.

During the night the A.O.C. received the following signal from the Prime Minister:-

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
7 May 41  
Appx. 8/5/  
41/1

"Your vigorous and splendid action has largely restored the situation. We are all watching the grand fight you are making. All possible aid will be sent. Keep it up."

Ibid  
Appx. 8/5/  
41/3

This was followed by a signal from the Admiralty (through the Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf) that all aircraft<sup>1</sup> in H.M.S. Hermes (Aircraft carrier) were to be placed at the disposal of Air Headquarters, 'Iraq, for operations either from H.M.S. Hermes or from a shore aerodrome as the A.O.C. should require. These Fleet Air Arm aircraft were placed under command of Group Captain Macdonald who was instructed

Ibid  
Appx. 8/5/  
41/9

1. These were six Swordfish which had arrived and shore-based at Shaitah on 4 May, (S.H.Q. Unit R.A.F. Station, Shaibah, Form 540, Entry of 4 May 41).

to take over operational command of all Royal Air Force units in the Basra - Shaibah areas.

At dawn on the next day (8 May) our ground forces resumed their positions which they had vacated the previous night. The enemy were holding Falluja and Ramadi but were believed not to be in great strength. Early in the morning one Blenheim of No. 203 Squadron Detachment reconnoitred the aerodromes at Baquba, Shahraban, Khanakin<sup>1</sup> and Kirkuk. At Shahraban, where a previous reconnaissance had reported several enemy aircraft, eleven aircraft were seen of which three were "strafed" successfully. In the afternoon two Blenheims of the same Detachment attacked nine dispersed aircraft which were still on Shahraban aerodrome with machine-gun fire (using incendiary bullets) and set all these machines on fire. No aircraft were seen at the other aerodromes. Meanwhile the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. had carried out offensive and photographic reconnaissances on enemy troops and gun positions in the Falluja and Ramadi areas making 47 sorties and dropping nearly half a ton of bombs. In the afternoon three Wellingtons of No. 70 Squadron Detachment attacked Rashid aerodrome with 112 lb bombs and containers of 40 lb G.P. bombs from 4,000 feet, all bombs (totalling 3 tons in weight) falling in the target area.

During the night, raids were made by four Wellingtons of No. 37 Squadron Detachment on the remaining enemy aircraft at Baquba and Shahraban, and 18,000 pamphlets were dropped over Baghdad en route. At Baquba several aircraft were seen and bombed in level and shallow dive attacks from between 4,000 and 2,000 feet. Similar attacks were made on enemy aircraft at Shahraban resulting in several near misses: one aircraft was set on fire by machine-gunning.<sup>2</sup>

1. Situated approx. 50 miles north-east of Shahraban.
2. In these operations the Detachment divided, two Wellingtons attacking Baquba and two attacking Shahraban. A total of nearly 3 tons of bombs was dropped.

## Results of the Raising of the Siege

### A. Supplies and Maintenance

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
8 May 41

With the virtual raising of the siege the garrison was able to send out foraging parties to bring in cattle and sheep from the neighbouring countryside for the replenishment of their food stocks. Meanwhile (on 8 May) Flight Lieutenant Lees drew up a dispersion scheme for rations and petrol, which was put in hand forthwith. The scheme resulted in the establishment of fourteen storage sites for food at suitable places in the cantonment, and the construction of four new petrol dumps (of 80,000 gallons each) in addition to the existing 'A' and 'B' petrol compounds.

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

Since the withdrawal of the enemy it was now possible to operate our aircraft at Habbaniya in greater security, and their repairs and maintenance no longer had to be carried out under intermittent artillery and machine-gun fire.

In addition to these benefits the morale of the garrison was strengthened by a feeling of freedom and of "having room to breathe".

Ibid

### B. General Situation

In spite of the foregoing advantages Habbaniya was still cut off from all communication with the outside world, (except by air), and unless communication could be restored quickly there was the ever present possibility of strong German aerial intervention (as already forecast by events in Syria) which, if it materialised, would constitute a grave menace to the garrison. It was, therefore, essential to open up communications as soon as possible, and to restore the situation by removing the Rashid Ali government from Baghdad. To achieve this latter object from Habbaniya considerable reinforcements of troops were required so that an advance could be made on Baghdad without, at the same time, jeopardising the safety of the cantonment. As already stated, some reinforcements

Ibid  
&  
Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
12 May 41

had been sent up from Basra by air, and by 12 May these included a Company of Gurkhas and a Detachment of fifty Madras Sappers and Miners. It would, however, have taken too long to build up sufficient forces at Habbaniya by means of air transport only; moreover each reinforcement brought by air increased the problem of rationing the garrison and civilians whose numbers had already been augmented by the prisoners taken at the action at Sin El Dhibban. It was, therefore, with considerable satisfaction that news was received at Habbaniya that a motorised force (known as "Habforce") commanded by Major-General J.G.W. Clarke, M.C., was being sent from Palestine to establish communication across the desert, and also to provide a flying column to assist the Habbaniya garrison to re-establish its defence, and to engage in further operations in 'Iraq.

Information  
from M.O.1  
(Records)  
War Office

The composition of "Habforce" was as follows:-

H.Q. 1st Cavalry Division and Signals  
4th Cavalry Brigade less two Squadrons  
60th Field Regt. R.A.  
1st Independent Anti-Tank Troop, R.A.  
No. 2 Troop, 2nd Field Squadron, R.E.  
One Sub-section, Boring Section, R.E.  
1st Essex Regt.  
3rd Reserve M.T. Company, R.A.S.C.  
552nd Company, R.A.S.C.  
166th Light Field Ambulance  
8th Light Field Hygiene Section  
Cavalry Brigade Ordnance Workshop  
Divisional Section, 1st Cavalry Division Ordnance Field Park  
Detachment 1st Cavalry Division Postal Unit  
1st Cavalry Division Provost Squadron less two sections  
Mechanised Regt. Trans-Jordan Frontier Force  
Desert Mechanised Regt. Arab Legion  
One Squadron R.A.F. Armoured Cars.

Air H.Q.  
'Iraq  
Form 540  
Entry of  
8 May 41

In the meantime (on 7 May) Lieut-General E.P. Quinan, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., had taken over the command of all British troops in South 'Iraq, his Headquarters being at Basra.

#### Operations of the R.A.F.

Meanwhile attacks against enemy aerodromes and troop concentrations were being carried out by our bomber Detachments at Shaibah, and offensive patrols and tactical reconnaissances by No. 4 S.F.T.S. and No. 203 Squadron Detachment, and by six Gladiators of No. 94 Squadron which had arrived at Habbaniya on 8 May. During the next few days the enemy's barracks at Mosul and Kirkuk and the aerodromes at Rashid, Washash and Musaiyib<sup>1</sup> were bombed and Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment attacked dispersed aircraft on Mosul landing ground damaging three P-Audaxes but losing one Blenheim shot down. On 9 May aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. attacked Rashid aerodrome damaging one enemy S.79 and also made tactical reconnaissances of Falluja, Ramadi and Mijara<sup>2</sup>, and the same day Vincents of No. 244 Squadron (Shaibah) made a reconnaissance of the Qurnat Ali, Ratawi,<sup>3</sup> Ghubaishiya and Ur areas (along the Shaibah - Ur Railway) but found nothing to report.

The frequent attacks which had been made on enemy aircraft at Rashid, Baghdad airport, Washash, Baquba and Shahraban, including the successful Blenheim Fighter attack on Shahraban (on 8 May) had virtually eliminated the 'Iraqi Air Force: twenty-five of their operational type of aircraft had by now been destroyed on the ground or shot down in the air, and between twenty and thirty damaged beyond immediate repair.

Attacks were now concentrated on enemy barracks, camps and petrol dumps: on 10 May the Swordfish of No. 814 Squadron of the Fleet Air Arm<sup>4</sup> at Shaibah attacked the enemy's barracks at Nasiriyah<sup>5</sup> dropping 2,480 lbs of bombs and scoring direct

- 
1. Situated approx. 40 miles south of Baghdad.
  2. Situated approx. 25 miles south of Habbaniya.
  3. Situated approx. 28 miles north-west of Shaibah.
  4. Under operational command of Grp-Capt. Macdonald, Shaibah (see page 38 supra).
  5. Situated approx. 100 miles north-by-west of Shaibah.

hits, and on the following day (11 May) the Swordfish attacked Samawa<sup>1</sup> dropping 2,480 lbs of bombs on buildings. On the same day Wellingtons of Nos. 37 and 70 Squadron Detachments made successful bombing attacks on enemy barracks at Mosul and the barracks and railway station at Quaragan,<sup>2</sup> and aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. - escorted by Gladiators and Blenheim Fighters of Nos. 94 and 203 Squadron Detachments - bombed successfully a petrol dump at Rashid, the barracks at Washash and Musaiyib and the ferry at Ramadi. In these operations the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. dropped  $3\frac{1}{2}$  tons of bombs, and the Blenheims dive-bombed Washash and Rashid barracks with 20 lb bombs scoring hits on buildings.

On 11 and 12 May the Wellingtons of Nos. 70 and 37 Squadron Detachments were withdrawn from Shaibah and returned to Egypt, and on 12 May four Blenheim IV's of No. 84 (Bomber) Squadron arrived at Habbaniya, followed by further detachments (totalling nine aircraft) which reached Habbaniya on various dates between 13 and 22 May.

#### Summary

The successful defence of Habbaniya followed by the action at Sin El Dhibban were prime factors in the suppression of the 'Iraq rebellion, for if Habbaniya had fallen the country would most probably have consolidated in favour of the rebels and the subsequent abortive intervention of the German Air Force<sup>3</sup> would have succeeded.

The brunt of the defence of Habbaniya fell upon No. 4 S.F.T.S. and the success of the operations was due in a large measure to the pilots and crews of its improvised Squadrons. In this they were well supported by the Detachment of Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron at Habbaniya, and the Bomber Detachments of Nos. 37 and 70 Squadrons operating from Shaibah against the enemy's aerodromes and the headquarters of their

- 
1. Situated approx. 60 miles west of Nasiriyah.
  2. Situated approx. 22 miles north-east of Shahraban.
  3. This is narrated in Section IV - (see pages 50 et seq. infra).

troops in various localities, in addition to their assistance at Habbaniya itself. The work of the Valentia and Douglas aircraft of No. 31 (Transport) Squadron was most valuable in bringing reinforcements and supplies from Basra and in evacuating the women and children from the cantonment and the sick and wounded from the hospital.

During the five days of the actual siege No. 4 S.F.T.S. made 584 sorties, dropped 45 tons of bombs<sup>1</sup> and fired over 100,000 rounds of ammunition. In the same period the Wellingtons of Nos. 37 and 70 Squadron Detachments made 26 and 25 sorties and dropped 22 and  $26\frac{3}{4}$  tons of bombs respectively, the Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment made 15 sorties,<sup>2</sup> and one Valentia of the Communication Flight made one sortie dropping 2,000 lbs of bombs.<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. These bombs were 200 x 250 lb and 2,986 x 20 lb bombs.
  2. This Detachment only arrived on the second day of the siege.
  3. A summary of daily aerial operations during the campaign (i.e. 2-30 May) is given in Appendix "G".

### III. OPERATIONS IN THE RUTBAH AREA

Air H.Q.  
Pal: & T-J.  
Form 540  
and Appxs  
Entries of  
2 May 41  
and sub-  
sequent  
dates

While the siege of Habbaniya was in progress hostilities had also occurred in the Rutbah area. The township of Rutbah is some 70 miles from the 'Iraq - Trans-Jordan border and is situated near the 'Iraq - Palestine Pipe Line which runs from the Kirkuk Oil Fields to Haifa. On 2 May (the day that the siege of Habbaniya began) Air Headquarters, Palestine and Trans-Jordan, (located at Jerusalem) received a signal from Air Headquarters, 'Iraq, that a force of 'Iraqi had been reported moving by lorry to Rutbah. It was thought that this action might be the prelude to wider operations by German air-borne troops, and it was decided to secure the Oil Pipe Line Station at H.4<sup>1</sup> as an operational landing ground for the R.A.F., and to deny the enemy the use of landing grounds at the Oil Pipe Line Station at H.3<sup>2</sup> and at Rutbah. After consultation with the Army one Company of the Essex Regiment was flown from Lydda to H.4 and one mechanised Squadron of the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force was ordered to move there immediately. These forces were put under command of Air Vice-Marshal G.H. D'Albiac, D.S.O., who had arrived at Jerusalem on 2 May from Greece to assume command of Air Headquarters Palestine and Trans-Jordan<sup>3</sup>, and on the following day (3 May) Group Captain L.O. Brown, D.S.O., A.F.C. (who had arrived the same day from Egypt) proceeded to H.4 to take command of the forces above mentioned including four Blenheim Bombers of No. 84 Squadron and two Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron which were flown from Palestine to H.4 to assist in the operations.

The six Blenheim aircraft arrived at H.4 on 4 May and the same morning an R.A.F. ground party (made up of crews of Nos. 84, 113 and 211 Squadrons) arrived by road with supplies of fuel and oil. There was, however, no equipment or maintenance facilities and at first it was found necessary to make petrol

1. Situated on the 'Iraq - Trans-Jordan border.
2. Between H.4 and Rutbah.
3. There was also a force of the Arab Legion commanded by Col. Lash in the H.4 area.

funnels for refuelling out of bent petrol tins.

On the next day (5 May) the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force with air support by a Blenheim Fighter - occupied H.3, and on the following day the Blenheim Bombers reconnoitred Rutbah and observed several motor vehicles approach the Rutbah fort the compound of which was full of M.T. During the next two days the Blenheims made reconnaissances of the Rutbah and Ramadi areas and attacked and immobilised a few enemy cars and lorries in the vicinity of H.4 and Rutbah, while the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force and the Arab Legion made ground reconnaissances. It was ascertained that the enemy garrison at Rutbah was considerably smaller than had been believed at first.

On 8 May one of the Blenheim Fighters escorted the six Gladiators of No. 94 Squadron which were sent as a reinforcement to Habbaniya.<sup>1</sup> This Blenheim also made a reconnaissance of Hit and Ramadi and dropped pamphlets on these places. It was now decided to attack Rutbah fort, the plan of operations being, briefly, as follows:- one Blenheim was to drop a demand for surrender into the fort, and if it did not capitulate within half an hour the Blenheims were to shallow-dive-bomb (singly) with 250 lbs from 2,000 to 1,000 feet with the intention of landing one or two bombs in the fort (in order to damage it as little as possible) and thus induce the garrison - now thought to be about 100 men with eight machine-guns - to surrender: the Arab Legion and the R.A.F. armoured cars were to be in position near Rutbah before dawn.

The above plan was carried out on the following morning (9 May), the Blenheims maintaining a continuous watch on Rutbah and bombing the fort at intervals from before dawn until mid-day; 4,000 lbs of bombs were dropped but all were near misses. Considerable rifle fire was encountered from the fort and three of our aircraft were damaged, one force landed, and one crashed at H.4 owing to engine failure and had to be written off. The three damaged aircraft (bombers) left for

1. See page 42 supra

Aquir<sup>1</sup> in the evening for repairs.

On the following morning (10 May) the remaining bomber left for Aquir and there was now only one aircraft left at H.4 (a fighter of No. 203 Squadron), but another Blenheim Fighter of this Squadron was flown up from Lydda to assist in the operations. These two aircraft made repeated attacks on the fort with 20 lb Fragmentation and 20 lb H.E. bombs and machine-gun fire. Heavy fire from enemy machine-guns and rifles was encountered and one of our aircraft (flown by Squadron Leader Gethin who was in command of all the Blenheims) crashed and burst into flames, Squadron Leader Gethin being fatally injured and the other two members of the crew killed. During the night one Valentia aircraft attacked the fort dropping 1,760 lbs of bombs but only obtaining near misses. However, the repeated attacks of our aircraft and the activities of the R.A.F. armoured cars during these two days had broken the morale of the garrison and before dawn (11 May) they abandoned the fort which was then occupied by our forces.

In the meantime the newly-formed "Habforce" began its advance across the desert from Palestine, and it was hoped that the flying column of this force (known as "Kingcol" and commanded by Brigadier J.J. Kingstone, D.S.O., M.C.) would reach Habbaniya by 15 or 16 May. The composition of "Kingcol" (consisting of units detached from "Habforce") was as follows:-

Headquarters 4th Cavalry Brigade and Signals

Household Cavalry Regiment

One Battery of 60th Field Regt. R.A.

1st Independent Anti-Tank Troop, R.A.

Detachment of 2nd Field Squadron, R.E.

Two Companies of 1st Essex Regt. (with a detachment of the Carrier Platoon)

Detachment of 166th Light Field Ambulance

3rd Reserve M.T. Company, R.A.S.C.

552nd Company, R.A.S.C.

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)  
and  
Information  
from M.O.1  
(Records)  
War Office.

1. In Palestine.

Desert Mechanised Regt. Arab Legion (less a Detachment)

8 Armoured Cars of No. 2 Armoured Car Company, R.A.F.

Air H.Q.  
P. & T-J.  
Form 540  
Entry of  
12 May 41  
Ibid  
Entry of  
15 May 41

On 12 May the command of operations eastward from H.4 passed from the A.O.C. Palestine and Trans-Jordan to the O.C. "Habforce". It was arranged that air reconnaissance for "Habforce" and "Kingcol" would be maintained by the R.A.F. Palestine and Trans-Jordan command up to landing ground 5 until both "Habforce" and "Kingcol" passed that point, after which the R.A.F. 'Iraq Command was to take on the reconnaissances between landing ground 5 and Habbaniya.

#### IV. THE CAPTURE OF FALLUJA

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

The knowledge that "Kingcol" was on its way to Habbaniya together with the reinforcements already received by air from Basra and the reorganisation of the ground forces of the garrison with the equipment captured from the enemy at Sin El Dhibban made possible the consideration of plans for offensive operations from Habbaniya. There were two obvious objectives, namely Ramadi and Falluja. Ramadi, although it appeared important, was not an essential link in the line of communication between Palestine and Habbaniya as there was an alternative route round the south of Lake Habbaniya via Mujara. Moreover, the enemy troops at Ramadi had broken the bridges and "bunds" over the canals so as to form water obstacles between themselves and any attacking British force, but in so doing they had thereby precluded themselves from acting as a serious threat to the line of communication with Palestine or of Habbaniya. On the other hand Falluja was the key to Baghdad (the ultimate objective of the campaign) to any force approaching from the west. It was therefore decided to prepare plans for the capture of Falluja, and as an essential preliminary Mujara was occupied on 10 May and work begun on the construction of a temporary bridge over the canal "Regulator" in order to open up the alternative route from Palestine.

#### Food Supplies

A.H.Q. 'Iraq  
Supply &  
Transport  
Branch  
Entries of  
14 May 41  
and sub-  
sequent  
dates

On 14 May the Army authorities took over the rationing of Basra and Shaibah, but at Habbaniya the problem of food supplies was causing some anxiety. On 15 May it was estimated that only 14 days rations for the civilians and 22 days for the troops remained. A request was signalled to Basra for supplies of rice and ghee to be flown up (in addition to 90 bags of flour which had arrived by air a few days previously), and a consignment of these commodities was sent by air to Habbaniya on 17 May. On the same day advice was received from Palestine that 85,000 rations for British and

15,000 rations for Indian troops were due to arrive at Habbaniya on 21 May. It was now established that food stocks would be sufficient until 31 May by which date it was anticipated that proper lines of communication would be established. In the meantime "Habforce" undertook the responsibility for the line of communication from H.4 to Habbaniya.

#### Further Operations of the R.A.F.

Meanwhile at Habbaniya the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. and Nos. 94 and 203 Squadron Detachments were continuing their operations. On 13, 14 and 15 May two Valentias of the Communication Flight made night attacks (before moon-rise) on Rashid and Mosul aerodromes,<sup>1</sup> and Audaxes and Oxfords of No. 4 S.F.T.S. bombed a petrol dump at Rashid, a small arms factory at Musaiyib and enemy M/T in the Falluja and Musaiyib areas. The fighter aircraft of Nos. 94 and 203 Squadron Detachments carried out offensive and photographic reconnaissances and standing patrols over Habbaniya, the Blenheim Fighters using 20 lb. bombs in addition to their machine-guns when engaged on "strafing" raids. In southern 'Iraq, Swordfish of No. 814 Squadron of the Fleet Air Arm continued their bombing attacks on enemy barracks at Samawa and also at Amara<sup>2</sup> causing considerable damage to buildings at both these places.

#### Appearance of German Aircraft

Meanwhile, in view of the possibility of landing-grounds in northern and north-eastern 'Iraq being prepared as bases for German aircraft, a Blenheim Fighter made a special reconnaissance of Mosul, Tel Kotehek,<sup>3</sup> Tel Sirwal,<sup>4</sup> Ain Zala,<sup>5</sup> Al Badi<sup>6</sup> and Qaiyara<sup>7</sup> on 12 May but without result. On the same day an unidentified aircraft believed to have been a Heinkel III was seen landing in the early hours of the morning at Rashid aerodrome.

1. The Valentias carried four 250 lb and two 20 lb bombs.
2. Situated approx. 100 miles north of Basra.
3. Situated (on the railway) on the 'Iraq-Syrian boundary, approx. 68 miles north-west of Mosul.
4. Situated approx. 30 miles south-west of Mosul.
5. Situated approx. 37 miles east of Tel Kotehek.
6. Situated approx. 93 miles west-by-south of Mosul.
7. Situated approx. 30 miles south-by-east of Mosul.

About this time reports were received of the passage of German aircraft through Syria to Mosul, and as it was considered that this could only have been effected with the concurrence of the French authorities it seemed very probable that the French might also have agreed to the passage of war material for German aircraft by rail (and road) from Syria, via the Aleppo - Mosul Railway. It was therefore decided to bomb the Railway between Tek Kotehek and Mosul in order to breach the line at Tel Kotehek and Tel Awainat,<sup>1</sup> and also at a point mid-way between these two places.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly (on 13 May) two Blenheim IV's of No. 84 Squadron were sent to attack these places: one of the Blenheims was unable to locate the target but the other dropped a stick of 250 lb bombs across the track from a height of 800 feet. On the receipt of further information of several ammunition trains having left Tripoli (Syria) for Mosul two Blenheim IV's attacked the station and sidings at this place scoring hits with 250 lb bombs on the sidings and station buildings and (probably) damaging trucks and rolling stock with which the sidings were packed.<sup>3</sup> These attacks were followed on the next day (15 May) by the bombing of a railway cutting seven miles south of Mosul by two Blenheim IV's when the track and one side of the cutting were hit.<sup>4</sup>

As had been anticipated, the German Air Force Units now made their appearance in 'Iraq, their presence being definitely established on 13 May when an Me.110 attacked a Blenheim Fighter while on reconnaissance over Mosul.

The advent of German aircraft necessitated reconnaissances to locate the aerodromes and landing grounds from which they were operating, and on 14 and 15 May Blenheims of Nos. 84 and 203 Squadron Detachments reconnoitred the Uglat<sup>5</sup>

- 
1. Situated (on the railway) approx. 47 miles north-west of Mosul.
  2. Instructions were given that passenger trains were not to be attacked (presumably to avoid casualties to any French or Syrian travellers).
  3. One Blenheim attacked from 5,000 ft and the other dived from 7,000 ft to 5,000 ft.
  4. One Blenheim shallow-dived at 200 ft and the other made a low level attack from 800 ft.
  5. Situated approx. 75 miles north-west of Mosul (and 10 miles over the boundary of Syria).

Tel Kotehek, Ain Zala and Erbil areas and the landing grounds at Baquba, Shahraban and Quaraghan. At Erbil a Blenheim Fighter discovered six aircraft (which it was impossible to identify as they were cleverly camouflaged with native tents) and damaged two of them with machine-gun fire, and on the next day another Blenheim Fighter reconnoitred Erbil and destroyed another of these camouflaged aircraft with a 20 lb bomb. Before dawn on 16 May the pilot who had attacked Mosul three days before re-visited that place and encountered sixteen German aircraft<sup>1</sup> dispersed round the aerodrome. He attacked with two 20 lb bombs from 5,000 feet and damaged one Me.109 and machine-gunned a Heinkel III which was set on fire and destroyed. During the attack an Me.110 endeavoured unsuccessfully to intercept the Blenheim.

On the same morning (16 May) three Heinkel III's attacked Habbaniya and bombed the cantonment doing considerable damage including the destruction of the Engine Repair Section<sup>2</sup> of the Aircraft Depot in which 27 aero engines were also destroyed. Gladiators of No. 94 Squadron Detachment intercepted the Heinkels one of which was forced down and another damaged, but one Gladiator was shot down and the pilot killed. Meanwhile an Audax of No. 4 S.F.T.S. on a test flight over the Habbaniya plateau was attacked and shot down by an Me.110. That same evening two Blenheim Fighters re-visited Mosul aerodrome to 'strafe' the remaining German aircraft encountered there that morning and set two of these on fire and damaged four others. On the return journey the Blenheims encountered a heavy sand-storm and as darkness had now fallen flying was very difficult, but with the aid of flares on the plateau they located the Habbaniya aerodrome and both landed safely.

On the next day (17 May) two Gladiators of No. 94 Squadron Detachment on a reconnaissance over Rashid encountered two Me.110's and shot them both down, and next day a Blenheim

- 
1. viz: six Me.110's, four Me.109's, one Heinkel III and five unidentified aircraft.
  2. Two temporary E.R.S's were formed to take its place as soon as possible.

Fighter located and shot up a damaged Me.110 on the ground near Baghdad. Meanwhile other Me.110's had attacked "Kingcol" which was now on the final stage of its march to Habbaniya, For its protection against further air attacks aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. were sent to escort "Kingcol", which arrived at Habbaniya on 18 May and encamped beyond the far side of the aerodrome on the edge of the Habbaniya lake.

It was now apparent that if the German Air Force was allowed to get established in force in 'Iraq it could prevent any movements by our ground forces and would be a serious menace to Habbaniya. The R.A.F. fighters at Habbaniya (which had been augmented on 16 May by four Hurricanes of No. 94 Squadron) were still insufficient to maintain standing patrols over the cantonment (necessitated by the impracticability of any adequate warning system owing to the limited territory of the cantonment) and also to carry out reconnaissances, escorts to bombers and the protection of ground troops. These problems confronted Air Vice-Marshal D'Albiac on his arrival at Habbaniya on 18 May to assume Command of Air Headquarters, 'Iraq, in place of Air Vice-Marshal Smart who had been badly injured in a motor accident on 15 May and was flown to the hospital at Basra two days later (17 May). Air Vice-Marshal D'Albiac was accompanied by the Aide-de-Camp of H.R.H. The Regent as it was intended that he should be present in the event of our forces entering Baghdad.

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

The new A.O.C. found that plans for the capture of Falluja had been arranged to take place on 19 May (the day after his arrival). These plans had been approved by the G.O.C. Troops and had been accepted by the Air Staff at Habbaniya, and the A.O.C. decided to give his consent thereto as all the preliminary arrangements had been made. Moreover it was now too late to alter the plan without incurring a further postponement<sup>1</sup>, and (as will be seen in the following

1. See para. 2, page 56 , infra.

details of the plan) it was essential to secure the bridge at Falluja without further delay.

Ibid

Plan for the Capture of Falluja

The town of Falluja stands on the Euphrates and is on the direct line of approach to Baghdad; it possessed one bridge which provided the only satisfactory crossing of the Euphrates, north of Musaiyib. There was also a bridge at Musaiyib, and an advance on Baghdad by way of this township (instead of via Falluja) had been considered. It was, however, apparent that an approach to the Musaiyib bridge - which would entail the crossing of some 60 miles of desert - would not only be more difficult to conceal from the enemy but would present serious administrative difficulties owing to the comparatively small amount of motor transport available.

The bridge at Falluja was a steel girder structure consisting of five spans of 177 feet: the demolition by the enemy of any one of these spans would effectively block an advance in force along the direct route to Baghdad and it was therefore essential to prevent any such destruction. Falluja itself was held by a weak Brigade of enemy Infantry, but its main strength lay in inundations which now covered the direct line of attack from the direction of Habbaniya, the Habbaniya - Baghdad road (which passed over the Falluja bridge) having been flooded for a stretch of two miles at a point some four miles to the west of Falluja. These inundations presented an impassable barrier, but there was still an alternative route (with only one small gap in it) consisting of an incomplete section of the newly-constructed Mujara - Falluja causeway known as "Hammond's bund". Moreover, although there were considerable inundations on the northern side of the Euphrates, there were possible lines of advance on Falluja from that side provided that some method could be devised of transporting the troops and equipment across the river. This means was provided in the form of a flying bridge ferry at Sin El Dhibban which was

constructed by two Air Ministry Works Directorate officers with a party of Sappers and Miners.

The plan for the capture of Falluja as eventually formulated was conditioned by the following factors:-

- (a) The impossibility at that time of getting troops and equipment in any degree of strength across the breach in "Hammond's bund".
- (b) The very limited capacity of the newly-constructed bridge ferry at Sin El Dhibban.
- (c) The essential need of getting the attacking troops in position at dawn on the day chosen for the operation so as to avoid giving the enemy sufficient warning of our intentions which would enable him to destroy the Falluja bridge.
- (d) The necessity for avoiding street fighting in Falluja, partly owing to the comparative weakness of our available forces.

The plan which was finally adopted was as follows:-

The attacking troops were to move to their positions outside Falluja during the night before the day of the attack, and before dawn a series of heavy air attacks were to be made on those points in Falluja which it was known (from our air reconnaissances and from ground reports) were held by enemy troops, the chief object of this aerial attack being demoralisation. These air attacks were to be maintained until the enemy surrendered. Meanwhile the troops were to be divided into five small columns (numbered 'A', 'G', 'L', 'S' and 'V');<sup>1</sup> three of these would be composed of about 100 Infantry with supporting weapons, one would be composed of the same number of Infantry and supporting weapons and also a troop of the "Habbaniya Artillery" with the captured 3.7 inch howitzers, and one would consist of one Section of the R.A.F. Armoured Car Company. Of these five columns, one (No. 'G') was to advance

1. A sketch map of the operations showing positions of the columns etc. is appended (from Air H.Q. 'Iraq, Form 540, Entry of 16 May 41, Appx: 16/5/41/3).

along "Hammond's bund" (wading through the water in the gap), three (Nos. 'A', 'L' and 'S') were to cross the new Sin El Dhibban ferry with the howitzers and R.A.F. armoured cars and move round by the various canal "bunds" to positions at Notch Falls and astride the road leading north-west from Falluja, and one column (No. 'V') was to be landed at dawn by troop carrying aircraft in a position astride the road from Falluja to Notch Falls and covering the main Falluja - Baghdad road with fire. The position to be taken up by this column was to block all the exits from Falluja except the track leading south-east to the Abu Ghuraib "Regulator"; this track was to be covered by a troop of 25 pounder guns of "Kingcol" which was to take up its position immediately to the west of the breach in "Hammond's bund". The five columns were to be in their positions by 05.00 hours at which hour the aerial bombing attack on the town was to begin.

It had been intended originally that the above plan should be put into operation on 17 May, but delays in the construction of the ferry at Sin El Dhibban and the slow progress of "Kingcol" (whose advanced troops did not reach Mujara until late on 16 May), had necessitated its postponement until 19 May.

Ibid

The plan for the capture of Falluja seemed to the A.O.C. to be open to possible criticism as in his opinion it placed too much on the Royal Air Force and made little use of the columns of troops so laboriously moved into position except to march them into the town if and when the enemy's garrison had been bombed into retreat or surrender by our aircraft. Although the A.O.C. fully agreed that the maximum air effort should be employed in the opening stages of the operation he did not consider that a prolonged air bombardment throughout the day was sound, and he felt that a ground assault should be made immediately following the air attack at dawn. He considered that in this manner the full value of surprise and initial shock would have been gained and (as events proved) would have been entirely successful. Apart from what he considered this

mis-employment of air power the A.O.C. also felt that the primary role of the Royal Air Force at this time was not the assault of ground objectives whose capture could be effected by ground forces, but was to seek out and destroy the German Air Force Units in 'Iraq. It was, therefore, with some reluctance that he agreed to the plan going forward, as he considered that to harness the main air effort to the direct support of the Army's operations was - in the circumstances brought about by the intervention of the German Air Force - to direct it from its primary role.

#### The Attack

In accordance with the foregoing plan the ground columns moved out from Habbaniya to their forward positions at dusk on 18 May. Owing to various unavoidable delays in crossing canals the three columns which crossed the Euphrates by the new Sin El Dhibban ferry did not reach their positions until long after the air action had started at 05.00 hours on the following morning (19 May). The column astride the Habbaniya - Falluja road was in position at first light, and the airborne column in four Bombay<sup>1</sup> and two Valentia aircraft was landed successfully before 05.00 hours at its position astride the road leading north-east from Falluja.

Meanwhile at first light two Audaxes of No. 4 S.F.T.S. took off to cut the telephone wires which linked Falluja with Baghdad. There were two telephone lines, one through the cultivation outside the town and one across the plain beyond Falluja. The line through the cultivation was cut in several places by one Audax by the novel but simple process of flying backwards and forwards through the wires for about a mile, the Audax being only slightly damaged. The other line was the main one and as there were too many wires for similar treatment the second Audax landed on the plain behind the enemy's lines and taxied up between the poles. The pilot then stood on the top wing and cut the wires with a pair of wire cutters while

1. The Bombays (detached from No. 216 Sqdn in Egypt) had conveyed 1st Essex Regt. (less two Companies) from H.3 and H.4 to Habbaniya. (Air H.Q.Pal. & T.J. Form 540, Entry of 16 May 41)

the gunner chopped down two of the poles with an axe.

At 05.00 hours ten Blenheim Bombers of No. 84 Squadron Detachment and forty-seven aircraft (Gordons, Oxfords and Audaxes) of No. 4 S.F.T.S. - escorted by Gladiators of No. 94 Squadron Detachment - began a heavy bombing attack on the targets allotted to them in Falluja, while four Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron Detachment made a patrol over the town. Several of the pupil pilots of No. 4 S.F.T.S. had become accomplished dive-bombers and one of the Gordons scored two hits with 250 lb bombs on the town water-tower out of four bombs dropped. After one hour's bombing, pamphlets calling on the garrison to surrender were dropped, but as these did not produce any response<sup>1</sup> the bombing was continued intermittently during the morning. As it became apparent that the bombing was not having the desired effect of inducing the enemy to surrender it was decided (somewhat tardily) to attempt to capture the bridge by an assault by the column facing it from the west. To cover the approach of the assualting column the enemy positions on the west bank of the Euphrates (facing and enfilading the bridge) were subjected to intense dive and pattern bombing for about ten minutes (at 14.45 hours) followed by thirty-five minutes' shelling by the troop of 25 pounder guns. The assualting column then rushed the bridge which was secured without interference by the enemy, and by 17.00 hours the town was captured.

During the bombing of Falluja the aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. made 131 sorties and dropped  $9\frac{1}{4}$  tons of bombs, and the Blenheims of No. 84 Squadron Detachment made 7 sorties and dropped  $4\frac{1}{2}$  tons of bombs. Subsequent interrogation of prisoners showed that the enemy's morale had suffered severely from the intensive bombing attacks which they particularly feared.

S/Ldr.  
Dudgeon's  
"The Defence  
of Habbaniya"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/2)

By the evening of the following day (20 May) our

1. It was learned subsequently from prisoners that the enemy had not dared to leave cover when the bombing ceased and they therefore did not see the pamphlets.

troops had completed their occupation of Falluja and had taken over 300 prisoners. There had been no casualties to any of the Army or Royal Air Force personnel during the whole of the operations at Falluja.

#### The German Air Menace

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
"Ops in  
'Iraq "  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

Meanwhile it had been ascertained by reconnaissances that the German aircraft - whose exact strength was unknown - were operating mainly from Mosul, but it was thought they might be using other aerodromes, especially Rashid, as advanced landing-grounds. It was only possible to attack Mosul - the probable main base of the German aircraft and therefore the chief objective in the hunt for their liquidation - by a comparatively small portion of our available aircraft at Habbaniya on account of the long distance involved. The only long-range aircraft available were the twelve Blenheims<sup>1</sup> but of these only four were fighters which, in the opinion of the A.O.C., were the only suitable type of aircraft for attacking enemy aircraft on the ground. Accordingly a request for two long-range Hurricanes was signalled to Royal Air Force Headquarters, Middle East, on 19 May. These were promptly supplied and arrived at Habbaniya on 21 May.

The possibility that the German Air Force was using Rashid and other aerodromes where they could conceal their aircraft in hangars decided the A.O.C. to attempt the destruction of the hangars at Rashid. Accordingly (on 20 May) a bombing force of nine Oxfords, five Gordons and fourteen Audaxes of No. 4 S.F.T.S. and four Blenheim Bombers of No. 84 Squadron Detachment - covered by a screen of Gladiators and Hurricanes<sup>2</sup> and two Blenheim Fighters<sup>3</sup> - attacked the hangar area at Rashid aerodrome. In this attack nearly all the large hangars were hit or damaged by near misses (as shown by photographs taken during the operation), and it was considered probable that the object of denying their use to German aircraft had been achieved. During this attack several anti-aircraft

1. Of Nos. 84 and 203 Squadron Detachment.
2. Of No. 94 Squadron Detachment.
3. Of No. 203 Squadron Detachment.

posts on the aerodrome were silenced by machine-gun fire - and one blown up by a 20 lb bomb - of the Blenheim Fighters. From thence onwards until the termination of hostilities all the most likely landing grounds (mainly in the Mosul and Baquba areas) were reconnoitred both visually and photographically as often as possible, but only at Kirkuk were any German aircraft found apart from those at Mosul.

The importance of liquidating the German Air Units was again demonstrated on 20 May (the day of the R.A.F.'s bombing attack on Rashid) when four Me.110's and three Heinkel III's attacked Habbaniya resulting in two fires in hangars containing training aircraft<sup>1</sup> which, with one Wellesley and one Blenheim Bomber, were all burnt out, while several aircraft on the ground were damaged. Two patrolling Hurricanes of No. 94 Squadron Detachment pursued the Heinkels and damaged two of them. Our casualties from this raid were one Army officer and one civilian killed and two Army (British) other ranks wounded. On the following day (21 May) two Me.110's attacked Habbaniya with machine-guns from 500 feet: a Hurricane and two other aircraft on the ground were slightly damaged, and two R.A.F. officers were wounded.

#### Enemy Counter-Attack at Falluja

On 22 May the victory obtained by the capture of Falluja might well have been negatived by a counter-attack which the enemy delivered at 03.00 hours with the object (it was learned subsequently) of blowing up the bridge over the Euphrates. Our ground forces in the town had been reduced and the guns which had covered the bridge from the breach in "Hammond's bund" had been withdrawn; this enabled the enemy to deliver a sudden assault with Infantry and light tanks which drove in our outposts and penetrated into the town. However, their advance was checked by a spirited counter-attack made by two Assyrian Companies of the 'Iraq Levies, and some effective

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1. viz: Two Harts and one Moth.

dive-bombing by aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. on enemy troops approaching the town broke up their attack and restored the situation. During this operation a lorry loaded with gun cotton intended for the demolition of the bridge received a direct hit from a bomb and was blown to fragments.

While the operations at Falluja were in progress the Audaxes of No. 4 S.F.T.S. and two Blenheim Bombers of No. 84 Squadron Detachment - with an escort of Gladiators and Hurricanes<sup>1</sup> - attacked the 'Iraqi Army and Air Force reserve petrol dump at Cassel's Post<sup>2</sup> which was set on fire by the third bomb dropped, nearly one million gallons of petrol being destroyed. On the same day the two long-range Hurricanes (incorporated in No. 94 Squadron Detachment) attacked dispersed enemy aircraft at Mosul, two being destroyed and several others damaged: one of the Hurricanes was shot down. Meanwhile Habbaniya was attacked twice by Heinkel III's and once by an Me.110, some damage to buildings and casualties of three Army (British) other ranks resulting.

During the next few days bombing attacks and offensive reconnaissances were made in various localities and thousands of pamphlets were dropped on some 19 towns and townships in 'Iraq. These attacks included a raid at Baquba aerodrome by Hurricanes of No. 94 Squadron Detachment which destroyed two enemy aircraft and damaged two others, and at Mosul aerodrome where four enemy aircraft were damaged by the Hurricanes; a bombing attack on Kirkuk aerodrome by Blenheim IV's of No. 84 Squadron,<sup>3</sup> and another raid on Baquba when a Blenheim Fighter of No. 203 Squadron Detachment shot up a Breda and a Northrop aircraft.

#### Bombing of Ramadi

Meanwhile several Oxford aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. had made a series of demonstration flights over Ramadi (which

- 
1. Of No. 94 Squadron Detachment.
  2. Situated (on the railway) approx. 13 miles north-east of Baghdad.
  3. The Blenheims dropped 250 lb bombs and incendiaries in a level attack from 3,000 to 2,000 feet. On 24 May the three remaining aircraft of No. 84 Sqdn arrived at Habbaniya and the whole Sqdn was now formally transferred from Egypt.

was held by the enemy's 1st Infantry Brigade) during which pamphlets were dropped calling on the garrison to surrender. As these flights produced no results a formation of Oxfords and Audaxes - escorted by Gladiators - of No. 4 S.F.T.S. bombed Ramadi on 25 May (dropping 8 tons of bombs) while our Artillery shelled the town. The garrison, however, still refused to surrender and a further bombing attack was made at dusk on 27 May.

These operations failed to produce the desired result, but they doubtless had some secondary value in diverting the enemy's attention from the British preparations for the projected advance on Baghdad.

#### Summary

The second phase of the operations to crush the 'Iraqi rebellion was marked by

- (1) the advance of "Habforce" and the arrival of "Kingcol" at Habbaniya and
- (2) the appearance of the German Air Force in 'Iraq.
- (1) The reinforcements brought by "Kingcol" resulted - with the full co-operation of the Royal Air Force - in the capture of Falluja, which cleared the way for the final advance on Baghdad.
- (2) The intervention of the German Air Force brought a new complexion to the operations, and its speedy neutralisation at once became of the first importance. This neutralisation was accomplished successfully by the Royal Air Force which hunted down and destroyed the German aircraft, denied them the use of 'Iraqi bases and aerodromes, and prevented as far as possible the conveyance of their ammunition and supplies along the railway from Syria. A somewhat remarkable feature of the German intervention was the complete lack of co-ordination between their Air Units and the 'Iraqi Army. In the opinion of the A.O.C. 'Iraq, if the German Me.110's had intervened during our attack on Falluja on 19 May

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's.  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

they would have caused heavy losses among the obsolete and training types of aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. which were bombing the town, and might well have given the 'Iraqi defenders sufficient encouragement to hold out. Moreover, the German aircraft made no attempt to give support to the 'Iraqi counter-attack on Falluja on 22 May. The reason for these failures on the part of the Germans to co-ordinate their attacks with the 'Iraqi army may well have been due to the death of Major Axel von Blomberg (son of the Field-Marshal and former German War Minister), who was sent to direct the German intervention in support of the 'Iraqi rebels. It appears that von Blomberg travelled by airplane to Baghdad where Rashid Ali and his Ministers were awaiting him, and that on its arrival the airplane, while circling overhead preparatory to landing, was fired on by some irresponsible tribesmen, one of the shots killing von Blomberg.

Extracts  
from "The  
Times" of  
17 and 31  
May and  
10 June, 41.

## V. THE ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD

### Control of Air Operations, Habbaniya

Air H.Q.

'Iraq

Form 540

Entry of

25 May 41

Appx. 25/

5/41/2

Meanwhile, before the advance on Baghdad began, the control of air operations at Habbaniya was reorganised. From the opening of hostilities (on 2 May) the control of all flying operations had been vested in a single officer known as the O.C. Air Striking Force, Habbaniya, but subsequent experience had shown the advisability of a decentralisation of control, partly to relieve the over-burdening of the O.C. Air Striking Force, and partly because air operations based on Habbaniya fell into two distinct categories.

The two main operational tasks confronting the Air Forces at Habbaniya were:-

- (1) The conduct of a strategical offensive against the 'Iraqi Army and the German Air Force, together with the provision of tactical air support for our ground forces, and
- (2) The defence of Habbaniya against air attack.

It was decided (as from 25 May) that the responsibility for carrying out these two tasks would be delegated to the O.C. Air Striking Force and a newly-made appointment of an O.C. Air Defence Force, each of these officers being responsible to Air Headquarters. The O.C. Air Striking Force was put in operational control of all the Bomber Units at Habbaniya and was responsible for all bombing operations, strategical reconnaissances, and the provision of close support for the ground forces, as ordered by Air Headquarters. The O.C. Air Defence Force was given operational control of all Fighter Units, anti-aircraft gun and machine-gun defences and the air raid warning organisation, and he was responsible for the close co-ordination of air and ground defences and for the development of an efficient warning system.

There were as yet no Squadron Intelligence Officers but the existing Wing Tactical Intelligence Section was to serve both the Air Striking and Air Defence Forces.<sup>1</sup>

#### Preparations for the Advance

On 26 May the road from Khan Nuqta<sup>2</sup> to Baghdad was photographed by an Oxford aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. as a prelude to the advance, and in the meantime considerable preparatory work had been carried out by the Sappers and Miners (under the direction of the Air Ministry Works Department Staff) on repairing the breach in the Euphrates "bund" above Falluja, and in constructing a ferry across the gap in "Hammond's Bund". The advance was scheduled to begin before dawn on 28 May, the plan of operations being as follows:-

The attacking force ("Kingcol") was to be in two columns - North and South. The North column was to move north and then approach Baghdad from the north-west. No air co-operation was to be provided for this column. The South (or main) column (consisting of 70 - 80 vehicles, four guns drawn by tractors and three armoured cars) was to advance across the Falluja Plain and thence astride the road to the Iron Bridge over the Washash canal on the western outskirts of Baghdad. The South column was to be provided with

- (a) Air reconnaissance and reliefs in the air from the start of the advance until the successful completion of the operation.
- (b) Close support (if necessary) of two Bomber forces which were to be on call by "Kingcol" as required.<sup>3</sup>
- (c) Fighter escort to provide cover for the Bomber forces

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1. A chart showing the control organisation (excerpted from Air H.Q. 'Iraq Form 540, Entry of 25 May 41, Appx. 25/5/41/2) is given in Appendix "D".  
 2. Situated approx. 17 miles east of Falluja.  
 3. The 1st Force was to consist of 2 Flights of aircraft: the code word for its call was "Normal". The 2nd Force was to consist of all other available aircraft: the code word for its call was "Noisy". If "Normal" had not been called for when "Noisy" was called, then both "Normal" and "Noisy" were to go into action.

if and when required, but not for defence against low flying attacks on the column unless these should prove particularly virulent and sustained.

As a precaution against air attacks in error on the ground forces, the troops were provided with a distinguishing white patch (6 inches square) on their backs.

#### The Advance

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
Report  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
2-31 May '41  
(A.H.B.  
II J3/3)

In accordance with the foregoing plan the advance was made by the two columns, the North column (consisting of a regiment of the Arab Legion, a Squadron of Household Cavalry and some Armoured Cars) which moved on the night of 27/28 May, crossed the ferry at Sin El Dhibban and moved in a wide northerly (and thence easterly) sweep towards Khadimain.<sup>1</sup> This was a long détour but the column reached Taji<sup>2</sup> by the evening of 28 May and was advancing on Khadimain. Here it was held up, and although it was unable to make any further appreciable progress it did valuable work in threatening Baghdad and helping to demoralise the rebel Government.

The South (or main) column left Falluja at first light on 28 May and by 07.00 hours it had captured the Police Post at Khan Nuqta which had been garrisoned by the enemy. From Khan Nuqta its advance was greatly hindered by the destruction of the road bridges over the canals which the enemy had carried out during their retreat from Falluja, and by the opening of the Abu Gharaib 'Regulator' by enemy troops holding that position. Meanwhile close support and reconnaissance patrols were maintained with our ground troops throughout the day by aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S., and a Gladiator of No. 94 Squadron Detachment reconnoitred the Baghdad area.

During the next day (29 May) the South Column was still held up by the extensive inundations near Khan Nuqta. Aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. made standing patrols and

1. Situated on the railway some four miles north-west of Baghdad. (See the Sketch map "Ramadi to Baghdad" - Maps and Plans No. 2 taken from Appx. "D" to A-V-M D'Albiac's "Report on Ops in Iraq" 2 May to 31 May 41, A.H.B. II J3/3)
2. Situated on the railway approx. eight miles north-west of Khadimain.

reconnaissances and bombed local targets in support of our troops. During a bombing raid of Khan Nquta by three of our Audaxes - escorted by a Gladiator of No. 94 Squadron Detachment - two Italian C.R.42's were encountered which forced down one of the Audaxes. The Gladiator shot down one of the C.R.42's<sup>1</sup> and the other then made off at high speed. These C.R.42's belonged to the 42nd Italian Fighter Squadron which had arrived in 'Iraq on the previous day (28 May) and was believed to be based at Kirkuk. Meanwhile Blenheims of No. 84 Squadron bombed enemy troops south of Falluja near the Abu Gharaib "Regulator".

#### Other Activities of the R.A.F.

In the meantime while the advance on Baghdad was progressing the Royal Air Force was also employed on other operations. On 28 May a special demolition party (flown in a Valentia from Air Headquarters, Middle East, to Habbaniya on 25 May) flew to Campaniya railway station (in north-east Syria - a few miles west of Tel Kotohek) and blew up a railway bridge, returning to Habbaniya the same day. On the next day (29 May) two Blenheim IV. Fighters of No. 84 Squadron made a low-flying attack on the Baquba aerodrome and seriously damaged one Northrop, two Italian C.R.42's and several unidentified biplanes<sup>2</sup> with 20 lb bombs and machine-gun fire.

#### Final Stages of the Advance

Meanwhile the South column of troops (which had been held up by the inundations east of Khan Nquta) had succeeded in advancing as some local natives, seeing the destruction of the water to their crops, had opened another "bund" and let the water escape. By 09.00 hours on 30 May the column had pushed on and reached the Experimental farm a few miles east of Baghdad, and by nightfall it had reached a point three miles

- 
1. The pilot of this C.R. 42 baled out and was taken prisoner by our ground forces.
  2. Some of these biplanes may have been C.R.42's of the Italian Fighter Sqdn. The number of biplanes which were damaged cannot be ascertained with any certainty as one of the Blenheims reported 'strafing' four and the other Blenheim reported hits with bombs on "many".

from the Iron Bridge over the Washash canal on the outskirts of the city. During its progress it had been assisted by constant air reconnaissance and by occasional close support bombing, and in the evening heavy bombing attacks with locally constructed "screaming" bombs<sup>1</sup> were made on the enemy barracks at Washash by aircraft of No. 4 S.F.T.S. Meanwhile the North column was still held up by enemy troops and Artillery near Khadimain railway station who were bombed by No. 4 S.F.T.S. aircraft. During the day four Italian C.R.42's made a demonstration - at a safe altitude - over our ground troops at Khadimain but did not deliver an attack. Meanwhile Blenheims of No. 84 Squadron bombed Rashid aerodrome, causing a large fire in the M/T depot, and also dropped pamphlets over Baghdad.<sup>2</sup>

At about 22.00 hours a wireless message was received by the G.O.C. "Habforce", at Habbaniya,<sup>3</sup> from the British Ambassador at Baghdad requesting that an 'Iraqi flag of truce accompanied by a representative of the Embassy should be received at the Iron Bridge as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup> A reply was sent informing the Ambassador that emissaries would be in position of our advanced troops two miles west of the Iron Bridge at 04.00 hours next morning (31 May). Two further signals were received from the Ambassador stating (1) that the Lord Mayor of Baghdad had visited the Ambassador and had stated that at a meeting of notables in the city the hope had been expressed that H.R.H. the Regent<sup>5</sup> would return to Baghdad next day (31 May) and (2) that Rashid Ali and his cabinet, the German and Italian Ministers, and the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem had fled to Persia; that the Administration had been taken over temporarily by the Lord Mayor and a committee who asked for an immediate armistice; and that the Regent should come to

1. Subsequent information revealed that the "screaming" bombs had in fact failed to scream.
2. The Blenheims dropped 250 lb bombs from heights of 8,000 to 3,000 feet.
3. Lieut.-Genl. Clark had arrived at Habbaniya for the operations.
4. This was the first wireless message received from the Embassy since its W/T set had been dismantled by 'Iraqi officials on 3 May (see page 28 supra).
5. The Regent had arrived with his suite at Habbaniya on 22 May.

Baghdad at once and form a new government.

A-V-M  
D'Albiac's  
"Ops in  
'Iraq"  
(A.H.B.  
II, J3/3)

At dawn on 31 May the G.O.C. and the A.O.C. met the 'Iraqi envoys and the terms of the armistice were agreed which were, briefly, as follows:-

That hostilities should cease forthwith; that the 'Iraqi Army, though permitted to retain its weapons, should return forthwith to its normal peace-time stations, and that in particular 'Iraqi troops should evacuate Ramadi by mid-day on 1 June; that all British prisoners of war and civilian internees should be released at once, and that 'Iraqi prisoners should be handed over when the full terms of the armistice had been complied with. Finally, that all German and Italian personnel and equipment should be detained by the 'Iraq Government pending further instructions.

On the same day (1 June) H.R.H. The Regent and his retinue, accompanied by Jamil Madf'ai (afterwards Prime Minister of 'Iraq) left Habbaniya for Baghdad. They were met by the British Ambassador at the outskirts of the city and received a warm welcome from the people of Baghdad.

It had already been decided that one Bomber Squadron of the Royal Air Force should occupy Mosul, but as it was considered necessary to first secure the aerodrome - in view of the uncertainty of the situation - the 2/4 Gurkha Rifles were flown to Mosul by Douglas and Valentia aircraft of No. 31 (Transport) Squadron and the Communication Flight while Blenheims of No. 84 Squadron maintained patrols of Mosul aerodrome during the landings and "take-offs". On 5 June No. 84 Squadron moved to Mosul.

Meanwhile it had been decided to close down No. 4 S.F.T.S. and to transfer all the Hart and Oxford aircraft to the R.A.F. Service Flying Training School at Geneifa (Egypt).

Summary

The third - and shortest - phase of the operations was centred on the advance to Baghdad which culminated in the flight of Rashid Ali and his supporters and the return of H.R.H. The Regent to Baghdad. Both prior to and during the advance the Royal Air Force gave valuable assistance to our ground forces, and their operations at Baquba (on 29 May) while the advance was in progress accounted for a considerable number of enemy aircraft.

The appearance of Italian Fighters on the second day of the advance was a potential menace to our operations, but the half-hearted efforts of these aircraft to give support to the 'Iraqi ground forces had no effect upon the issue of the conflict, their only success being the forcing of a reconnaissance Audax to make a hurried landing near Khan Nuqta, for the loss of one of their number. On the following day (29 May) two more of these C.R.42's (and perhaps others) were damaged in the raid by the Blenheim IV Fighters at Baquba.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, on 31 May, four officers and fifty-two other ranks of this Italian Squadron, accompanied by some Germans, arrived by motor convoy at Tel Kotchek on their way to the Syrian border and were disarmed.

Air H.Q. 'Iraq  
Form 540  
Appx. 8/7/41/1  
(Combined  
Intell;  
Centre.  
Summary No.  
21). Entry  
of 8 July '41.

1. See page 67 supra.

VI. GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE OPERATIONS  
OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE DURING THE  
'IRAQ REBELLION

The 'Iraq Rebellion of 1941 was of short duration and its suppression was accomplished successfully. The part which the Royal Air Force played was of great importance and assisted in no small measure to the successful issue of the conflict.

The success of the whole campaign was largely due to the personnel of No. 4 S.F.T.S. who bore the brunt of the defence of Habbaniya and other subsequent air operations, and during the thirty days of the fighting made over 1,600 sorties, dropped 85 tons of bombs, and fired 250,000 rounds of ammunition. In these operations they were ably supported by the Blenheim Fighters of No. 203 Squadron whose low-flying attacks on enemy aerodromes were very effective, and by the Wellingtons of Nos. 30 and 70 Squadrons operating from Shaibah. The Valentias of the Communication Flight rendered good service both in transport and night bombing operations, and the aircraft of No. 31 (Transport) Squadron from India performed much valuable work in evacuating women and children and hospital cases, and in transporting reinforcements of troops, ammunition and supplies. Thereafter the arrival of the Blenheim Bombers of No. 84 Squadron proved a welcome reinforcement on the return of the Wellingtons to their parent units in Egypt, and the advent of the Gladiators and Hurricanes of No. 94 Squadron made possible the maintenance of standing fighter patrols, escort cover for the bombers, and long-range attacks on aerodromes used by German aircraft.

The initial phase of the air situation comprised the neutralisation and virtual destruction of the 'Iraqi Air Force in the first six days of the operations. This was followed by the appearance of the German Air Force in 'Iraq which constituted a grave menace to our operations and might

well have altered the whole military situation. The neutralisation of the German Air Units became immediately of primary importance, and the speedy and successful accomplishment of this objective was effected by the Royal Air Force. With the signing of the armistice the remnants of the German Air Force in 'Iraq were eliminated.

The intervention of the Italian fighters (which occurred towards the end of the operations) was remarkable for its inefficiency, their third (and last) appearance being merely an out-of-range demonstration over our forward troops at Khadimain. It may well be that the virtual annihilation of the Italian Air Force in East Africa, which had recently occurred at the hands of the Royal and South African Air Forces, had so shattered the morale of the Italian pilots that they were incapable of performing any serious operation. As in the case of the German Air Force, the Italian Air Units were also eliminated from 'Iraq by the terms of the armistice.

The suppression of the Rebellion - in which the defence of Habbaniya had played so integral a part - saved 'Iraq and the whole position of the Middle East. It also saved the road through Persia which - on the German invasion of Russia three weeks later - became vital for the transit of Allied aid to the Soviet Government. For the safeguarding of the road through Persia depended upon the security of 'Iraq, and thus (according to a recent historian<sup>1</sup>) "by a strange conjunction of events Habbaniya had saved the Kremlin". If this be so, it may be added that the saving of the Kremlin has since proved an incalculable factor in the saving of the world.

P.Guedalla's  
"Middle  
East  
1940-42 -  
A Study in  
Air Power"

1. The late P. Guedalla, op: cit:

APPENDICES

## APPENDIX "A"

## SUMMARY OF STRENGTH AND SERVICEABILITY - AIRCRAFT OF ROYAL 'IRAQI' AIR FORCE as at 15/2/41

Serial	Unit	Function of Unit	Location of Unit	Type of Aircraft	Serviceable	Reserve	Unserviceable	Total	Remarks
1	No. 1 Squadron	Army Co-op.	Mosul	Pegasus - Audax	10	-	-	10	A. Crashes during Period 15/11/1940 to 15/2/1941.  Douglas 8A-4 No. 137 (repaired)  Breda No. 111 (repaired and now "S")  Gladiator No. 87  Tiger Moths Nos. 45, 74 & 148
2	No. 2 Squadron	General Purpose	Rashid	Vincent	4	-	1	5	
				Rapide and Dragon	2 1	- -	- -	3	
				Dragonfly	1	-	1	2	
				Q.6	-	-	-	-	
3	No. 3 Squadron	-	-	REDUCED TO CADRE					
4	No. 4 Squadron	Fighter	Kirkuk	Gladiator	7 *	-	1 @	8	
5	No. 5 Squadron	Fighter Bomber	Rashid	Audax	3	-	-	3	
6	No. 6 Squadron	Medium Bomber	Rashid	Breda 65	4	4	6 @	14	
				Savoia 79	3	-	2 @	5	
7	No. 7 Squadron	Fighter Bomber	Rashid	Northrop 8A	6	2 u/s 3 s	4	15	
8	Flying Training School	Flying Training	Rashid	D.H. Moth	9	under 4 erection	18	31	
				Magister	-	-	1 @	1	
				Pegasus Audax	3	-	3	6	
9	Aircraft Depot	Repair and Overhaul	Rashid	Audax	-	-	5	5	
				Gladiator	-	-	3 @ 4	4	
				Percival	-	-	1 @	1	
				Vincent	-	-	1 @	1	
				Rapide	-	-	1 @	1	
				Vega Gull	-	-	1 @	1	
N.B. * Since this date Gladiator 86 has crashed at KIRKUK  @ Denotes aircraft cannot be made serviceable through lack of spares.				TOTALS	53	13	50	116	B. Aircraft put Up for write off during period 15/11/1940 to 15/2/1941  NIL  C. Aircraft written off during period 15/11/40 to 15/2/41  NIL  Total Aircraft in R. 'I. A.F.
					53	7	56		
				Percentages	48.27%	6.03%	45.7%	100%	

Note: The above is transcribed from Air H.Q. 'Iraq, Appx. 8/3/41 to Form 540, Entry of 31 March 1941

DIARY OF EVENTS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING  
THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES

30th April, 1941

- 0300 hours LST. Wireless signal received at Air Headquarters from the British Embassy, Baghdad, stating that large bodies of 'Iraqi troops from Rashid were crossing the bridges and moving out of Baghdad westwards.
- 0330 hours LST. The General Alarm was sounded and all defences at Habbaniya fully manned.
- 0500 hours LST. Reconnaissance aircraft sent up from Habbaniya reported that 'Iraqi troops with guns were in occupation of the Plateau on the South of the Cantonment. The strength of the 'Iraqi forces was estimated to be roughly two battalions with a few guns (number not determined).
- 0600 hours LST. An 'Iraqi officer arrived at the main gate of the Cantonment with a message from the 'Iraqi Commander of the troops on the Plateau. He was conducted to the A.O.C. His message was a demand that all flying should be discontinued and that no person should leave the Cantonment under threat of shelling by the 'Iraqi batteries.
- 0630 hours LST. The A.O.C. sent a reply to the 'Iraqi commander saying that his demands could not be accepted and that any interference by the 'Iraqi forces with the normal training carried out at Habbaniya would be considered an act of war and would be met by immediate counter offensive action.
- 0650 hours LST. The 'Iraqi demands and the A.O.C's reply to them were reported by signal to the British Ambassador at Baghdad, the G.O.C. Basrah, the Air Ministry, H.Q. R.A.F., M.E. and H.Q. R.A.F., India. The Ambassador was asked to arrange for the immediate withdrawal of the 'Iraqi forces from the Habbaniya area, and was informed that any increase of these forces would compel the A.O.C. to take air action.
- 0920 hours LST. The continuous air reconnaissance being maintained from Habbaniya showed that the 'Iraqi forces investing the Cantonment were being rapidly increased. A signal was sent to H.Q. R.A.F. M.E., repeated to G.O.C. Basrah, H.Q. R.A.F. India, the Air Ministry and the British Ambassador, Baghdad, reporting the steady increase in the strength of the 'Iraqi forces investing Habbaniya, and that there were now several field guns and five 4.5 howitzers being placed on the outskirts of the Cantonment. It was also stated that air action might have to be taken later in the day if the 'Iraqi forces were not withdrawn as otherwise the risk of night attack would be unacceptable. The signal concluded with a request for assistance to be sent by air the same day.
- 0930 hours LST. A signal was received from the British Embassy, Baghdad, in which the Ambassador fully endorsed the action taken by the A.O.C. in reply to the demands presented by the 'Iraqi envoy.
- 1100 hours LST. A signal was received from the Embassy, Baghdad but was very corrupt. It was taken to mean that no action should be taken pending a decision by the Foreign Office as to policy.
- 1130 hours LST. The 'Iraqi Envoy again presented himself at Air Headquarters with a second message from the 'Iraqi commander. This message accused the British of having broken the Anglo-'Iraqi Treaty and stated that the 'Iraqi commander would not allow any training or anything else to be carried out as long

as the Treaty was not respected.  
Before replying to this message the A.O.C. in consultation with his Staff reviewed the current situation.

Review of Situation After Receipt of Second Message from 'Iraqi Commander.

Arguments for taking immediate offensive action

- (i) The steady increase in the 'Iraqi investing forces was making offensive action progressively less probable of success. Delay was increasing the relative strength of the investing force.
- (ii) The 'Iraqis might wait until darkness before staging an attack. In that case our only really effective weapon (aircraft) would not be available.

Arguments against taking immediate action

- (i) No directive had been received from higher authority. The previous policy of the A.O.C.-in-C., Middle East, had always been to avoid a flare up in 'Iraq at any cost. The existing situation in Libya and Greece made it improbable that adequate reinforcements could be spared for 'Iraq. There was a possibility that in the circumstances higher authority might be willing to accept the 'Iraqi demands in order to avoid having to undertake a fresh campaign.
- (ii) The difficulty of defending the Cantonment due to:-
  - (a) its layout - absence of defensive works
  - (b) the absence of artillery
  - (c) the presence of 9,000 civilians in the Civil Cantonment for which at that time only 4 days rations were estimated to be available
  - (d) the presence of 250 British women and children who had been evacuated the previous day from Baghdad
  - (e) the unknown reliability of the Assyrian Levies (who were 'Iraqi subjects).

Conclusion Reached

In view of the absence of any directive from higher authority, and of the previous policy of the A.O.C.-in-C., Middle East, the A.O.C. decided to take no immediate offensive action, in spite of the risk such a course involved.

1150 hours LST. The note sent to the 'Iraqi commander in reply to his second message, therefore, merely stated that he had raised a political question which was being referred to the British Ambassador as it was outside the province of the A.O.C. The note again asked for the withdrawal of the 'Iraqi forces.

1155 hours LST. A signal was sent to H.Q. R.A.F. M.E. repeated to G.O.C. Basrah, H.Q. R.A.F. India, the Air Ministry and the British Ambassador, Baghdad, giving the gist of the second message received from the 'Iraqi commander, and the A.O.C.'s reply to it. The signal also stated that the A.O.C. had decided not to issue an ultimatum to the 'Iraqi commander, in view of the policy so far pursued by H.Q. R.A.F. M.E., and that offensive action would be deferred until the 'Iraqis opened fire. An immediate directive was asked for, together with the possibility of reinforcements.

1330 hours LST (approx). A third message from the 'Iraqi commander was delivered to the A.O.C. by the 'Iraqi Envoy. The message stated that the 'Iraqi forces would not do anything hostile, if the Habbaniya garrison did not, but that the 'Iraqi forces could not be withdrawn without orders from Baghdad. The A.O.C. in reply asked the 'Iraqi commander to keep the troops well clear of the Cantonment during the hours of darkness so as to avoid the possibility of an incident.

1415 hours LST (approx). A signal from the Ambassador to the Foreign Office in London was received at Air Headquarters. This was the signal previously received in corrupt form at 1100 hours LST. In this signal the Ambassador recommended that we should use force to restore the situation; he considered the 'Iraqi threats as acts of war justifying immediate air action. Pending Foreign Office decision whether the issue was to be forced, the Ambassador was pressing the 'Iraqi Government for the immediate withdrawal of their forces.

1630 hours LST. A signal was sent to the Embassy asking if the Ambassador agreed with the replies sent by the A.O.C. to the three messages from the 'Iraqi commander and whether he would have preferred the issue of an ultimatum and, if necessary, the delivery of air attacks on the steadily increasing forces. The A.O.C. had withheld from taking action pending the Foreign Office's reply to the Ambassador's request for a directive. The Ambassador replied later in the evening that he would have preferred quick action but that he realised the A.O.C.'s difficulties in the absence of definite instructions from H.M. Government. He hoped these would be forthcoming soon.

1900 hours LST (approx). A signal from the A.O.C.-in-C. Middle East was received confirming the action taken by the A.O.C. and promising to send 10 Wellingtons to Shaibah forthwith, keeping a further 10 standing by in Palestine. A directive was given that "subject to Ambassador's views you should take immediate action with Wellingtons from Shaibah and such aircraft as are at Habbaniya if 'Iraqi's open fire." This message was passed to the

1st May, 1941

0200 hours LST. Ambassador, who replied giving his full support for any action the A.O.C. might like to take to liquidate the situation.

0230 hours LST (approx). A signal was received from the C.-in-C. India stating that he considered air action should be taken immediately against the 'Iraqi forces threatening Habbaniya.

0700 hours LST (approx). A signal from G.O.C. Basrah addressed to C.-in-C. India and repeated to C.-in-C. Middle East was received in which the G.O.C. stated that his forces could not help Habbaniya and asked Middle East to arrange air assistance.

0830 hours LST (approx). A signal from the Foreign Office, London to the Ambassador, Baghdad, was received, stating that the position must be restored and 'Iraqi troops withdrawn without delay, and giving full authority for the taking of any steps necessary to ensure this, including air attack. On receipt of this directive, the A.O.C. considered the question of issuing an immediate ultimatum to the 'Iraqi commander to withdraw his forces. It was however certain that the local commander would not be able to comply without reference to Baghdad, and consequently the time limit given could not be less than about three hours if any movement of 'Iraqi forces in the event of compliance of the 'Iraqi Government were to be evident. A time limit of three hours would mean that, if there was no 'Iraqi withdrawal evident on its expiry,

only half a full day would be available for operations before nightfall. As he considered that the maximum possible amount of daylight was essential for air action, the A.O.C. decided to request the Ambassador to issue an ultimatum direct to the 'Iraqi Government in Baghdad at 0500 hours LST the following morning, 2nd May.

1120 hours LST. A signal was sent by the A.O.C. to the Ambassador repeated for information to H.Q. R.A.F. M.E., H.Q. R.A.F. India, G.O.C. Basrah, Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf and the Air Ministry. In this signal the A.O.C. asked the Ambassador to deliver an ultimatum to the 'Iraqi Government at 0500 hours LST on 2nd May demanding the immediate withdrawal of the 'Iraqi troops from the vicinity of Habbaniya, failing evidence of which air action would be taken commencing at 0800 hours LST.

1300 hours LST (approx). A copy of a signal addressed by the Ambassador to the Foreign Office was received at Air Headquarters. In this signal the Ambassador stated that he had asked the A.O.C. to take air action on this day. During the afternoon air reconnaissance reported that further 'Iraqi forces were being brought up, including extra artillery. This increase of force made it necessary to alter the manner in which the ultimatum was to be delivered, as it was becoming clear that the 'Iraqis were not likely with the force at their disposal to accept an ultimatum. The A.O.C. therefore decided that the ultimatum would be given at 0545 hours LST the following morning to the local 'Iraqi commander. If he accepted it, he would be given half an hour's grace to get his initial moves started; otherwise full air action would be taken.

1606 hours LST. The A.O.C. sent a signal to the Ambassador stating that he could not take air action before the following morning as there was insufficient daylight left. He also explained his change of plan regarding the delivery of the ultimatum and impressed on the Ambassador the necessity for doing nothing to compromise surprise.

1730 hours LST (approx). A signal (which had been delayed in decyphering) from the A.O.C.-in-C. Middle East to the A.O.C. was received, in which the A.O.C. was directed to act in accordance with either of the following two alternatives:-

- (i) to announce the continuance of full flying training, and to put the announcement into effect. If this caused the 'Iraqis to open fire, air attack should be commenced against Government offices in Baghdad and at Rashid Camp.
- (ii) to give an ultimatum for the removal of the 'Iraqi forces surrounding Habbaniya. If this ultimatum was not accepted, air action should be taken firstly against Government Offices in Baghdad.

By the time this signal had been received the situation had further deteriorated. Air Reconnaissance reports showed that 27 additional guns were being placed in positions covering the Cantonment, and it was later reported that Humfria Village on the outskirts of the Cantonment had been occupied at dusk by 'Iraqi troops. The alternative courses directed by the A.O.C.-in-C. would no longer solve the situation and the A.O.C. decided that air action would have to be taken the following morning without the issue of an ultimatum since this would allow the 'Iraqis to attack first.

2130 hours LST. A signal was sent by the A.O.C. to the Ambassador, repeated to H.Q. R.A.F. M.E., H.Q. R.A.F. India, G.O.C. Basrah, Senior Naval Officer Persian Gulf, O.C. Shaibah and the Air Ministry in which he explained that the deterioration in the situation now made it necessary to attack the following morning without an ultimatum. He also stated that the alternatives given by the A.O.C.-in-C. no longer met the case.

2nd May 1941

0300 hours LST (approx). A signal was received from the Ambassador (in reply to the signal from the A.O.C. announcing his intentions of taking air action without issuing an ultimatum) in which the Ambassador stated his full agreement with the A.O.C.'s decision.

NOTE: The above is transcribed from Appendix "C" to A-V-M D'Albiac's Report "Ops in 'Iraq, 2 - 31 May 1941" (A.H.B. II J3/3).

CYPHER MESSAGE

To:- A.O.C.  
From:- CORNWALLIS  
Date:- 1 May 1941.

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Grateful if you can arrange print in Arabic several thousand leaflets to drop from aircraft over Baghdad tomorrow if and when fighting starts. City is being worked up by intense propaganda. Text follows.

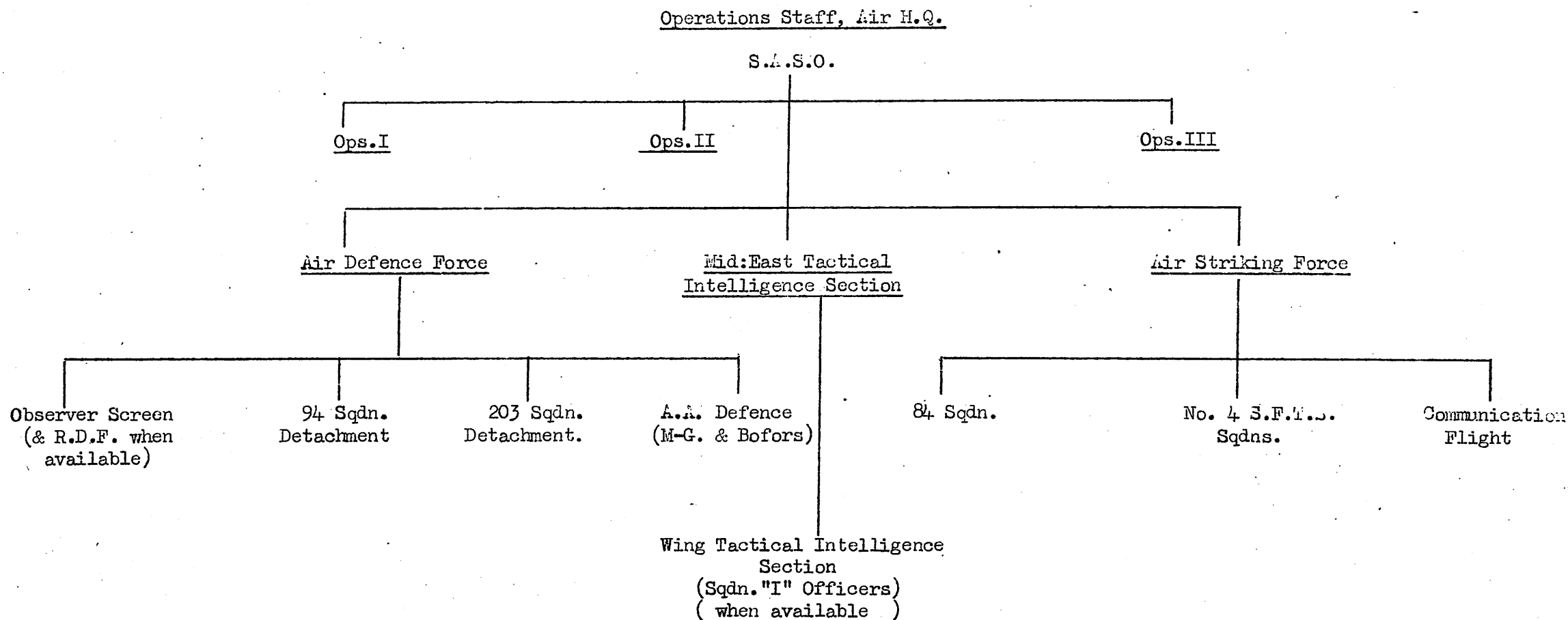
"Citizens! Rashid Ali and his Golden Square of army officers betrayed you for German gold into fighting with your ally Great Britain. Keep calm. Believe none of their lies. Do not make crowds. The British are truthful and strong and will soon put all enemies of your country to flight. The British will then ensure that the noble 'Iraqi nation regains its accustomed peace with honour in alliance with its friend Great Britain and under its own independent and constitutional 'Iraqi Government. I promise it. Long Live King Faisul."

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T.O.O. 1800/1.

APPENDIX "D"

CONTROL OF AIR OPERATIONS, HABBANIYA  
 (as from 25 May, 1941)



NOTE: The above is excerpted from Air H.Q. 'Iraq, Appx. 25/5/41/2 to Form 540, Entry of 25 May 1941.

AIRCRAFT STRENGTH OF UNITS

		<u>At Start of Operations</u>	<u>At End of Operations</u>
<u>No. 4 Service</u>	AUDAX	32	25
<u>Flying Training</u>	GORDON	8	7
<u>School</u>	OXFORD	29	25
	GLADIATOR	9	7
	BLENHEIM I	1	1
<u>Communication</u>	VALENTIA	3	3
<u>Flight</u>			
<u>Nos. 37 (B) and</u>	WELLINGTON	18	15
<u>70 (B) Squadron</u>			
<u>Detachments</u>			
<u>No. 203 (F)</u>			
<u>Squadron</u>	BLENHEIM IV (F)	4 (arrived 3rd May)	3
<u>Detachment</u>			
<u>No. 94 (F)</u>	GLADIATOR	6 (arrived 8th May)	4
<u>Squadron</u>	HURRICANE	4 (arrived 16th May)	
<u>Detachment</u>		2 (arrived 21st May)	6
		1 (arrived 28th May)	
<u>No. 84 (B)</u>	BLENHEIM IV (B)	4 (arrived 12th May)	
<u>Squadron</u>		2 (arrived 13th May)	
		2 (arrived 16th May)	
		2 (arrived 23rd May)	11
		3 (arrived 24th May)	

Transcribed from Appendix "A" to A-V-M D'Albiac's Report "Ops. in 'Iraq - 2 to 31 May 1941" (A.H.B. II J3/3).

AIRCRAFT LOSSES FROM VARIOUS CAUSES

<u>Type</u>	<u>Shot Down</u>	<u>Destroyed on Ground</u>	<u>Other Causes</u>
Audax	4	3	1
Gordon	-	1	-
Oxford	1	3	-
Gladiator	1	2	1
Hurricane	1	-	-
Wellington	1	1	1
Blenheim IV	1	1	1

NOTE:- In addition to the above operational aircraft lost, the following were also destroyed on the ground at Habbaniya by enemy action:-

1 Wellesley  
1 Moth  
2 Harts

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Transcribed from Appendix "A" to A-V-M D'Albiac's Report  
"Ops. in 'Iraq: 2 - 31 May 1941" (A.H.B. II J3/3).

## SUMMARY OF DAILY AIR OPERATIONS

(Transcribed from Appendix 'A' to A.V.M. D'Albiac's Report: "Operations in Iraq, 2-31 May, 1941". (A.H.B.II J3/5) )

Date	Unit	Type of Operation.	Objectives or Area.	Type of Aircraft used.	No. of Sorties	No. of A/C involved	Weight of bombs dropped	Remarks.
2/5/41.	No.4 SPTS.Habbaniya.	Bombing and machine gunning attacks.	Guns etc. in positions round Habbaniya	Audax. Gordon Oxford. Gladiator.	193	46	16½ tons.	1 Oxford, 1 Audax shot down. 1 Gordon, 1 Oxford destroyed by shell fire.
	No.70 Sqdn. Dtcht. Shaibah.	do	do	Wellington.	8	8	10 tons (approx.)	1 Wellington forced landed at Habbaniya and was destroyed by shell fire.
	No.37 Sqdn. Dtcht. Shaibah.	do	do	Wellington.	4	4	4½ tons (approx.)	
3/5/41	No.4 SPTS.Habbaniya	Bombing and machine gunning attacks.	Guns, AFV's, M.T. & troops in positions round Habbaniya	Audax. Gordon. Oxford. Blenheim I.	119	33.	12 tons (approx.)	1 Oxford destroyed on ground by shell fire.
	do,	Standing fighter patrols and interception flights.		Gladiators.				1 E.A. (Savoia) shot down unconfirmed.
	No.203 Sqdn.Dtcht. Habbaniya	do.		Blenheim IV	2	2	960 lbs.	
	No.37 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Bombing & machine gun attacks.	Enemy guns etc. near Habbaniya	Wellington.			3 tons (approx.)	
	do	do	Rashid Patrol Dump and magazine.	do	4	4		A/C intercepted over Rashid by 'Iraq fighters 1 E.A. shot down, 1 damaged.
	No.70 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Bombing & Machine gun attacks.	Enemy guns etc. round Habbaniya & Fallujah Bdg. Buni (1 aircraft).	Wellington.	9	7	8 tons (approx.)	
4/5/41.	No.4 SPTS.Habbaniya	Bombing & machine gunning.	'Iraq guns etc. near Habbaniya and Rive Buni (3 aircraft)	Audax. Oxford. Gordon.	53	26	3½ tons (approx.)	
	do.	Standing fighter patrols & reces.		Gladiators.				
	No.203 Sqdn.Dtcht. Habbaniya.	do.		Blenheim IV (F)	5	4		2 E.A. set on fire 6 others damaged. (Savoias, Bredas, Audax, Gladiators)
	do.	Low flying attack.	Dispersed A/C Rashid & Baghdad Airport.	do.				
	No.37 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Level bombing & low flying machine gun attacks.	Aerodrome buildings & dispersed A/C at Rashid.	Wellington	10	8	7 tons.	

Date	Unit	Type of Operation	Objectives or Area.	Type of Aircraft used.	No. of sorties.	No. of A/C involved	Weight of bombs dropped	Remarks
4/5/41.	No.37 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Level bombing & low flying machine gun attacks.	'Iraqi guns etc. Habbaniya.	Wellington.	10	8	7 tons	1 E.A. on ground destroyed. 18 E.A. on ground damaged. 2 E.A. shot down.
	No.70 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah	Level bombing	'Iraqi guns etc. near Habbaniya. 'Iraqi Barracks Diwaniya.	Wellington.	3	3	6,000lbs.	
5/5	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing & machine gunning.	'Iraqi guns etc. near Habbaniya.	Audax, Oxford. Gordon .	80	28	4 tons.	
		Standing fighter patrols & recces.		Gladiator .				
	No.203 Sqdn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	do.						
		Bombing & Low flying attack	Dispersed A/C on Mosul aerodrome.	Blenheim IV (F)	4	4		2 E.A. on ground hit.
		Bombing & low flying machine gun attacks.	'Iraqi APV's near Habbaniya.					
	Communication Flt. Habbaniya	Low bombing.	Bund near Fallujah	Valentia .	1	1	2,000 lbs.	Missed bund and made no breach.
	No.37 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Security Patrol	'Iraqi Lines Habbaniya.	Wellington.	1	1		
6/5.	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya	Bombing & machine gunning.	'Iraqi troops & M.T. at Sin El Diban and on road from Fallujah to Sin El Dhibban.	Audax. Oxford. Gordon.	139	39	9 tons	A mixed column on road between Fallujah and Sin El Dhibban was bombed & destroyed.
		Fighter patrols.		Gladiator.				
	No.203 Sqdn. Detch. Habbaniya	Low flying attacks.	(i) dispersed A/C Rashid. (ii) M.T. column East of Fallujah.	Blenheim IV(F)	4	4		2 S.79's 1 Gladiator damaged.
	No.37 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Security Patrol (night 5/6 May)	'Iraqi lines near Habbaniya.	Wellington.	7	6	1,760 lbs.	
		Level bombing.	Rashid Aerodrome buildings.				7½ tons.	1 E.A. destroyed, 6 damaged on ground. 1 hangar destroyed.
	No.70 Sqdn. Dtcht. Shaibah.	Level bombing	Washash Barracks & magazine.	Wellington.	5	5	6 tons	

Date	Unit	Type of Operation	Objectives or Area.	Type of Aircraft used.	No. of sorties.	No. of A/C involved.	Weight of bombs dropped	Remarks
7/5/41	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing & machine gunning	'Iraqi Forces in Fallujah Area.	Oxford. Audax.	63	29	2 tons (approx.)	2 forced landed E.A. found and destroyed by fire. 3 interceptions of E.A. 1 E.A. shot down unconfirmed. 3 E.A. set on fire others damaged.
		Recco. Fighter patrols.		Audax. Gladiator.				
		Low flying attack	Dispersed A/C on Baquba L.G.	Audax.				
	203 Sqdn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Recco.	'Iraqi landing grounds Baquba, Shahraban, Rashid.		12	3		1 E.A. (Audax) shot over Habbaniya. 2 E.A. set on fire, others damaged.
		Fighter patrols		Blenheim IV (F)				
		Low flying attack	Dispersed A/C on Baquba L.G.					
	37 Sqdn. Dtcht. Shaibah	Level bombing	Baghdad Airport buildings and dispersed A/C on Rashid aerodrome.	Wellington	3	3	3½ tons	27,000 leaflets dropped on Baghdad
8/5/41	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya	Offensive recco. Photographic recco. Night patrols.	Enemy troops, guns etc. on Fallujah and Ramadi Areas	Oxford, Audax Gordon. Gladiator.	47.	22	½ ton	
	203 Sqdn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Low flying attack.	Dispersed A/C on Shahraban L.G.	Blenheim IV(F)	4	4		All A/C on L.G. set on fire 9 biplanes
		Fighter Patrol.		do.				
	37 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Night bombing	Hangars & buildings. Rashid aerodrome.		5	5	3½ tons.	Many near misses. 18,000 leaflets dropped on Baghdad
		Level day bombing	Dispersed A/C at Shahraban, Baquba.	Wellington.				
	70 Sqdn. Dtcht. Shaibah.	Level day bombing	Rashid hangars & buildings	Wellington	3	3	3 tons.	Several direct hits on buildings.
9/5/41	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya.	Offensive recco. Fighter escorts and patrols.	Rashid Aerodrome.	Audax. Oxford.	53	21		1 S.79 hit by bombs on Rashid Aerodrome.
		Tactical recces. Night recco patrols.	Fallujah, Ramadi Mujarah, Musaiyib.	Gladiator.				
	203 Sqdn. Dtcht. Habbaniya.	Tactical recces.	Fallujah Baghdad road	Blenheim IV(F)	4	4		3 E.A. (Audax) damaged. 1 Blenheim shot down.
		Low flying attack	Dispersed A/C on Mosul landing ground.					
	94 Sqdn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Standing fighter patrols. Local recco.		Gladiator.	5	5		No interceptions.
	70 Sqdn.Dtcht. Shaibah.	Night bombing. Level bombing.	Buildings Rashid. Barracks Qaraghan.	Wellington.	5	5	3 tons.	

Date	Unit	Type of Operation	Objectives or area.	Type of A/C used.	Sorties.	No. of aircraft.	Wt. of bombs dropped	Remarks.
10/5/41.	No.4 SFTS Habbaniya.	Tactical recce.	Habbaniya, Fallujah Ramadi, Musaiyib, Mujara, Baghdad Areas.	Oxford. Audax. Gladiator.	26	16		
	203 Sqn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Photo. recce.	Baquba, Khanqin, Quarachan, Shahraban.	Blenheim IV(F)	1	1		
	94 Sqn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Tactical recce. Standing fighter patrol.	Baghdad Area.	Gladiator.	12	6		
	37 Sqn. Dtcht. Shaibah	Level day bomb- ing. do.	Mosul military barracks. Kirkuk Barracks & Hangar.	Wellington.	6	6	5 tons 3 tons.	
11/5/41.	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing	Petrol Dump Rashid. Barracks Washas, Musaiyib. Ferry at Ramadi.	Oxford. Audax. Gordon.			3½ tons.	
		Night recce. patrols.		Audax.	49	31		
		Tactical recce.	Baghdad, Fallujah, Ramadi Area and Mujara, Kerbala, Rashid.	Gladiator. Audax.				
	203 Sqn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Bombing	Washash & Musaiyib Barracks.	Blenheim IV(F)	4	2	32 lb. bombs	
	94 Sqn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Escort to bombers. Recce.	Rashid & Musaiyib. Baghdad Area.	Gladiator.	8	5		
12/5/41.	No.4 SFTS Habbaniya.	Bombing.	Petrol Dump Rashid. Ramadi Ferry. Enemy M.T.	Audax Oxford. Gordon.			2½ tons.	
		Local recce.		Gladiator.				
		Distant recce. (1 sortie).	L.G's K2 & Qaiyara.	Blenheim I.	49	32		
		Night recce. (2 sorties).		Audax.				
	203 Sqn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Reconnaissance.	L.G's at Rashid. Baquba, Shahraban, Qaraghan, Khanqin, Qaiyara, Mosul, Tel Kotehek, Ain Zala, Al Badi, H.2. H.1. T.1, K.3.	Blenheim IV(F)	3	2		
	94 Sqn. Dtcht. Habbaniya	Standing fighter patrols. Local recce. Escort for bombers.	Baghdad Area. Rashid.	Gladiator.	10	6		

Date	Unit	Type of Operation	Objectives or area.	Type of A/C used.	Sorties.	No. of aircraft.	Wt. of bombs dropped	Remarks.
13/5/41.	No.4 SPTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing	Petrol Dump Rashid. SAA Factory Musaiyib Vehicles At K.3.	Oxford. Audax.	48	29	2½ tons	1 Audax missing.
		Reconnaissance.	Baghdad, Ramadi. Fallujah & Mujara Kerbala Musaiyib Areas.	Audax Gladiator.				
		Night patrols.	Habbaniya Area.	Audax				
	203 Sqdn. Detach. Habbaniya	Reconnaissance.	Shahraban L.C. Mosul aerodrome.	Blenheim IV(F)	2	2		Aircraft intercepted at Mosul by Me.110 but not hit.
	94 Sqdn. Detach. Habbaniya	Standing fighter patrols. Local recce. Escort to bombers.	Baghdad Area K.3.	Gladiator.	9	5		
	Communication Flt. Habbaniya	Night bombing	Aerodrome buildings Rashid.	Valentia.	2	2	1½ tons.	
	84 Sqdn. Habbaniya	Bombing *	Railway line at Tel Kotehek, Tel Awaina	Blenheim IV (B))	1	2		1 A/C bombed and hit railway. 1 A/C unable to locate railway.
14/5/41.	No.4 SPTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing	Hangars Rashid. M.T. Fallujah plain and Mukhaib.	Audax. Gladiator. Blenheim I.	42	32	¾ ton.	
		Recce.	Ramadi, Fallujah, Baghdad & Kerbala Musaiyib, Mujara Areas.	Audax Gladiator				
		Night patrols	Baghdad Habbaniya Area.	Audax				
	203 Sqdn. Detach. Habbaniya	Night recce.	Tel Kotehek.	Blenheim IV(F)	1	1		Aircraft unable to locate Mosul.
	94 Sqdn. Detach. Habbaniya	Standing fighter patrol Local recce. Escort to bombers.	Habbaniya Baghdad Area. Rashid.	Gladiator.	10	6		
	84 Sqdn. Detach. Habbaniya	Bombing	Railway Line Mosul station sidings.	Blenheim IV(B)	2	2		2 aircraft bombed and hit railway, buildings and sidings.
	Comm. Flt. Habbaniya.	Night bombing	Aerodrome buildings Mosul.	Valentia.	2	2	1½ tons	

(\* See 84 Sqdn. O.R.B. and bombing reports)

Date	Unit	Type of Operations.	Objectives or area	Type of A/C used.	Sorties.	No. of aircraft	Weight of bombs dropped	Remarks.
15/5/41.	No.4 SPTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing	Hangars Rashid. M.T. near Ramadi. Barges near Ramadi.	Oxford. Audax.	52	30	Over 1 ton.	
		Night recce.	Ramadi, Fallujah Baghdad Area.	Audax.				
		Day recce.	do.	Oxford. Audax. Gordon.				
	203 Sqn. Detach. Habbaniya	Offensive recce.	Enemy A/C Ain Zala Uqlat, Tel Kotoek, Erbil, Tel Sirwal K.3.	Blenheim IV(B)	4	3		6 camouflaged monoplanes Erbil - 2 damaged.
	94 Sqn. Detach. Habbaniya.	Standing fighter patrol Local recce.	Baghdad Area.	Gladiator.	8	4		
	84 Sqn. Detach. Habbaniya	Bombing.	Railway cutting Mosul.	Blenheim IV(B)	4	4	3,000 lbs.	2 A/C bombed railway line.
		Recce.	L.G's at Baquba, Shahraban, Qaraghan.					A/C failed to find landing grounds.
	Comm.Flt. Habbaniya	Night bomb- ing	Hangars Rashid.	Valentia.	2	2	1½ tons.	
16/5/41.	No.4 SPTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing & machine gunning	M.T. convoy N. of Ramadi.	Audax.	31	20		One Audax on tent shot down over Plateau by Me.110.
		Recce.(night)	Ramadi Fallujah Baghdad Area.	Audax.				
		Recce. (day)	do.	Oxford. Audax. Gladiator.				
	203 Sqn. Detach. Habbaniya	Offensive recce.	Mosul.	Blenheim IV(B)	1	1		6 Me.110, 4 Me. 109, 1 He III seen on ground, 1 Me. 110 in air did not inter- cept. 1 He. III set on fire, one other E.A. dam- aged by bombs.
	94 Sqn. Detach. Habbaniya	Standing Fighter Patrols. Interception Flights.		Gladiator	10	5		1 Gladiator on patrol inter- cepted formation of 3 He.III. One He.III damaged. Gladiator shot down, pilot killed. 3 Gladiators took off and inter- cepted 2 He.III E.A. damaged.
	84 Sqn. Detach. Habbaniya	Bombing	Railway cutting 15 miles south Mosul.	Blenheim IV(B)	6	6		Railway line hit.

Date.	Unit.	Type of Operations.	Objectives or Areas.	Type of Aircraft Used.	Sorties.	No. of A/C.	Weight of bombs dropped.	Remarks.
17/5/41.	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya.	Reconnaissance.	Musaiyib, Hindiya Ramadi. Fallujah Baghdad Area.	Audax. Oxford. Gladiator. Blenheim I.	17	10		Leaflets dropped on Musaiyib, Fallujah & Ramadi.
	No.203 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Standing fighter patrol. Low flying attack.	Habbaniya. Enemy A/C Mosul.	Blenheim IV(F)	3	3		1 B.A. set on fire 4 others damaged.
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Standing fighter patrol. Local recon.	Habbaniya. Habbaniya Baghdad Area.	Gladiator.	10	3		2 Gladiators on recon. over Rashid met two Me.110's and shot both down.
	No.84 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Bombing.	Airodrome buildings Mosul. Airodrome buildings Rashid.	Blenheim IV(B)	8	8		1 aircraft failed to locate object- ive.
18/5/41.	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya.	Reconnaissance.	Ramadi Fallujah Baghdad Areas. Musaiyib Majara.	Audax Gladiator.	12	10		
(See O.R.B. of 203 Sqn.)	No.203 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	do.	Baghdad Area	Blenheim IV(F)		1		1 Me.110 shot up on ground east of Baghdad.
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Standing Fighter Patrols. Recon.	Habbaniya Hit K.3.	Gladiator.	14	7		1 Me. 110 found on ground East of Baghdad and shot up. Target missed.
	No.84 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Bombing	Petrol stores - Cassels Post.	Blenheim IV(B)	2	2		
	Comm Flt. Habbaniya	Night Bombing	Hangars Rashid.	Valentia.	2	2	1 1/2 tons	Reconnaissance flares dropped over Baghdad.
19/5/41.	No.4 SFTS Habbaniya.	Bombing.	'Iraqi Forces in Fallujah.	Gordon. Audax Oxford.			9 tons.	
		Standing Fighter Patrol	Habbaniya.	Gladiator.				
		Road Recon.	Fallujah Baghdad Road.	Gladiator.	134	50		
		Tele.wire cutting.	All telephone lines leaving Fallujah.	Audax				A/C landed on Fallujah Plain and pilot cut down poles with hatchet.
		Tactical recon.	Fallujah Area.	Audax				Other lines cut with message from of a/c
	No.203 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Low flying attack.	Forced landed Me. 110-3 miles East of Rashid.	Blenheim IV(F)	5	3		
		Escort for bombers.	Fallujah.					
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Escort for bombers. Standing patrols	Fallujah. Habbaniya	Gladiator	10	5		

Date.	Unit.	Type of Operation.	Objectives or Areas.	Type of A/C Used.	Sorties.	No. of A/C.	Weight of bombs dropped.	Remarks.
19/5/41.	No.84 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya.	Bombing.	'Iraqi Forces in Fallujah.	Blenheim IV(B)	7	10	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ tons.	
	Comm. Flt. Habbaniya	Troop Carrying	Position covering N.E. exit from Fallujah	Valentia.	2	2		Approximately 100 troops with machine guns landed behind 'Iraqi positions.
	No.216 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Troop carrying	do.	Bombay	4	4		
20/5/41.	No.4 SFTS Habbaniya.	Bombing.	Hangars Rashid	Audax. Oxford Gordon	48	83	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tons.	A.A. posts silenced with M.G. fire.
		Fighter escort to bombers.	Rashid.	Gladiators.				
		Standing patrols & interception patrols.	Habbaniya.	Gladiator.				
		Demonstration	Ramadi.	Oxford.				
		Low flying attack.	'Iraqi M.T. col. on Fallujah Plain.	Audax.				
		Rece.	Habbaniya Ramadi Area & road from Fallujah to Bagdad.	Gladiator. Audax.				
	No.203 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Offensive Patrol.	Rashid.	Blenheim IV(B)	2	2		A.A. posts silenced with M.G. fire.
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Fighter escort to bombers.	Rashid.	Hurricane. Gladiator.	6	12	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tons.	1 Gladiator attacked by 5 Me.110's 3 Gladiators drove off 1 Me. 110 from Fallujah. 1 Me.110 & 3 Me. 111 intercepted & damaged.
		Standing patrols	Habbaniya & Fallujah Area.	Gladiator.				
		Fighter escort to Valentias.	Fallujah.	Gladiator.				
		Interception Flights.	Habbaniya Area.	Hurricanes				
	No.84 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Bombing.	Hangars Rashid	Blenheim IV(B)	6	12	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tons.	Hangars of Air Storage Unit (Hart) destroyed by 1 M.E.110 & 5 aircraft destroyed.
		Demonstration.	Ramadi.					
	Comm. Flt. Habbaniya	Transport of Supplies.	Troops on Falluja Plain.	Valentia.	1	1		

Date	Unit	Type of Operation.	Objectives or Area.	Type of A/C used.	Sorties..	No. of a/c.	Wt. of bombs dropped.	Remarks.
21/5/41.	No.4 SPTS. Habbaniya.	Recce.	Ramadi & Baghdad Areas. Mujara.	Oxford. Audax.	10	7		No interceptions.
		Interception Flights.	Habbaniya.	Gladiator.				
	No.203 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Photographic recce.	L.O's at Mosul, Tel Ketchen, Uqlat, Ain Zala, Qaiyara, & K.2.	Blenheim IV(F)	1	1		
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Standing patrols & interception flights.	Habbaniya	Gladiator. Hurricane.	9	6		
		Recce.	Fallujah Baghdad Road.	Gladiator				
22/5/41.	No.4 SPTS. Habbaniya	Bombing	Petrol store, Cassels Audax Post. 'Iraqi troops & M.T. in Fallujah Area.	Audax & Blenheim I	58	26	4 1/2 tons.	1,000,000 gallons of 'Iraqi petrol destroyed.
		Recce.	Baghdad Ramadi & Mujara Areas.	Gladiator & Audax				
	No.203 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Photographic recce.	Cassels Post. 'Iraqi Column SE of Fallujah.	Blenheim IV (F)	2	2		
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Standing patrols & interception Flts.	Habbaniya.	Gladiator. Hurricane.	15	8		2 B.L. destroyed. 1 Hurricane shot down.
		Escort to bombers.	Cassels Post.	Gladiator. Hurricane.				
		Low flying attack.	Dispersed a/c Mosul.	Hurricane.				
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Bombing.	Petrol store at Cassels Post.	Blenheim IV (B)	2	2		
23/5/41.	No.4 SPTS. Habbaniya	Standing Patrols.	Habbaniya.	Gladiator.	5	4		
		Reconnaissance	Fallujah Area.	Gladiator.				
		Bombing.	Khan Nuqta Police Post.	Blenheim I.				
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Standing Patrols. Interception Flts.	Habbaniya.	Hurricane. Gladiator.	14	6		
		Reconnaissance.	Baghdad & Ramadi Area.	Hurricane. Gladiator.				
	No.84 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Photographic recce.	Mosul & Northern L.G's Rashid, Baquba, Shahraban, Diwaniya. Also Cassels Post.	Blenheim IV(F)	6	5		Only 1 aircraft completed recce. the remainder returned to base with various troubles.

Date	Unit	Type of Operation.	Objectives or Area.	Type of A/C used.	Sorties	No. of A/C.	Wt. of bombs dropped.	Remarks.
24/8/41.	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya	Standing Patrols.	Habbaniya Area.	Gladiator	7	7		
		Reconnaissance	Baghdad Area.	Gladiator.				
		Photographic recce.	Fallujah Baghdad Area.	Oxford Blenheim I.				
	No.203 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Pamphlet dropping	Baghdad & South Euphrates Area.	Blenheim IV(F)	1	1	1 Gladiator forced landed p.m.23/5 but pilot walked through enemy lines to Fallujah.	
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Reconnaissance. Interception Flights.	Baghdad & Fallujah Plain. Habbaniya Area.	Gladiator. Hurricane.	8	6		
	No.84 Sqn. Habbaniya	Pamphlet dropping.	Baquba, Diwaniya.	Blenheim IV(B)	1	1		
25/5/41.	No.4 SFTS. Habbaniya	Bombing.	Military objectives Ramadi.	Audax. Oxford.	82	34	8 tons	
		Fighter escort to bombers.	Ramadi.	Gladiator.				
		Reconnaissance.	Fallujah Plain.	Gladiator.				
	No.203 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Photographic recce.	Railway Bridge in Tel Awainat Area.	Blenheim IV(F)	1	1	4 E.A. on ground Mosul attacked with H.G. 2 E.A. on ground Baquba set on fire.	
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Standing Patrols. Interception Flts.	Habbaniya Area.	Gladiator. Hurricane.	14	12		
		Reconnaissance & Offensive Patrol	Baghdad Area, Balad, Samarra, Mosul, Ramadi.	Hurricane. Gladiator.				
		Escort to bombers	Ramadi	Gladiator				
	No.84 Sqn. Habbaniya	Pamphlet dropping.	16 large towns	Blenheim IV(B)	9	6		1 a/c returned to base with engine trouble.
		Bombing	Hangars & a/c Mosul.					
	26/5/41.	No.4 SFTS Habbaniya	Reconnaissance.	Baghdad & Ramadi Area.	Gladiator.	24	17	
Pamphlet Dropping.			Ramadi.	Audax				
No.203 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya		Low flying attacks	Dispersed a/c Kirkuk.	Blenheim IV(F)	1	1	No. E.A. seen at target.	
No.84 Sqn. Habbaniya.		Bombing.	Hangars & A/C Mosul.	Blenheim IV(B)	8	8		
		Low flying attack.	A/C on Erbil L.G.	Blenheim IV(F)				
		Offensive recce.	E.3, T.1, H.1.	Blenheim IV(B)				

Date	Unit.	Type of Operation	Objectives or Area.	Type of A/C used.	Sorties.	No. of A/C.	Wt. of bombs dropped.	Remarks.
26/5/41.	No. 94 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya.	Standing patrols & Interception Flts.	Habbaniya Area	Hurricane. Gladiator.	}	8	7	
		Reconnaissance.	Baquba, Rashid. Shahraban.	Hurricane.				
		Low flying attack.	Forced landed No. III at Balad	Gladiator.				
27/5/41.	No. 4 SFTS Habbaniya	Bombing	Ramadi.	Audax. Oxford.	6	6	(not known.	
	No. 4 SFTS Habbaniya.	Standing Patrol		Gladiator	}	4	4	
		Reconnaissance.	Baghdad Area.	Audax Blenheim I.				
	No. 203 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Reconnaissance.	Petrol Store - Suleiman Pan.	Blenheim IV(F)	}	2	2	
		Message dropping.	Razaza					
	No. 94 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Standing Patrols.	Habbaniya.	Hurricane.	}	8	4	
		Reconnaissance.	Baghdad Area	Gladiator.				
	No. 84 Sqn. Habbaniya	Bombing	Kirkuk Aero- drome.	Blenheim IV(B)	}	5	5	Do. 17 shot up Had Jugo-Slav markings.
		Photographic recce.	Baquba. Shahraban.					
		Low flying attack.	Forced landed Do. 17 at K. 2.	Blenheim (F)				
28/5/41.	No. 4 SFTS. Habbaniya.	Bombing.	Iraqi troops of Ramadi, SE of Fallujah and on Fallujah Plain.	Audax.	}	28	18	
		Reconnaissance.	do.	Gladiator.				
		Escort for recce. and bomber a/c.	do.	Gladiator.				
	No. 203 Sqn. (Detach). Habbaniya	Reconnaissance.	Baquba, Kirkuk Chemchemal.	Blenheim IV(F)	1	1		1 Breda, 1 Northrop shot up at Baquba. 1 bomb fell near Me. 110 at Kirkuk. 1 Me. 109 intercepted but did not press attack.
	No. 94 Sqn. Habbaniya Comm Flt. Habbaniya	Reconnaissance.	Baghdad Area	Gladiator.	1	1		
		Pamphlet dropping.	Baghdad Area.	Valentia.	1	1		

Date.	Unit.	Type of Operation.	Objectives or Area.	Type of A/C used.	Sorties.	No. of A/C	Wt. of bombs dropped.	Remarks.
29/5/41.	No.4 SPTS Habbaniya.	Bombing.	'Iraqi troops in areas. (i) Abu Gharaib Regulator. (ii) Experimental Farm between Khan Muqta and Baghdad. (iii) Khadimain Fly.Stn.	Audax.				
		Pamphlet dropping	Washash, Rashid. Hills. Rahaliya.	Blenheim I	20	15		
		Close recce.	In front of our troops on Fallujah Baghdad road and in Khadimain vicinity.	Audax				1 Audax forced landed in order to forestall attack by C.R. 42's
		Protection of recce. and bomber a/c.		Gladiator				1 Gladiator attacked by 3 C.R. 42's.
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Escort to bombers.	Khadimain & Khan Muqta.	Gladiator.				1 Gladiator met 2 CR 42 shot down 1 (pilot captured) and drove off other.
		Reconnaissance.	Area N.W. of Ramadi.	Hurricane.	4	4		
	No.84 Sqn. Habbaniya	Bombing.	'Iraqi troops near Abu Gharaib Regulator.	Blenheim IV(B)				Our troops bombed in error.
		Reconnaissance.	Abu Gharaib Regulator. Kerbala, Ramadi.	Blenheim IV(B)	12	12		
		Low flying attack.	Dispersed a/c at Baquba.	Blenheim IV(F)				
	Comm.Flt..	Pamphlet dropping.	Baghdad & 9 other towns.	Valentia.	1	1		
30/5/41.	No.4 SPTS Habbaniya	Bombing	(i) 'Iraqi troops and guns in Khadimain Area (ii) Washash Barracks Baghdad.	Audax. Oxford. Blenheim I.	71	34	3 tons	
		Reconnaissance.	Baghdad & Khadimain Area.	Audax. Gladiator.				
		Escorts to bombing and recce. a/c.		Gladiator				
	No.94 Sqn. (Detach) Habbaniya	Reconnaissance.	Baquba landing ground	Hurricane				
		Escort to bombing and recce. a/c		Hurricane Gladiator.	9	6		
		Offensive patrol	Rashid.	Hurricane.				
	No.84 Sqn. Habbaniya	Bombing.	(i) 'Iraqi troops N. of Khadimain. (ii) Rashid camp.	Blenheim IV(B)			5 tons.	
		Reconnaissance.	(i) Ramadi, Hit, Musaiyib Mujara. (ii) Mosul.		19	12		1 Blenheim failed to return. Search unsuccessful.
		Pamphlet dropping.	Baghdad, Hills, Ramadi.	Blenheim IV(B)				

SUMMARY OF AIR ATTACKS ON HABBANIYA

Month of May	Time LST	No. & Type of Aircraft	Height	Type of Attack	Damage Inflicted	Enemy Aircraft casualties	R.A.F. Combat casualties
2nd	a.m. p.m.	'Iraqi Northrops	500'	Bombing & machine gunning	Slight structural damage to buildings. 1 Gordon destroyed.	Nil	Nil
3rd	1400	2 'Iraqi Savoias	7,000'	Medium level bombing.	Negligible damage.	1 aircraft intercepted by Gladiator and shot down (unconfirmed)	Nil
4th	-	3 'Iraqi Northrops	-	Low level bombing.	Damage slight.	Nil	Nil
6th	-	'Iraqi Audax and Northrops	-	Low level bombing.	1 Oxford. 2 Gladiators and 1 Audax destroyed on ground.	Nil	Nil
7th	1200	2 'Iraqi Audax	-	Low level bombing.	Negligible damage.	1 Audax shot down.	Nil
16th	0920	3 He.IIIK	7,000'	Medium level bombing.	Direct hit on "F" Group Aircraft Depot, near miss 'Y' Group. Direct hit E.R.S. Workshop. 27 engines destroyed. Some casualties.	1 He.IIIK broke off from formation with petrol streaming from it after interception by Gladiator.	1 Gladiator shot down, pilot killed.
20th	0915	1 He.IIIK	12,000'	High level bombing	Negligible damage	Nil	Nil
	1715	3 He.IIIK	9,000'	Medium level bombing	1 A.S.U. Hangar destroyed 1 Wellesley, 2 Harts, 1 Blenheim IV, 1 Moth in hangar destroyed. Structural damage other buildings.	3 He.IIIK believed damaged after interception by Hurricane.	

Month of May	Time LST	No. & Type of Aircraft	Height	Type of Attack	Damage Inflicted	Enemy Aircraft casualties	R.A.F. Combat casualties
20th	1735	3 Me.110	100'	Low flying machine gun attack.	Damage negligible	Nil	Nil
21st	1550	2 Me.110	100'	Low flying machine gun attack.	No damage.	Nil	Nil
22nd	0555	1 He.IIIK	7,000'	Medium level Bombing	Direct hit on No. 4 S.F.T.S. Sergeants' Mess and on Sgts' Quarters in Aircraft Depot. Supplies Depot H.Q. wrecked and Laboratory burnt out. Direct hit Barrack Block A/C Depot, and NAAFI Aircraft Depot. Some structural damage by near miss. Some casualties.	Nil	Nil
	0610	1 He.IIIK	9,000'	Medium level Bombing		Nil	Nil
	1710	1 He.IIIK	10/ 12,000'	High level Bombing	Damage negligible	Nil	Nil
	1710	2 Me.110	10/ 12,000'	High level Bombing	Damage negligible	Nil	Nil
24th	0845	2 Me.110	100'	Low flying machine gun attack	Hospital Emergency Operating Theatre slightly damaged by cannon shell.	Nil	Nil
	1645	2 Me.110	500'	-do-	Damage negligible	Nil	Nil
25th	1105	2 He.IIIK	8/9000'	Medium level Bombing	Direct hit on A.R.S. Main hangar, damage to floor.	Nil	Nil

Month of May	Time LST	No. & Type of Aircraft	Height	Type of Attack	Damage Inflicted	Enemy Aircraft casualties	R.A.F. Combat casualties
25th (Cont.)	1105				Direct hit on road causing damage to water main and sewage pipe.		
	1115	3 Me.110	100'	Low flying machine gun attack.	Damage negligible.	Nil	Nil
26th	0630	1 He.IIIK	-	Bombing attack	Slight structural damage.	Nil	Nil

Transcribed from Appendix "B" to A-V-M D'Albiac's Report "Ops. in 'Iraq: 2 - 31 May 1941" (A.H.B. II J3/3)

TOTAL R.A.F. CASUALTIES SUSTAINED  
THROUGHOUT THE OPERATIONS

KILLED IN AIR OPERATIONS	18
WOUNDED IN AIR OPERATIONS	15

KILLED AS RESULT OF ENEMY AIR ATTACK AND SHELL FIRE	16
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WOUNDED AS RESULT OF ENEMY AIR ATTACK AND SHELL FIRE	39
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KILLED IN LAND OPERATIONS	-
WOUNDED IN LAND OPERATIONS	10

TOTAL KILLED	34
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TOTAL WOUNDED	64
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Transcribed from Appendix "B" to A-V-M D'Albiac's Report  
"Ops. in 'Iraq: 2 - 31 May 1941" (A.H.B. II J3/3).

APPENDIX "K"

(Translation)

By: The "Führer" and Commander-in-Chief  
of the Armed Forces.

Field Headquarters  
23.5.41

OKW/WFSt/Abt I.(1 Op) No. 44772/41g Chefs

Twenty-two copies:  
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Restricted to  
Higher Command: by  
officer's hand only.

DIRECTIVE NO. 30

Middle East

1. The Arab Freedom Movement is, in the Middle East, our natural ally against England. In this connection, the raising of rebellion in Iraq is of special importance. Such rebellion will extend across the Iraq frontiers to strengthen the forces which are hostile to England in the Middle East, interrupt the British lines of communication, and tie down both English troops and English shipping space at the expense of other theatres of war.

For these reasons I have decided to push the development of operations in the Middle East through the medium of going to the support of Iraq.

Whether and in what way it may later be possible to wreck finally the English position between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, in conjunction with an offensive against the Suez Canal, is still in the lap of the Gods.

2. As a synopsis of other and detailed decrees, I now order for the support of Iraq: the despatch of a military mission, assistance by the German Air Force, and the delivery of weapons.

3. The Military Mission (code name: Special Staff F) is under Air General Felmy. Its tasks are:-

- (a) to advise and support the Iraq armed forces;
- (b) to restore as far as possible military communications with forces hostile to England, both inside and outside Iraq;
- (c) To secure for the German armed forces first-hand knowledge and records of this area.

The Chief of the German Armed Forces High Command will regulate the combination of these tasks. For the measures of support envisaged:-

- (a) the Head of the Military Mission will control all personnel of the German armed forces sent to Iraq and, in addition, the German liaison detachment in Syria;
- (b) the Head of the Military Mission is under the Chief of the German Armed Forces High Command, with the proviso that any orders and policy for the air units will come solely from the Commander-in-Chief of the German Air Force;

/ (c)

- (c) the Head of the Military Mission will deal only with the military authorities in Iraq. Communication with the Iraq Government concerning the affairs of the Mission will be undertaken by the representative of the German Foreign Office. With regard to military arrangements, which may have repercussion on foreign policy, the Head of the Military Mission must establish in advance an understanding with the representative in Iraq of the German Foreign Office;
- (d) the members of the Military Mission will rank for the time being as volunteers (a sort of Condor Legion). They will wear tropical uniform with Iraq badges; the latter are also to be displayed on German aircraft.

#### 4. Air Force

Taking into consideration the numerical limitation on the employment of the German Air Force, the aim must be, over and above pure technical efficiency, to strengthen the self-confidence and will to resist of the Iraq armed forces and civil population. The method and extent of German intervention will be in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief of the German Air Force.

#### 5. Delivery of weapons

The necessary arrangements (deliveries from Syria, on the basis of agreement to this end reached with the French, and from Germany, are the responsibility of the Chief of the German Armed Forces High Command.

6. The control of propaganda in the Middle East is the task of the German Foreign Office, which in this sphere will work in co-operation with Section WFSt/WPr of the Armed Forces High Command.

The fundamental thought behind all propaganda must be:

"An Axis victory will bring to the countries of the Middle East emancipation from the English yoke and, with this, the right of self-determination. Whoever loves freedom, let him march in the vanguard against England."

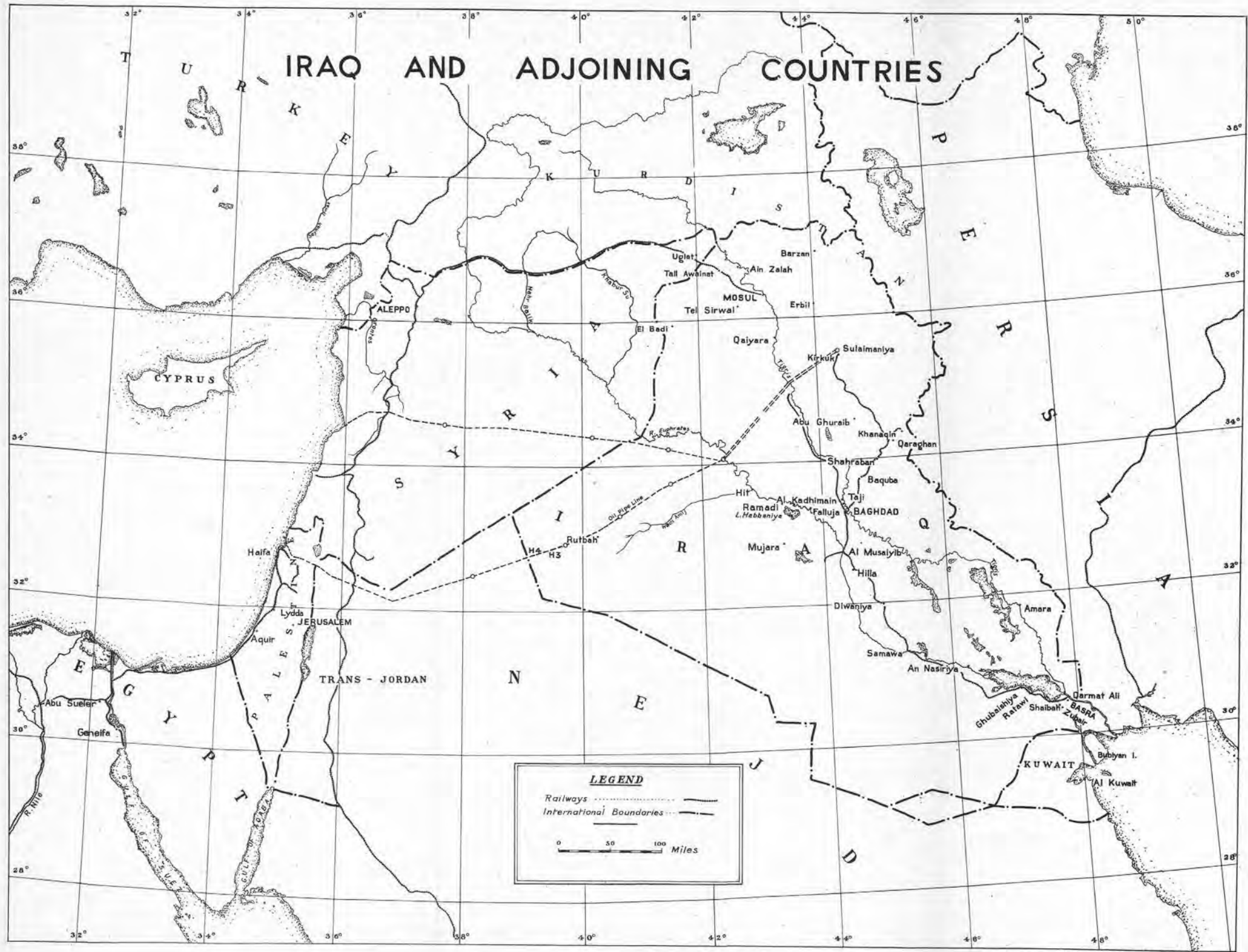
Propaganda against the French position in Syria must, at the same time, be discontinued.

7. In so far as the utilization of Italian military personnel in Iraq is concerned, it is the policy to co-operate with them in the light of the foregoing Directive. An effort will be made to secure their subordination to the Head of the German Military Mission.

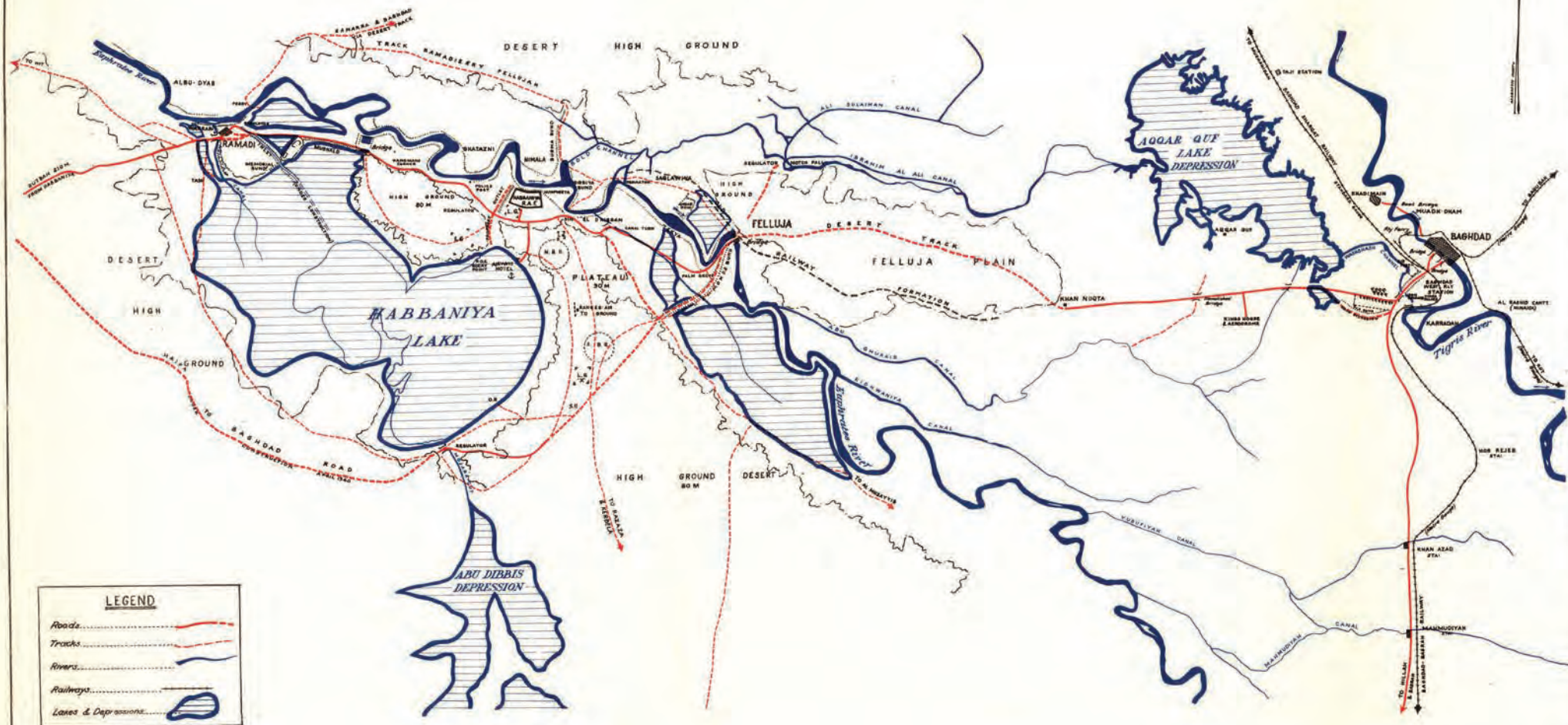
(Signed)                      Hitler    C. & S.C.

M A P S

# IRAQ AND ADJOINING COUNTRIES



# ROAD FROM RAMADI TO BAGHDAD. SKETCH MAP



[illegible]

5

# THE ATTACK ON FELLUJA

