

A.H.B., WHITEHALL
No 611

REPORT ON THE EVACUATION OF THE

ROYAL AIR FORCE

FROM

P A L E S T I N E

BY

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AIR OFFICER COMMANDING,

L E V A N T.

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

1. The major events leading up to and governing the evacuation of Palestine were the issue of the U.N.S.C.O.P. Report, recommending the Partition of Palestine, on 1st September, 1947, the statement of the British Colonial Secretary before U.N.O. on 26th September, 1947, and an amplifying statement by Sir Alexander Cadogan, on 13th November, to the effect that Britain intended to evacuate Palestine by 1st August, 1948. In those statements it was made clear that British support to any U.N.O. plan was conditional on acceptance of the plan by Arabs and Jews, and that we would not implement any policy by force of arms. It was also stated that, in the opinion of the British Government, any U.N.O. decision must be accompanied by a clear ruling as to how it should be carried out. Britain reserved the right to terminate Civil Administration prior to the evacuation date, if no acceptable settlement was reached, and gave a warning that Britain would not be responsible for law and order after the withdrawal of the Administration, and even before that withdrawal in areas in which it might be impracticable to maintain order.

2. The High Commissioner met the Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East in JERUSALEM on 14th November to prepare an outline plan for the evacuation. The Service Commanders in PALESTINE also attended the meeting.

3. Factors which governed planning were the fact that the Civil Administration could not control the country as a whole from any centre except Jerusalem, where the whole machinery of government, telephones, etc. were concentrated; in the absence of a U.N.O. Commission to take over responsibility for Government, and with sufficient force at its disposal, the British Administration would have to withdraw ahead of the Services, since no Government could function without backing. The High Commissioner stressed the importance of remaining in Jerusalem and maintaining Civil Government up to the last possible moment, to give U.N.O. as much time as possible to reach a solution acceptable to the inhabitants of Palestine, and in the hope that some special arrangement could be made for the safety of the Holy Places in JERUSALEM. The limited capacity of the routes out of Palestine, and the economic importance of giving precedence to the movement of citrus fruit on the railway, and through the Port of HAIFA for some months, complicated the problem of withdrawing the vast bulk of equipment within the time allowed. The certainty of civil disturbances, and the probability of fighting, at least between Arabs and Jews, necessitated planning the evacuation as a tactical operation.

4. The problem was :

- (a) The evacuation of about 70,000 Army and R.A.F. with their equipment and vehicles.
- (b) The evacuation of essential R.N., Army and R.A.F. stores and machinery, amounting to an estimate of 250,000 tons.
- (c) The disposal in PALESTINE of an estimated total of 100,000 tons of surplus stores and 8,000 vehicles.
- (d) The disposal of fixed assets, and the return of hirings, a total of 208 camps and 1,133 hirings.

Later, the commitment

Later, the commitment of evacuating our 1,000 civilians and their families and 6,000 British Police was added. The R.A.F. share of these figures was 3,700 men, 25,000 tons of equipment and machinery, and 1,640 vehicles.

5. The plan agreed upon involved a withdrawal in three phases :

Phase 1: Withdrawal from the south, beginning in the middle of February.

Phase 2. Withdrawal from JERUSALEM, and thinning out from the northern frontier into the HAIFA and SARAFAND areas by 31st May.

Phase 3. Complete concentration in the HAIFA enclave by the end of June, and completely out of PALESTINE by 31st July.

6. On 29th November the General Assembly of U.N.O. voted in favour of the partition of PALESTINE, and on 11th December, 1947, Parliament approved the withdrawal of all our forces by 1st August, 1948, and the termination of the Mandate on 15th May, 1948.

CONDITIONS DURING THE EVACUATION.

7. In the event, the R.A.F. evacuation went smoothly, but the difficulties which beset Commanders and Staff cannot be understood without knowledge of some of the conditions under which planning and execution were carried out.

Command Set-Up.

8. PALESTINE was a joint command between Army and Air Force, although I had responsibilities outside that country which were not shared by the G.O.C., and the G.O.C. had an infinitely greater direct responsibility within PALESTINE than I had. I was directly responsible to the Air Commander-in-Chief, MED/M.E. for compliance with the accepted policy that air forces were not to be used offensively against Arabs or Jews, except in case of emergency, which was defined as including any occasion on which failure to use the air would lead to casualties, or increased casualties as the case might be, to British forces.

9. A feature of the evacuation was the excellent relations which existed between the G.O.C. and myself, and between our Staffs, and the ease with which inter-service plans were agreed upon and executed.

10. The Navy formed a third party in all operations relating to intercepting Jewish illegal immigrant shipping. The Commodore, PALESTINE, had his Headquarters in HAIFA, being represented by a Naval Liaison Officer at G.H.Q. In this sphere, also, inter-service co-operation was excellent.

11. The good relations which existed between the Services and the Civil Government, and the High Commissioner's sympathetic understanding of our problems, were material factors in the evacuation.

Political-cum-Military.

12. The British Government took the decision to evacuate at

a time when

a time when it was obvious that no solution, satisfactory to both Arabs and Jews, was likely to be found. For at least eighteen months previously militant Zionism had the bit between its teeth. Illegal organisations such as the I.Z.L., and the Stern Gang, had declared their intention of fighting the British with every means, legal or illegal, that they could find. These operations took the form of kidnappings, murderous attacks on individuals, (usually from behind), and carefully planned surprise sabotage operations wherever they had evidence of a weakness in defence, making full use of stolen military vehicles, British uniforms and forged or stolen papers. Whilst the Jewish Agency professed horror at those attacks, the Jews, as a whole, would not take any practical steps to curb their activities. No Jew would give the slightest assistance to Security Forces, or even own up to having seen a cold-blooded murder committed under their nose.

13. Once the Partition plan was put forward to U.N.O., the Arabs realised that they would have to fight for their independence and, in order to obtain vehicles, weapons, ammunition, etc. for that fight, they intensified their thieving activities, and their traditional skill and audacity in this direction was a constant menace to the safeguarding of Service equipment and, frequently, to the lives of Service personnel.

14. Both Jews and Arabs had excellent intelligence from Service establishments, because all Stations employed considerable numbers of Jews and Arabs. As an example, No. 120 Maintenance Unit at RAS EL AIN depended largely on Jews for the considerable amount of clerical work necessary for its operation, and there were large numbers of Arab labourers employed round this widely dispersed Station.

Internal Security.

15. The role of the Services in PALESTINE, and the fact that we never had an enemy in the open throughout the evacuation, forced the Services into a defensive role in Palestine. Every civilian encountered was a potential thief or murderer, and both Arabs and Jews could therefore choose the time and place of their attacks. Every vehicle on the road was a potential target, and, as time progressed, the Arabs became bolder, particularly in the matter of armed hold-ups, both on the open road and in the towns and, in certain cases, even within the perimeter of Stations. In the majority of cases the more ambitious attacks, aimed at destruction and murder, were carried out by Jews; but, in the majority of cases, during the evacuation itself, these attacks were directed against either Army or Police installations, whereas the R.A.F. had their share of the armed hold-ups and robberies, which were the main feature of Arab operations. A few examples are quoted as typical, but not as the outstanding events :

On the 6th April, 1948, Camp 80, an Anti-Tank Regiment camp near to R.A.F. EIN SHEMER, was attacked by Jews in Army and Police uniforms, and driving military vehicles. They got into the camp without being identified, murdered four guards and the Commanding Officer, and got away with considerable quantities of armament.

On another occasion, a lorry load of Guardsmen were surprised by a band of armed Arabs, and found themselves so well covered by automatic weapons that they lost all their arms and their vehicle.

Shortly before

Shortly before the final evacuation of JERUSALEM, a R.A.F. tender was returning from a church service in the Cathedral when it was stopped by armed Arabs in a part of the city where Service and Police vehicles were constantly passing. There was an Arab barrier which had been approved by the Municipality, although, on this occasion, it was occupied by unauthorised Arab irregulars. The driver and escort, on producing their identity papers, suddenly found themselves covered by automatic weapons, and were forced to get out of the vehicle. The vehicle was lost, and, possibly because the attackers were surprised to find an airman in the rear of the vehicle, they put a burst of automatic fire into the rear before driving off. The airman in the rear was seen to fall, but has never been heard of since, in spite of strenuous efforts to trace him, and is presumed to be killed.

A R.A.F. Regiment convoy of two vehicles, under an officer, got too close together on a winding and hilly road and were stopped by a barrier, were caught unprepared, and every man was covered by armed Arabs. The entire party lost their weapons, and one car was lost.

On 14th February, 1948, a R.A.F. Regiment vehicle passed a barrier apparently manned by Arab Supernumerary Police. Immediately it was clear, the Arabs opened fire on it and the driver was wounded twice. He succeeded in keeping his vehicle on the road, and got clear of the attack before his vehicle was stopped by loss of petrol through bullet holes.

A R.A.F. Armoured Car, fully immobilised, and parked in JERUSALEM in the Royal Warwick Regimental transport yard, which, in itself, was within a Zone, was stolen one night by a party of Jews speaking good English, dressed in Army uniforms, driving an Army vehicle, and supplied with apparently genuine 2 Brigade identifications and a work ticket instructing them to tow away this vehicle for repairs.

Losses of Rifles, etc.

16. The prices of rifles and all forms of firearms rose sharply, and, at one time, a rifle would bring a hundred and eight pounds. With this temptation, and the increasing audacity of thieves, it was necessary to take drastic action to ensure that men realised the seriousness of the loss of weapons. The normal Court Martial procedure was too cumbersome and, therefore, a Standing Field General Court Martial was instituted, and all convening orders and confirmation of sentences was done entirely in LEVANT wherever the case, in my judgment, did not present any legal complications on which advice was necessary.

Ground Defences.

17. R.A.F. Stations are seldom well designed for the type of ground defence necessitated by PALESTINE conditions, and most of our Stations were dispersed and difficult to defend. The basis of our ground defence was the R.A.F. Regiment, and this led to frequent complaints from senior Regimental officers that the

Regiment was spending

Regiment was spending far too much time on guard duties, and nothing like enough on training. I insisted, however, that the Regiment existed for the purpose of defending R.A.F. airfields. R.A.F. tradesmen were prohibited from doing more than one night in four on guard duties, in view of the fact that the manning situation did not allow of men having time off after guard. Even so, we were often hard pressed to maintain adequate defence organisations, and the Army were too heavily committed to give us any further assistance.

18. In an effort to build up the training of the Regiment, I had previously instituted a scheme of having two Stations (No. 120 Maintenance Unit and EIN SHEMER) each of which had two Rifle Squadrons of the Regiment. The object was that, at each Station, one Squadron spend one week on guard duties while the other Squadron was entirely under the Squadron Commander for training. Squadrons changed over duties each week. My remaining two Rifle Squadrons were stationed at KOLUNDIA and in JERUSALEM, respectively, where their duties made it impossible to do more than very limited training. To cover this, all six Rifle Squadrons changed station periodically so that each Squadron got a turn at training. Once the evacuation got under way we could not afford the transport or loss of working hours involved in moving units, so that even this training had to be sacrificed and, on certain occasions, (for example, at the peak of the evacuation of No. 120 Maintenance Unit) I gave orders that no man, whether in the Regiment or not, could be employed on training unless it was physically impossible to use him on evacuation duties.

19. Unfortunately, the manning position of the Regiment was so bad that, by the end of January, 1948, it proved necessary to reduce two Rifle Squadrons to number plate basis, in order to save overheads. No. 1 Armoured Car Squadron was also reduced to number plate only, while No. 2 Armoured Car Squadron, with H.Q. at RAMLEH (and, later, at AMMAN) provided detachments for special duties and for convoy escorts throughout PALESTINE.

20. In addition, we had a force of some nine hundred Supernumerary Police, roughly half Arab and half Jew, all R.A.F. trained. These men had done well in the past, but conditions were too much for their loyalty once Partition was announced. It was, however, quite impossible to do without these men entirely, until we had evacuated some of our Stations, although we had to mix them with British personnel as far as possible. I consulted with the Government on disarming these men, because both Police and Army used a much greater number of locally enlisted men than we did, and if I had disarmed mine unilaterally this might have precipitated mass desertion with weapons from the other Services. The High Commissioner, the G.O.C. and myself agreed that the policy should be to pull in these men from outlying Stations at the earliest possible date, and to aim at disarming and, ultimately, disbanding these men on a programme under which Police, Army and Air Force worked on approximately the same timings. Certain risks of desertion with arms had to be accepted, but the object was to avoid having these men armed, except during those short periods when they were employed on some duty which necessitated carrying arms. For example, Supernumeraries had been shot whilst on lonely patrols and, in many districts, would have refused duty altogether unless armed.

21. The Aircraft Park and Explosives Compound at AQIR were defended by the Arab Legion, under an old agreement by which the Army guarded aircraft concerned in Air Support and parachute training. This worked very satisfactorily until shortly before Partition was announced, when a large theft of ammunition occurred, and there was a moral certainty that the Arab Legion personnel had connived at this theft. Risks of this sort had to be weighed, and frequently had to

be accepted, because

be accepted because we had not enough personnel to be secure everywhere.

22. In my opinion, the comparative freedom of R.A.F. Stations and installations from major incidents was, at least in part, attributable to Jewish and Arab respect for the efficiency of the defence organisation.

Living Conditions.

23. Conditions throughout PALESTINE necessitated galling restrictions on all personnel, including being armed at all times, and sleeping at night with their weapons in bed and tied to their person. Putting weapons under mattress or pillow was not enough to defeat the cunning of the Palestine thieves. Men could never get out of camp alone, the normal regulation being four armed men as a minimum, and then they were limited to certain districts and times, and few attractive places were in bounds. Recreation outside camps was practically non-existent. These and other restrictions were kept under constant review, both locally and centrally from Air Headquarters. They were relaxed whenever possible, and during lulls a generous use of transport for sea bathing, and visits to historical sites, etc. was not only authorised but ordered. On occasions the cliffs were strongly manned and defended to allow bathing. Even so, outside recreation was sadly limited, and often prohibited altogether for long periods. Station Commanders worked in close co-operation with local Army Commanders, in respect of both local defence and local security regulations, within a general policy laid down by A.H.Q., and amended from time to time.

24. These conditions enhanced the importance of good messing. Men could not get outside their camps for long periods, and nothing led to grouches so quickly as monotonous or poor quality in their messing. We adopted expedients. In some cases I subsidised messing, and A.H.Q. officers' mess traded certain of their non-public assets with the officers' mess, AMMAN, in exchange for sufficient fresh potatoes and fresh vegetables (then procurable in JERUSALEM) to keep all ranks supplied up to the evacuation of the City.

Special Convoy Escorts.

25. Rail movement out of PALESTINE was severely restricted, and it was necessary to move as much material as possible by road. This involved strong and carefully planned escorting, for which we had to rely on Regiment personnel to provide individual escorts with vehicles in a convoy, and we used the Armoured Cars as the main-stay of convoy defence. MED/M.E. had made available detachments of 51 M.T. Company from EGYPT, in strengths which varied from time to time, to assist with the evacuation. One of the earlier convoys of 51 M.T. Company had a driver wounded and lost a rifle shortly after entering PALESTINE. This brought to light the fact that 205 Group simply had not got personnel to comply with the local LEVANT security orders regarding escorts in vehicles and escorts to convoys. It was therefore agreed with MED/M.E. and 205 Group that Levant would be responsible for providing escort teams under the command of a Regiment officer to meet each incoming convoy at the frontier, and to remain responsible for the discipline and security of that convoy while it remained in PALESTINE. Good convoy discipline, the provision of motor-cycle despatch riders, and the careful briefing of drivers, etc. on the necessity of keeping their distances and sticking together were the essential points of these convoys. After this one incident, our convoys went through without the loss of a vehicle, packing case or weapon. This most satisfactory result was directly attributable to the careful briefing of escorts and convoy personnel, and to a strict insistence on discipline. The whole of the convoy escorting organisation was under the direct command of my C.R.O., Squadron Leader MacGregor.

Deteriorating Conditions

Deteriorating Conditions.

26. As our withdrawal proceeded, fighting between Arabs and Jews became more intense, each side endeavouring to seize strategical positions ahead of our withdrawal. At the same time our own ability to control the situation was becoming less, and on 2nd January, 1948, the High Commissioner laid down that the role of the Security Forces was no longer the preservation of law and order, in the normal sense, but to preserve a state of affairs in which it remains possible for the Civil Government to function on a restricted basis. The run-down of the Army and Police rendered the R.A.F. ability to hit quickly without becoming involved on the ground, even more important.

Communication Flying.

27. Prior to the evacuation, I had given LEVANT Communications Flight a priority second only to the search for illegal immigrant shipping in the allocation of personnel, etc. Travel on land was severely restricted, and land travel by the High Commissioner, the G.O.C. and other V.I.Ps often required escorting and organising to an extent which strained resources, and was never free from danger.

28. As the evacuation progressed, the importance of Staff visits by Service and civilian Government officers increased, and the practicability of land travel decreased sharply. Then communications flying increased still further in importance. I had to abandon the normal regulations for carrying civilians, and substituted an organisation by which any request to fly a civilian was vetted by the Chief Secretary's Department, and all doubtful cases were referred to the Chief Secretary, personally, before being referred to my H.Q. and, if necessary, were decided by the Chief Secretary and myself. The Civil Government loyally abided by the conditions I laid down from time to time.

29. The Flight consisted of 3 Ansons, 6 Proctors and 1 Spitfire. From January to May, 1948, inclusive, they flew an average of 250% of the MED/M.E. Planned Flying target with the Ansons, and 115% with the Proctors. Their serviceability averaged 79% during this period, in spite of periodical difficulties with provision of spares. During the critical month of May, when I had ordered maximum serviceability, there were three days on which one aircraft was unserviceable. Otherwise, 100% serviceability was maintained, in spite of intensive flying. All four pilots were locally classified V.I.P. pilots, and I had been insistent, in the past, on the prompt removal of any pilot of doubtful ability. The reputation of their Flight was very high, in all respects, both in Service and Civil circles.

30. I have dealt with this small Unit at length because of the operational importance of communications flying in this operation, and the great extent to which the reputation of the R.A.F. is affected by the pilots and personnel of air communications units. I could not have been better supported in this respect.

31. There was no happier Unit in my Command than this Flight, and, although all ranks pulled their weight, the chief credit for these results lies with the Flight Commander, Flight Lieutenant LEWIS, and the Engineer Officer, Flight Lieutenant SUCKLING.

R.A.F. PLANNING.

32. The low capacity of the communications leading from PALESTINE, the grave doubts as to how long we could retain sufficient control of the local situation to allow the use of railways, etc. and the enormous bulk of Army stores to be moved, clearly indicated the importance of a flying start with the R.A.F. evacuation.

Accordingly, during

33. Accordingly, during October, I asked for immediate consideration to be given to a review of the local commitments of No. 160 M.U. at AQIR, which, at that time, was mainly occupied in the overhaul of Ansons on behalf of MED/M.E., and for the reduction of No. 120 Maintenance Unit to the status of an Air Stores Park or, alternatively, to reduce, substantially, the equipment-holding commitments of that M.U. These two Units were our biggest headache, and, until we could get a definite policy on their run-down from MED/M.E., it was impossible to make a start with practical work. No. 5 M.T.R.U. was already under orders to move to EGYPT, and the preliminary stages of that move had given a convincing demonstration of the administrative difficulties, in the way of the movement of bulk equipment from PALESTINE. In the early stages, MED/M.E. ruled that it was necessary, in the first instance, to prepare M.U.s in EGYPT before material from PALESTINE descended upon them in bulk. As the move progressed, however, and it was seen that we were succeeding in sending out our equipment properly packed and documented, this policy was changed, and we were able to control the despatch direct from LEVANT.

34. The broad policy decisions were taken right at the beginning. Briefly, they were that the R.A.F. would have to continue to operate its two Fighter Squadrons, (Nos. 32 and 208,) right up to the end, and that the two G.R. Squadrons (Nos. 37 and 38) would have to continue their searches for illegal immigrant shipping up to the end of the Mandate. Joint planning with the Army regarding the successive phases of the withdrawal showed that the Army would have to increase the size of the proposed HAIFA enclave to include RAMAT DAVID airfield, and that we would have to be prepared to re-open that airfield, and to operate from it in the latter stages until we could afford to move the Fighter Squadrons to NICOSIA, in CYPRUS, and to operate them from there, at the cost of a longer period of warning.

35. A.H.Q. would have to remain with the G.O.C., which involved remaining in JERUSALEM until the end of the Mandate, and then proceeding direct to the HAIFA enclave. At some stage a proportion of the Headquarters would have to be thrown off to deal with problems arising after the closing down of Stations.

36. The closing down of the Stations would commence in the south, in accordance with the general plan agreed by the Commanders-in-Chief and the High Commissioner, and this problem boiled down to closing RAMLEH, AQIR, TEL LITWINSKY and RAS EL AIN, at the earliest practicable date, and then, at a later stage, moving from EIN SHEMER to RAMIT DAVID. In order to keep commitments in the HAIFA enclave as small as possible, it was recommended, and agreed by MED/M.E., that the rear maintenance of the G.R. Squadrons should be moved to LUQA in MALTA, the Fighter Squadrons to NICOSIA, in CYPRUS, and LEVANT Communications Flight should move intact to AMMAN, in TRANSJORDAN.

37. A.O.A. at MED/M.E. decided to hold periodical administrative staff conferences which would be attended by Levant Staff, and these meetings, which eventually came down to about one a month, were a great help to all concerned. Within LEVANT itself I found that my usual weekly staff conference, and monthly Station Commanders' conference, proved adequate for planning and controlling the evacuation, taken in conjunction with frequent staff visits to the Stations concerned. In addition, G.H.Q. and A.H.Q. formed a number of committees to handle joint administrative problems. The more important ones were the weekly meeting held by the Brigadier i/c Administration, and a weekly meeting of the movement staffs of the two services.

FIGHTER OPERATIONS.

38. As the Arab-Jew fighting developed, many cases arose where British land forces were compelled to intervene to keep open communications, or to prevent the spread of open defiance of the Government.

I agreed ~~.....~~.....

I agreed with the G.O.C. that we would lay on air demonstrations at his request, but that these demonstrations would not be armed except on my personal authority. I took every opportunity of discussing these and other possible operations with the Fighter Squadrons, and formally addressed all officers at EIN SHEMER on this subject, explaining that, until they received instructions to the contrary from me personally, even if an armed support operation was authorised, and even if the aircraft were called upon to attack, their orders were to achieve the main object of the operation, either without inflicting casualties, or by inflicting the absolute minimum casualties necessary to achieve the object. This was warfare with a difference - we had no enemy, as such, and no pilot acquired merit by inflicting avoidable casualties. On the other hand, there was to be no hesitation if their briefing or the situation they found required firm and prompt action to save or reduce British casualties on land. These apparently complicated instructions were, in fact, simple, because both Squadrons had reached a high degree of efficiency in close support work, and had been thoroughly well exercised. I was confident that each individual pilot understood his responsibilities, and I had no doubt that they would carry them out intelligently and efficiently. This confidence was justified by events. In all the fighter operations, the personal leadership and calm judgment of Squadron Leader AMBROSE, D.F.C., the senior officer with the Squadrons, and the C.O. of No. 208 Squadron, were important factors in our success.

39. A great many demonstration and reconnaissance flights were undertaken in various parts of PALESTINE, sometimes armed and sometimes unarmed. These demonstrations had an extremely good effect, but, in the earlier operations, they were entirely directed against Arabs, because the Arabs appeared in force in various positions; but the Jews, at that stage, confined themselves to small operations by gangs of thugs, and were never caught in numbers in the open. The effects of demonstrations, however, fell off rapidly if they were repeated too frequently in the same area. A typical example was the case of the Jewish village at KAHR ETZION near HEBRON, which was attacked 15th January, 1948, by some thousands of Arabs. The attack was intended to be carried out by irregular Arab forces, but was complicated by the appearance of thousands of local villagers with sacks and bags, etc. to carry off the loot which it was confidently expected would be obtained. It looked as though an ugly situation was developing, and the Army turned out in strength, but a convincing demonstration flight was the decisive factor in dispersing the attackers, without British Forces becoming involved in fighting. On this occasion, in consultation with the G.O.C., I had ordered aircraft to be armed, and sent one of my own staff down with the tentacle, but the object was achieved without opening fire.

40. At one period, in response to an urgent request from the High Commissioner, I authorised standing armed patrols over the Potash convoys from the Dead Sea Potash Works to JERUSALEM, because the U.K. Government had stressed the great economic importance of this potash, and the Dead Sea was the only source of potash within the Sterling Area, and we had intelligence of intended Arab attacks, in force, in the open. These convoys had already been attacked in JERUSALAM. In this case the District Commissioner, at my request, informed all Arab authorities that the aircraft escorting these convoys would open fire if the intended Arab attacks materialised. An intercepted telephone conversation indicated that this warning was largely responsible for the peace enjoyed by these convoys during the rest of their operation.

41. Following the Jewish attack on the Arab village of DEIR YASSIN, and the murder of the inhabitants, the High Commissioner decided to take punitive action if the attackers failed to evacuate the village. The Air C-in-C was in JERUSALEM at the time and, on his

orders, a detachment , , , , ,

orders, a detachment of rocket firing Tempests, which I had given prior warning would be required at a later stage, were called forward from IRAQ, and arrived very promptly indeed. The Jewish Agency claimed to have removed the murderers and to have taken control via the Hagana, and the attack was called off.

42. On 28th April, 1948, following Jewish attacks in force on JAFFA, the G.O.C. undertook a land operation to put a stop to the fighting in this area. One strongpoint, a reinforced concrete brewery, was a sniping post, which the Jews refused to quit. Its capture was an essential part of the land operation, but would obviously be expensive in casualties. At the urgent request of the G.O.C. I agreed to take on this objective from the air. Accordingly, four Spitfire aircraft attacked this objective with cannon fire. Police and Army on the spot reported a well-conducted attack and accurate firing. Damage to the building itself was small, and largely confined to doors, windows, window frames, etc, but the attack was entirely effective in that the post was immediately evacuated and was occupied by our forces without resistance. Jewish casualties are unknown, but this small operation is a good example of the use of minimum force and the saving of British casualties by air action.

43. Following this operation, a Tempest detachment from IRAQ was maintained in PALESTINE until after the end of the mandate, and took part in one operation, although its chief role was to be in reserve in case rockets were required.

44. Prior to the ending of the mandate, reports were received that the Armies of the Arab States might attempt to invade parts of PALESTINE in force before our withdrawal to HAIFA. This was not very probable, but, as a precaution, H.Q., MED/M.E. moved No. 6 (Tempest) Squadron from KHARTOUM to EGYPT, in reserve. LEVANT Spitfire Squadrons flew reconnaissance sorties of the frontiers, but the threatened invasion did not take place.

G.R. OPERATIONS.

45. Searches for shipping conveying illegal Jewish immigrants to PALESTINE continued practically up to the end of the mandate, the last of these ships, the VIREA, being located on 23rd April, 1948. These searches were monotonous in the extreme, and the crews of Nos. 37 and 38 Squadrons (Lancaster G.R.) deserve credit for the thorough manner in which they performed these long sorties, usually of 10 to 12 hours' duration, searching for tiny ships, often with inadequate description, while the necessity of closely examining every vessel seen prohibited the use of the automatic pilot during the great majority of the time of flight. They developed a high degree of skill at detecting suspicious craft. It often required three or more days searching to find their target as, even when intelligence appeared to be good, poor seamanship and erratic sailing usually produced the ship at an unexpected time and place.

46. Between 1946 and 1948, 47 ships carrying illegal immigrants were intercepted by the Royal Navy, in practically every case after location and shadowing by the R.A.F. During that period 65,307 illegal immigrants were transferred to CYPRUS or, in 1946, to camps in PALESTINE. After 1st February, 1948, the run-down of the Army necessitated abandoning the Army coast watching, which had, hitherto, been a feature of these operations, as a precaution against the target ship eluding the R.A.F. and the R.N. The importance of "hanging onto" a ship, once located, was thus increased.

47. During the evacuation of the rear maintenance of the G.R. and the Fighter Squadrons, the Lancasters were fitted with large, locally designed, wire luggage carriers which fitted to the bomb bays.
The bomb doors

The bomb doors could not be closed with the racks in position, but they fitted along the sides of the racks. The Lancasters were employed on freighting, when not required for search operations, and greatly helped in transferring the maintenance organisation without interrupting operations, enabling much other valuable equipment, for which shipping was not available, to be moved, and saved further calls on the MED/M.E. Dakota force.

PERIOD PRIOR TO THE EVACUATION OF
JERUSALEM.

48. This period can best be dealt with Station by Station. One relevant fact was that the Army found it was quite impossible for them to hold on to Stations if their main Units evacuated them before the Disposals organisation had effected their sale. Army commitments were increasing, and their strength was falling, and the G.O.C. has stated, in his report, that, where camps had to be abandoned, they were promptly looted or burnt; "camps disappeared overnight". Looting by Arabs was extremely thorough. Roofs, windows, doors, and sometimes even the walls themselves were removed.

49. MED/M.E. gave me a free hand to abandon any Station which, in my judgement, it was impracticable to defend until it could be handed over to the proper authority, which boiled down to the purchaser since the Disposals Authorities had no force with which to undertake guarding. I was also authorised to abandon inventory work, where necessary, and to follow the principle of getting out as much valuable equipment as possible. This authority was used sparingly, but occasions did arise when detailed checking would have prevented work of greater importance and led to a loss in the long run.

Ramleh.

50. The Palestine Government Survey Department were taking over RAMLEH, but they had nothing with which to guard this Station other than unarmed Supernumeraries. The Station was, however, in a purely Arab area, and certain Works and Buildings personnel were left there to clear the remainder of A.M.W.D. movable assets with Armoured Cars on call from AQIR, and a flying platoon of the local Army Garrison, at short notice. Unfortunately, a rumour was spread amongst the local Arabs that RAMLEH had been sold to the Jews, and the result was an influx of Arabs attempting to dismantle the Station and steal any remaining equipment. The Army flying platoon and Armoured Cars from AQIR dealt with this situation, but not before an Arab A.M.W.D. employee had been killed, and the last lorry load of steel was stolen on its way to LYDDA Station. Several Arabs were killed before they were driven off, and when the local muktars were interviewed to try and ensure no repetition, they replied bluntly that their villagers were out of hand, and, from their point of view, it was a pity that the numbers killed were five and not fifty. This incident, however, was a useful lesson on the risks of leaving any Station, even for a short period, without a R.A.F. guard strong enough to deal with the local situation.

Tel Letwinsky.

51. At TEL LETWINSKY we had No. 3 R.A.F. General Hospital, No. 5 M.T.R.U. and A.M.W.D. Depot. The Army, who had a Brigade Headquarters on that Station, were taking over from the R.A.F. and accepting responsibility for the disposal of the Station. On 22nd January, 1948, O.C., No. 5 M.T.R.U. (who was also Station Commander at TEL LETWINSKY) reported that his Supernumerary Police were by that date completely unreliable. He was therefore authorised to disband the whole lot forthwith, although, by the terms of their contract, this involved payment of a month's wages in lieu of notice. This principle of not giving notice had been accepted by both the Police and the Army, as men

under notice

under notice were a menace to the security of the Station. The remainder of the evacuation of TEL LETWINSKY passed without serious incident, a noteworthy point being the efficient manner in which No. 3 R.A.F. General Hospital completed its own evacuation with its own transport, and completed this ahead of schedule.

Aqir.

52. The early closing of AQIR led to strong pressure from the 6th Airborne Division to re-open a Parachute Training School at a more northern Station. The loss of these training facilities was a severe blow to the Division, but was inevitable if the joint Army-Air plan for evacuation was to be adhered to. Moreover, there was no suitable buildings at the northern Stations for parachute packing and hanging, on the scale required for the work of the School, and it was therefore decided that the target date of the end of 1947, for the closing of this School, must be adhered to. The closing down of this Station, with its Aircraft Maintenance Unit and Parachute School, proved a formidable undertaking, and the successful manner in which it was completed reflected great credit on all personnel concerned, but, particularly, on Wing Commander STREATFIELD, who was the acting Station Commander during the bulk of the period. The evacuation of this Station also showed the necessity for leaving a Care and Maintenance Party, whose duty was the final clearing up, and which experience taught us would last approximately one month on a big Station, unless avoidable losses of equipment were to take place.

53. AQIR was closed down for all practical purposes on 15th January, and the Care and Maintenance Party had a target date of 15th February to complete the final clearing up.

54. By the time this Care and Maintenance Party was ready to complete the final clearance of AQIR, the Government of PALESTINE put a stop on the sale of this Station and requested us to hold on to it, pending a decision from U.N.O. as to whether they themselves would take over the Station. I decided to attempt to hold this Station, and sent a Flight of No. 2 Armoured Car Squadron and sixty gunners from Rifle Units of the R.A.F. Regiment (which was the maximum we could afford), and placed the Station under the command of Squadron Leader CHILDS, Officer Commanding, No. 2 Armoured Car Squadron. Squadron Leader CHILDS was instructed that, although he was there to endeavour to keep this Station intact, it was realised that his force was totally inadequate to hold the whole Station against a determined attack, and he was therefore authorised to abandon any part of the Station which, in his judgment, was necessary, and he was told that the over-riding consideration was the safety of his own men. In the end it was decided that U.N.O. would not take over AQIR, and the Station was sold and handed over by Squadron Leader CHILDS to the Jewish purchaser.

55. This detachment had an adventurous time, for hundreds of Arabs commenced to loot outlying buildings. The Station was large and scattered and the available force small. These attacks were driven off, mainly by Armoured Car fire on their flanks. Later, as the result of a press report that the Station was being handed over to the Jews, more serious attacks developed, and part of a line of old airframes, mainly Wellingtons, which had been sold two years, but not removed by the purchaser, was set on fire at night. The fire was beyond the range of available hoses, because the aircraft were well outside the perimeter, but burning debris, carried by the wind, menaced other parts of the Station. The whole Station remained on duty that night, the fire was kept under control, and would-be saboteurs were flushed from the cover of a corn field by mortar and small arms fire.

56. At another period swarms of Arabs attempted to tear down
the main hangar

the main hangar, to steal the material, but these also were driven off by fire on their flanks. Threats of reprisals on the local village Mukhtars led to unorthodox but effective punishment of the ring leaders, and an offer to supply an armed Arab guard. We had an arrangement with the Army for reinforcement in emergency, and this operated well, though our requests were moderate.

57. It is of interest that our Armoured Cars proved to have a better cross-country performance than Army Bren Carriers.

58. Ultimately, one small building was damaged by fire, but, otherwise, the camp was sold intact, except for broken windows, etc. The operation was conducted without known casualties, except for two Arabs injured in falling from the hangar roof, and reflects credit on Squadron Leader CHILDS and all personnel concerned.

No. 120 M.U. (RAS-EL-AIN).

59. No. 120 M.U. contained the vast majority of valuable R.A.F. equipment in PALESTINE. It was a particularly difficult Station to defend, having a perimeter of six and three quarter miles, around which were scattered isolated buildings, and with two orange groves within the perimeter. The entire evacuation of this Station and its defences were most capably handled by its Commanding Officer, Wing Commander FRANKLIN, and the thefts which actually took place were an extremely small proportion of the losses I had anticipated from this cause. An example of the sort of thing that did happen was two R.A.F. men in charge of an isolated building during the lunch interval, when a party of Arabs, apparently labourers working in the shed, suddenly turned upon them, covered them with fire arms, disarmed them and tied them up while they stole a quantity of watches, and made away.

60. The majority of the equipment evacuated from this Station was moved by No. 51 M.T. Company, and the final evacuation of the Station was completed on schedule, without major troubles. No. 51 M.T. Company did this job and, indeed, all other evacuation tasks, with great efficiency and willingness. All efforts of the Disposals Authorities to sell this Station failed, and they reported that there was no hope of a sale. Both Arabs and Jews were interested, and an Arab purchase was practically concluded at one stage, but was cancelled owing to the impossibility of defending the place. The continued defence was beyond my capacity, because the opening of RAMAT DAVID brought new commitments, and my full defensive strength was urgently required for the safety of aircraft and personnel. This Station was therefore abandoned, and was the only valuable R.A.F. asset to be abandoned in PALESTINE.

Ein Shemer and Ramat David.

61. The early stages of evacuating EIN SHEMER presented no particular difficulties. Most of the maintenance equipment of the four Squadrons was removed to MALTA and NICOSIA, using our own G.R. Lancasters, and we also had the use of Dakotas for certain items. The Wing Commander executive from EIN SHEMER had been appointed as the Station Commander, RAMAT DAVID, and the whole operation of evacuating EIN SHEMER, and moving into RAMAT DAVID, was under the command of the Station Commander, EIN SHEMER. This part of the move passed off smoothly, and the Station was handed over to Care and Maintenance Party on 4th April, 1948, guarded by two Rifle Squadrons of the R.A.F. Regiment. The attack on Camp 80, referred to earlier in this report, occurred on 6th April, and gave early warning of the sort of thing that this, by that time, isolated Station, must be prepared to meet. On 9th April the camp came under spasmodic fire at night from practically all Jewish sides of the camp. This was probably an attempt to test the defences, and the prompt response (mortars had been trained previously on selected objectives) probably had a good deal to do with the comparative peace

the camp

the camp enjoyed thereafter.

62. The camp had been sold to Jews, and it was known that considerable forces of Arab irregulars intended to try to beat the Jews in taking over the camp. There was therefore a considerable danger of our withdrawal being caught up in Arab-Jewish fighting. Any order normally issued and circulated was soon known to the local inhabitants by means of labourers, N.A.A.F.I. employees, etc., and I decided that the original order to evacuate the Station on 30th April should stand; but, in fact, we would carry out a surprise withdrawal on 25th, informing the Jewish purchasers at the last possible minute. This was completed successfully, the withdrawal being covered by the Army and with R.A.F. aircraft overhead.

63. The evacuation, the defence of the Station, and the handling of quite major incidents in the vicinity of the Station, were capably and coolly handled by the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader SANDERSON. I had given him the same orders as in the case of AQIR, namely, that he had full authority to abandon any part of his Station, if he considered this necessary in the interest of the safety of his personnel.

64. The only major incident during our short occupation of RAMAT DAVID was the attack by EGYPTIAN Spitfires, which is described later. A point of interest was the frantic attempt made by local Jews to try and persuade R.A.F. personnel to part with equipment. On one occasion a typed list of R.A.F. spares, complete with stores reference, was handed in, and fantastic sums of money were offered to pilots to land Spitfires at Jewish aerodromes, plus an elaborate scheme to prove that they had bailed out over the sea. We did not lose any Spitfires by this method.

Kolundia.

65. KOLUNDIA, the small JERUSALEM air strip, was an awkward position to defend, and keeping this strip open to the last day involved a careful balancing of risks. There was a Jewish settlement literally on the edge of the tarmac, and the Arab town of RAMALLAH (and other villages) in the vicinity. On several occasions the camp was swept by small arms fire, but, by various expedients, major fighting in the area was prevented. One Proctor under repair had several bullets through it, but we were fortunate enough to avoid casualties.

66. Provision of guards was a constant difficulty, but we relied upon carefully sited mortar positions and Armoured Cars for hitting power to back up the rifles and Brens of the Regiment. We had a close liaison with the Arab Legion at RAMALLAH and, later, with the Royal Marine Commandos. During the latter months all traffic to and from KOLUNDIA had to be escorted by a pair of Armoured Cars. Traffic was frequently interrupted by fighting, particularly in the SHEIKH JARRAH quarter, on the outskirts of JERUSALEM.

67. In the early stages I was strongly pressed to open KOLUNDIA to civil air traffic, but, after consulting the Government and the Inspector-General of Police, the High Commissioner ruled that the Government could not possibly deal with the necessary police work that would be involved, and none of us had the force to keep the road open to Jewish traffic, and practically all civilian air traffic would have been Jewish. I strongly supported this argument, and added my own difficulties at KOLUNDIA itself, which could not have been kept open against determined Arab opposition. I was attacked in the local Jewish press, but this ceased when it was realised that nobody was taking any notice.

68. KOLUNDIA was R.A.F. property, including most of the land.

By decision

By decision of the Government, this property was left unoccupied, but remained vested in the British Crown, with a view to future use or disposal.

Air Headquarters, JERUSALEM.

69. Air Headquarters and Air Headquarters (Unit) occupied a number of large, unsuitable and scattered buildings in JERUSALEM. Air Headquarters itself was opposite the DAMASCUS GATE into the OLD CITY. This was an Arab area, but the scene of two Jewish outrages, in which drums of explosives were rolled down from passing cars into the Arab market at the Gate, with the result that Air Headquarters lost many of its windows, twice in a fortnight. It became a common sight to see Potash convoys ambushed outside the Gate, or a Jewish car on fire there. Conferences were interrupted by small arms and automatic fire under the windows.

70. The Officers' Mess was in the Italian Hospital, which the Jews made two unsuccessful attempts to blow up, being blown up by their own bombs on one occasion. This Hospital was situated in an area between Jewish and Arab areas, and was thus frequently 'on the spot' when fighting took place in the vicinity. Air Headquarters (Unit) had its offices in various large and unsuitable buildings in the same area, but the main airmen's accommodation was in pleasant commandeered Jewish villas and flats in REHAVIA, a comparatively quiet area close to the Jewish Agency. The M.T. yard, the D.A.P.M's Headquarters and Air House were all comparatively isolated areas requiring special guarding.

71. The plan for the evacuation of Air Headquarters involved a progressive withdrawal from outlying buildings, timed to coincide with reductions of the staff. The latter point produced interesting results, since the acid test was whether a particular appointment either helped me to exercise command or helped the Units to carry out the policy given to them. The first branch to go in toto was the Engineering Staff - my C.R.O. stayed until the last convoy had left, and the final solution to the minimum necessary operational staff for the last six weeks in HAIFA was my Signals Officer, my P.A. and myself, with my S.A.S.O. in reserve to take my place whenever I was away.

72. In general terms the A.H.Q. withdrawal plan was to give up the DAMASCUS GATE A.H.Q. and establish A.H.Q. in the Italian Hospital group of buildings, where we had to keep open communications through narrow and winding streets by force, by establishing barriers with Armoured Cars in support. Then, as soon as it was possible to run-down the staff sufficiently, to contract to the D.A.P.M's building and Air House, with a rear Air Headquarters thrown off to NICOSIA. Finally, we came down to Air House only and then moved to KOLUNDIA for the final forty eight hours. Thence to HAIFA and, finally, to H.M.S. "PHEOBE".

73. Air House itself was situated on the edge of the Arab quarter of QATAMON, and, during the Arab-Jew battle for that area, we had the advantage of a bird's eye view of the fighting from the roof, but the disadvantages of days and nights disturbed by artillery, mortars, small arms fire and explosions, and of occasionally having to run the gauntlet to get to and fro. The only damage to the house was a bullet through a roof water tank, although we had to chip in now and again to drive snipers to a more respectful distance.

74. These rapid changes of Air Headquarters from building to building and area to area produced signals problems, but my Signals Officer, F/Lt. POPE, surmounted all difficulties, and I was off R.T. communications only while in the air, and I was off cypher communications for one night while equipment and personnel were en route to HAIFA. Without this excellent Signals organisation I would have been unable to exercise control - telephones had ceased to function at an early stage in the evacuation.

75. A feature of Air Headquarters work was the tremendous advantage of having

advantage of having good R.T. communication with all operational LEVANT Stations and to MED/M.E. There was no security with this channel, and at one stage a 'pirate' station attempted to intervene, but this quick and direct channel, even limited as to subject, was invaluable, and we knew each other's voices well enough to ensure that no outsider could get away with giving wrong orders.

76. One mistake was evident. Rear Air Headquarters in CYPRUS retained an administrative responsibility, but they were too far divorced from the rapidly changing scene in PALESTINE to do this effectively, and their Administrative Instructions were soon found to be out-of-date, and Rear A.H.Q. were thereafter limited to dealing with queries relating to the closure of Stations. They were disbanded on 24th April, 1948.

THE EVACUATION OF JERUSALEM.

77. The evacuation of JERUSALEM presented special problems in that both Jews and Arabs were 'on their toes' to seize strategical points, and it was obvious that, as we moved out, so the battle would start in earnest. Therefore, the plans and the exact date were kept to an absolute minimum number of individuals. The operation was under the command of the Brigadier Commanding No. 2 Infantry Brigade, a strong Brigade Group which had been reinforced by Marine Commandos, tanks and artillery.

78. The essence of the plan was that the High Commissioner should leave Government House in the early morning, and proceed to KOLUNDIA under heavy guard. As his convoy passed Allenby Square, a key point in the centre of the city, the roll-up of No. 2 Brigade would commence from that point, Units being positioned so that those to the north evacuated via KOLUNDIA, and those south of it pulled out southwards towards BETHLEHEM. This plan necessitated the evacuation of British civilians to KOLUNDIA before H.E.'s convoy, and all R.A.F. personnel at KOLUNDIA, including a Rifle Squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment and seven Armoured Cars, all destined to go to AMMAN, had to be routed with the Army column moving via RAMALLA - LATROUN to EGYPT.

79. Taking PALESTINE as a whole, three columns would be on the move on 'D' Day :

- (1) A column moving north from JERUSALEM, then turning west and south to EGYPT.
- (2) A column moving south from JERUSALEM, probably only to the BETHLEHEM area that day.
- (3) A column moving south from the RAMLEH area, after absorbing part of column (1), above.

80. The residue of Column (1), above, including police and some R.A.F. then proceeded north to the RAMAT DAVID - HAIFA area.

81. On D plus 1 Column (2), above, was to continue its journey to EGYPT via HEBRON and BEERSHEVA, while the other two columns were to continue their journey if it had not been completed.

82. Against this background, I offered to place the R.A.F. in JERUSALEM and KOLUNDIA under the command of No. 2 Infantry Brigade for the forty eight hours preceding the evacuation, and to hold Air House (a strategical site) up to the last moment. After discussion, however, it was decided to be preferable that No. 2 Brigade should have nothing in JERUSALEM except its own Units, and I was asked to take complete control of the KOLUNDIA area from D minus 1, until the final evacuation of that area was completed. Accordingly, Air House was handed over to the Army

on D minus 2, and A.H.Q. moved out to KOLUNDIA on that day.

83. In view of the heavy traffic, the difficulties of fitting in KOLUNDIA R.A.F. detachment smartly with the northbound convoy, and the fact that comparatively heavy air traffic had to be handled on this small strip, and any aircraft in serious technical trouble might have to be burned because the essence of the whole plan was speed and timing, I put my S.A.S.O. in charge of flying and my C.R.O. in charge of Ground Defences and convoys, etc. at KOLUNDIA. The ground defences were augmented by field guns loaned by the Army.

84. The operation went smoothly and according to programme. A convoy of senior Government officials arrived at KOLUNDIA at 07.30 hours, and were in position for H.E. to say goodbye to them. At 08.30 hours the convoy conveying H.E. and the G.O.C. arrived. H.E. inspected a Guard of Honour of the R.A.F. Regiment, said goodbye to his officials, and embarked in an Anson, in which I piloted him to HAIFA. I did this as a small gesture to an officer for whom we had all acquired a great respect. I was gratified to find that this was much appreciated by H.E. A second Anson followed with the G.O.C. and his Staff, a third with baggage, then two Dakotas with the Civil officials, two Austers working with the columns and, finally, two Proctors, which had been in reserve, went off. My S.A.S.O's seniority easily outweighed the claim of the other pilot (my P.A.) to be the last R.A.F. pilot off from KOLUNDIA.

85. I understand that the Radio News Reel Reporter contrived to give some credence to that part of his broadcast which dealt with the 'roar of the engines' as H.E.'s humble Anson took off, by risking life and equipment and taking up a position on the runway during the take-off.

86. Air support proved to be a simple operation. A cab rank of four Spitfires was maintained over the JERUSALEM - KOLUNDIA area until H.E. was clear, when it became an air escort. There was also an air escort of three Lancasters from our G.R. Squadrons, whose neat formation earned the praise of the Radio News Reel broadcaster. On landing at HAIFA, the fighter escort did a perfectly timed fly-past as H.E. advanced towards his Guard of Honour. In all the Spitfires flew 21 operational sorties on D Day, and 16 sorties in air escorts and a salute to H.E. before he sailed from HAIFA, which had been arranged as conditional on the Squadrons not being extended on operations. On D + 1, in addition to the normal sorties, a cab rank was flown over EL BURAJJ, in south PALESTINE, in response to a request from No. 1 Div., but it was not until 18.00 hours that evening that we learned that Egyptian Spitfires had inflicted casualties on our troops in that place during the morning. It was then too late to take effective warning or retaliatory action.

87. By the evening of D plus 1 all Egyptian bound columns were clear of the frontier, and the remainder concentrated in the HAIFA enclave. No further incidents occurred and I was able to leave the southern states of the convoy routes to No. 6 (Tempest) Squadron, who had been in reserve in EGYPT, and who were very keen to take part in the operation.

88. It would have been impossible for me to have exercised effective detailed control of air support over these three columns, and the Air C-in-C agreed that I should delegate authority to order R.A.F. aircraft to open fire to the Column Commanders. The Operations Order dealing with air support, and an explanatory note on the use of air power, which was issued to Column Commanders, are attached at Appendix "B". A general control was exercised from RAMAT DAVID, where my S.A.S.O. was stationed after leaving KOLUNDIA, and where I would have been had the Columns become engaged in fighting.

89. H.M.S. "OCEAN" (Aircraft Carrier) arrived off PALESTINE a few days before D Day. I had estimated that my requirement on D Day would be 25 operational sorties, and rather less on D + 1. I counted on having a total of 100 sorties per day from the two Spitfire Squadrons for this short period

short period, although the Squadron Commanders guaranteed 120 per day, less casualties, and their estimates on exercises previously had been justified. Thus, on a conservative estimate, I had four times as many sorties as could be foreseen, and a Tempest Squadron in reserve in addition. This was ample should fighting develop, and I was unable to offer the Fleet Air Arm any share in the operations other than remaining in reserve. We exercised the F.A.A. units in close support in PALESTINE prior to D Day.

THE HAIFA ENCLAVE.

90. From the A.H.Q. point of view, life in the HAIFA enclave soon settled down into a pleasant but, from the Service point of view, dull routine, in that there was little to do, yet we had to be 'on our toes' in case something did happen. My Staff in HAIFA consisted of my Signals Officer and my P.A., with my S.A.S.O. available in AMMAN to be called forward whenever I was away. I also had one Air Staff Squadron Leader who was in AMMAN awaiting posting and who completed Forms 540 up-to-date.

91. At this stage R.A.F. LEVANT consisted of the following Units : RAMAT DAVID Station, housing Detachments of Nos. 32 and 208 Squadrons (Spitfire XVIII), and No. 62 (Rifle) Squadron, R.A.F. Regiment. The Station Commander had four Army armoured cars at call to assist in escort duties and security generally. LEVANT Communications Flight was a lodger Unit at R.A.F. Station, AMMAN, with a small detachment at HAIFA Airport. The rear maintenance of the Fighter Squadrons was in NICOSIA. No. 111 Embarkation Unit and A.H.Q. were in HAIFA. In addition, a Flight Lieutenant from the R.A.F. Regiment had been appointed Airport Manager at HAIFA Airport.

92. This officer received his directive from the G.O.C., as Military Governor. His duties were to supervise the civilian staff of the Airport, and to exercise sufficient control to ensure that the terms of the Truce were being observed. He was not responsible for the security of the Airport, which was in the hands of a detachment of the Grenadier Guards, with Armoured support.

93. The defences of RAMAT DAVID, as with other Stations, called for improvisation. The Commandant of the R.A.F. Regiment visited this Station and expressed himself well satisfied with the use made of available resources. One side of the camp was very open, but he acknowledged that resources did not permit strengthening it. He was startled to find that the Commanding Officer (Wing Commander STREATFIELD), whose prestige with the local inhabitants was high, had personally visited every village mukhtar in that area and given an assurance that he would burn their crops (which were vulnerable) if there was any trouble from that quarter. They were convinced that he would do so, if necessary.

94. Another example of the value of personality arose when a lorry was ambushed and stolen by local Arabs. The C.O. went off alone, recovered the lorry and borrowed a driver to take it back. He refused the request to visit the local Irregular Commander and demanded that this individual be brought to him. His line of argument on this occasion is not recorded.

95. Similar incidents occurred elsewhere and, on one occasion, my P.A. recovered a stolen pistol from the Old City of JERUSALEM by insisting on the Arab Higher Committee providing him with a guard to the H.Q. of the local Arab Commander.

96. Conditions in the enclave were peaceful, and, as the G.O.C. was anxious to reduce its size as early as possible, it was decided to evacuate R.A.F. Station, RAMAT DAVID on 22nd May. It had been agreed, in April,

in April, that we should endeavour to complete the final evacuation by 1st July instead of 1st August. I had previously arranged to operate the Fighter Squadrons over the enclave from CYPRUS, and an adequate supply of drop tanks was available to give the necessary endurance. Dakota aircraft, previously authorised by MED/M.E., were called forward for the morning of 22nd, and dawn that morning found the Station packed up and ready to move, with peaceful conditions in the local countryside.

97. At approximately 06.00 hours on 22nd, two Spitfire IXs carried out a surprise low flying attack on the aircraft dispersal area at RAMAT DAVID. One dropped two 250-lb bombs on one of the aircraft dispersal pens, and set two Spitfires on fire, the second attacker indulged in some ineffective firing from comparatively high altitude. Both attacking aircraft disappeared before their identification markings could be recognised, but they were identified as Spitfire IX with blue spinners, and therefore it was a moral certainty that they were Egyptian Air Force aircraft,

98. The Station Commander, Wing Commander STREATFIELD, was confined to his bed, with medical orders to stay there. Within minutes, however, he was on the scene in a dressing gown, complete with crutch and stick, taking full control of the situation in his usual vigorous and direct manner. He remained on the spot all day.

99. His immediate action was to despatch a pair of Spitfires to endeavour to find the attackers and to destroy them if located within PALESTINE. He followed this with another pair to act as standing patrol over the airfield in case of a repetition. He initiated improvisation of A.A. defences and then took personal charge of fire fighting, withdrawing his personnel only when other aircraft were in a position of safety, and the dangers from exploding ammunition, etc. became too acute to take further action about the two originally set on fire. These two burnt out. Unfortunately the attackers had too much start, and were not caught by our pursuing aircraft.

100. The 4/7 Dragoon Guards, who occupied part of RAMAT DAVID, were most prompt and helpful in organising ground A.A. defences. Relations between this unit and the R.A.F. had been excellent throughout.

101. At about 07.45 hours three further aircraft attacked RAMAT DAVID, and this time they were seen to be Egyptian Spitfires. They came in low and attacked the main hangar. They obtained a direct hit on the hangar (which had been evacuated), and set on fire an unserviceable Spitfire which was being reduced to produce. Two of these aircraft were promptly shot down by our standing patrol and were seen to crash in flames while the third was evidently seriously damaged by the Bren and rifle fire of the R.A.F. Regiment. It disappeared, losing height, with a severe glycol leak and a large piece of the fuselage (possibly the hood) was seen to fly off. Later, this aircraft was found to have belly landed in Jewish territory.

102. Considerable damage was done to the hangar, and one airman was killed and one injured.

103. I reported these attacks to the Air C-in-C by R.T. and we were fortunate in that the Group Captain Operations of the Egyptian Air Force was in H.Q., MED/M.E. at the time, and was able to give an immediate assurance that the whole affair was a ghastly mistake on the part of the Egyptian Air Force, since they had been given ample warning that we were in occupation of RAMAT DAVID. He undertook to take immediate steps to stop these attacks, and to follow up by proceeding to EL ARISH (the Egyptian Air Force Advance Base) himself. I then reported the occurrence to the General Officer Commanding, who expressed his satisfaction with the action taken, and stressed the importance of

importance of demonstrating the fact that any attack on the dwindling British forces in the enclave should be dealt with vigorously and promptly. During my interview with the G.O.C. an R.T. message was received reporting a third attack on RAMAT DAVID at about 09.15 hours by two further Egyptian Spitfires who again came in low and got in an attack before the tentacle on the ground could direct the standing patrol on to them. These two aircraft were promptly shot down by the standing patrol, and these were also seen to crash in flames.

104. By this time the Dakotas to move the Fighter Squadron personnel and equipment had arrived and they received the brunt of this attack. One Dakota received a direct hit and was destroyed, and, with it, its load of airmen's kits was also lost. The second Dakota was taxiing out to take off and was attacked by machine gun fire. The second pilot and navigator were killed, three airmen were injured and the aircraft was seriously damaged. A third Dakota was seriously damaged by blast and machine gun fire. At this stage I gave orders that any Egyptian Spitfire seen over the enclave, and in a position in which it might conceivably be considered as likely to attack RAMAT DAVID, was to be shot down on sight. We were entirely without warning systems, and this was the only positive way of avoiding casualties that occurred before it was possible to direct the standing patrol on to low flying aircraft which appeared over the neighbouring hills and were over RAMAT DAVID in a matter of seconds after being seen from the ground. The Air C-in-C confirmed these orders, and the General Officer Commanding expressed his agreement.

105. At this stage damage by bomb splinters, blast and bullets had reduced our serviceable Spitfires to five, and, although we had reason to think that the Egyptian Group Captain would succeed in stopping the attacks, I considered it necessary to have force immediately available for retaliatory action against the Egyptian base at EL ARISH, if the attacks continued, although, of course, a decision to take this action would have had to come from the Air Commander-in-Chief. My only reserve were the Spitfires at NICOSIA in CYPRUS. These had completed their D Day task and were completely stood down as far as I was concerned. I called NICOSIA on the R.T. and instructed the Commanding Officer, Group Captain H. FORD, A.F.C., to despatch five Spitfires, or as many as he had immediately serviceable, to RAMAT DAVID, with the minimum delay. This call was logged by my R.T. operator, and exactly thirty five minutes later I received a W.T. message from NICOSIA reporting that five Spitfires were airborne and en route to RAMAT DAVID. This was a very fine performance, in view of the fact that they were not at any stage of readiness and NICOSIA is a very scattered Station.

106. There were no further attacks, and I took the earliest opportunity, when relieved in HAIFA by my S.A.S.O., to visit RAMAT DAVID myself. I found an even higher state of morale in all ranks than usual. All ranks were most emphatic that their Station Commander had been an inspiration throughout the day, and that his evident intention of hurling his crutch at any attacker who came near enough added a touch of humour which had helped to keep them on their toes.

107. After consultation with the G.O.C., I postponed the evacuation of the R.A.F. from RAMAT DAVID for 24 hours, to ensure we did not appear to have been driven out, and yet to avoid delaying the planned evacuation longer than was necessary. The Army undertook to remain in position long enough to guard the parties working on the two damaged Dakotas. The evacuation was completed without further incident. Aircraft lost were the two Spitfires burnt out in the first attack, one Dakota burnt out, and one Spitfire in process of being reduced to produce. It is a credit to the Station, and to all personnel concerned, that after the first surprise attack (which none of us had any reason to anticipate), 100 per cent of the attackers were destroyed.

108. The only other incident of note during this period was a
night bombing attack

night bombing attack on R.A.F. Station, AMMAN (under command A.H.Q., IRAQ) in which a Warrant Officer's family had a very narrow escape, and the LEVANT Communications Flight offices and Technical Stores were hit by a small bomb, and aircraft, including an Anson, were damaged. With their usual energy, Communication Flight improvised rapidly and were again at 100 per cent serviceability before their operations were affected. On my next visit I was shown an aircraft referred to as the LEVANT Comm. Flight night fighter Proctor. This was the fastest Proctor in the Flight, to be piloted by the Flight Commander, with all windows open, and another pilot (an ex Army Instructor) in the back with a tommy gun. The attackers were undoubtedly Jews, probably using Dominies and preferring moonlight; the Flight thought they had a chance of engaging. The chance was slight, but the instance is typical of the spirit of the Flight, and I supported the venture, subject to co-ordination with the fixed defences.

FINAL EVACUATION.

109. In the small hours of the morning, the day before the final evacuation, three Army tanks were stolen from HAIFA airport by Jews, with the active assistance of two soldiers, who deserted with the tanks. At first light an Army officer of 651 A.O.P. Squadron took an Auster aircraft which had been made over to the Truce Commission, and traced the tracks through the MUSS MUSS PASS, in the direction of TEL AVIV. This provoked a protest from the Truce Commission, but they agreed it was their business to try to recover the tanks, since the theft was a breach of the Truce. Spitfires from NICOSIA were laid on for an armed reconnaissance of the Jewish coastal plain, but without results, probably because the Jews had previously stolen transporters and could move the tanks into hiding without tell-tale tracks.

110. The Aircraft Carrier "Triumph" had come to HAIFA and, after consultation with the G.O.C., it was decided to fly a further armed reconnaissance for these tanks the next day, on the slight chance of catching them on the move soon after dawn, using rocket-armed Fleet Air Arm aircraft. The decision as to whether to attack was to be taken by the G.O.C. and myself, largely on whether they were in open country or whether there was any risk of causing casualties to innocent people. The Truce Commission were informed of our intention and did not raise any objections.

111. Accordingly, four pairs of aircraft took off from H.M.S. "Triumph" at first light on 30th June and carried out a search of the plain between the ZICRON YACOB area and TEL AVIV, having been fully briefed by myself the night before, and operating under my command whilst over land. The missing tanks were not located.

112. We had no reason to anticipate any interference with the final evacuation, but the possibility could not be ruled out, and the evacuation was planned as a tactical operation.

113. The land operation was under the command of 1st Guards Brigade, and the G.O.C. and myself had a small Tactical Headquarters on board H.M.S. "PHOEBE". A tentacle was ashore with the Brigade Commander, and the G.O.C. and myself were able to listen in from the ship and take control when the land evacuation had reached a stage to make this desirable. This time was to be decided by the Brigadier Commanding No. 1 Guards Brigade. As our fighters were located at NICOSIA, in CYPRUS, they were too far away to remain on call, and a cab rank was maintained overhead from dawn until the last soldier was clear of the port. A copy of the orders for air support are attached as Appendix "C".

114. The operation went smoothly. At 11.00 hours I took over fighter control. At 12.00 hours the G.O.C. went ashore to witness the last stages, and was the last soldier to leave the shore. By about 13.05 hours the last troopship was clear of the port, and the four R.A.F.

Spitfires, then on patrol,

Spitfires, then on patrol, did a neat fly-past H.M.S. "PHOEBE" and returned to base.

115. Our total casualties from 1st October, 1947 to 30th June, 1948, were :-

(i)	Killed or died of wounds	-	15
(ii)	Seriously wounded	-	6
(iii)	Missing, believed killed	-	1
(iv)	Moderately or slightly wounded	-	10

We lost 27 vehicles by theft and ambush.

CONCLUSION.

116. I am not aware of any new lessons that arose out of the evacuation from PALESTINE, but many old ones were emphasised. It is not practicable to record the many local difficulties encountered and expedients adopted, but, to my mind, the important features were as follows :

117. I was given a firm policy (but in general terms) from MED/M.E., and decisions when I asked for them. Otherwise, I was left to carry out that policy in my own way. This enabled me to adopt a similar attitude to subordinate commanders, with the result that we all had the feeling that it was our operation, and up to individual commanders to find and adopt the best solution to their problems.

117. A high morale was maintained by all ranks throughout the operation. Men cheerfully worked long hours under uncomfortable and, often, dangerous conditions, and even accepted the high incidence of guard duties as inevitable. In part, this was due to the fact that men understood not only what they were doing, but why it had to be done. I was fortunate in my Commanders and Staff.

118. Co-operation with the other Services and the Civil Government was excellent throughout. In my opinion one of the most important reasons for this was that we were situated close together and all knew each other well. It has always been my experience that once the Staffs of two Services really know each other, problems of joint operations become comparatively simple. Both H.Q., PAL. and A.H.Q. maintained a bar on the premises, which I consider invaluable for breaking the ice with visitors from other Services, and for making visitors from our own Stations feel that the A.H.Q. staff were human beings, and to overcome the feeling of hesitancy in asking advice, even if only a cup of coffee was supplied.

119. Although I do not suggest that previous experience in a particular type of R.A.F. operation is not useful, PALESTINE proved, once again, that a normal R.A.F. officer can quickly become proficient in the Staff side of any normal type of R.A.F. work, without previous experience of it. As my Staff ran down, officers had to become Jacks of all trades, but no difficulties were encountered on this score. From the operational point of view, the outstanding case was that of my S.A.S.O., Wing Commander R.H. WATERHOUSE, C.B.E., D.F.C., A.F.C., whose previous experience was limited to training and bombing, with no Staff experience or training. When he took over, LEVANT included Air Transport Support operations and training, Parachute training (both ab. initio and refresher), Close Support by fighters, normal fighter training and G.R. work, particularly searching for illegal immigrant ships. He was soon acknowledged as an air expert in their respective spheres by the R.N. and the Army, and was often in sole charge of operations.

120. Armoured Cars were invaluable. They escorted inter-Station and evacuation convoys. In some cases they had to escort labourers to and from their villages; they helped the Army to keep open the KOLUNDIA road, and their mobility and fire power were important factors in the defence of Stations (particularly when on a C & M basis), and of the scattered buildings we occupied in JERUSALEM.

S E C R E T.ROYAL AIR FORCE, LEVANT.ORDER OF BATTLE AS AT 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1947.

<u>UNIT.</u>	<u>LOCATION.</u>	<u>REMARKS.</u>
<u>PART I - UNITS UNDER COMPLETE CONTROL OF A.H.Q., LEVANT.</u>		
<u>R.A.F. Station Headquarters.</u>	Aqir. Ein Shemer. Qastina (C & M Basis). Nicosia. Ramleh.	
<u>R.A.F. Unit.</u>	Jerusalem.	
<u>Flying Units.</u>		
No. 32 Squadron.	Ein Shemer.	
No. 38 Squadron.	Ein Shemer.	
B(87) Flt., No. 38 Sqdn. (Late 37 Sqdn.)	Ein Shemer.	
No. 208 Squadron.	Ein Shemer.	
(i) 'A' Flight.		
(ii) 'B' Flight (253).		
Levant Communication Flight.	Aqir.	
Parachute Training School.	Aqir.	
<u>Operations Rooms.</u>		
Joint Ops. Room (RAF Comp).	H.Q. Palestine, Jerusalem.	
Sector Ops. Room (North). (Unmanned).	Nicosia.	
Sector Ops. Room (South).	Ein Shemer.	
<u>R.A.F. Regiment & Defence Units.</u>		
No. 19 Wing.	Ramleh.	
No. 20 Wing.	Ein Shemer.	
No. 52 (R) Squadron.	Ras-el-Ain.	
No. 53 (R) Squadron.	Kolundia.	
No. 58 (R) Squadron.	Ein Shemer.	
No. 62 (R) Squadron.	Jerusalem.	
No. 65 (R) Squadron.	Ras-el-Ain.	
No. 66 (R) Squadron.	Ein Shemer.	
No. 1 Armoured Car Squadron.)	Ramleh.	
R.A.F. Regt. H.Q., & 1 Flight.)		
1 Flight.	Ein Shemer.	
1 Flight.	Amman.	
No. 2 Armoured Car Squadron.)	Ramleh.	
R.A.F. Regt. H.Q. & 2 Flight.)		
1 Flight.	Jerusalem.	
<u>Maintenance Units.</u>		
No. 120 Maintenance Unit.	Ras-el-Ain.	
No. 160 Maintenance Unit.	Aqir.	
<u>Signals Units.</u>		
No. 14091 A.M.E.S.	Haifa.	
No. 826 A.M.E.S. (Unmanned).	Nicosia.	
No. 14074 A.M.E.S.	Deir Qaddis.	
No. 6562 A.M.E.S.	Aqir.	
No. 15052 A.M.E.S.	Aqir.	

Medical Units

UNIT.	LOCATION.	REMARKS.	
<u>Medical Units.</u>			
No. 3 Anti Mosquito Unit. H.Q. & No. 1 Section. No. 2 Section 'A' Det. No. 2 Section 'B' Det. No. 3 Section.	Tel Litwinsky. Jerusalem. Tel Litwinsky.		
No. 2 (ME) Field Hygiene Unit.			
No. 10 (RAF) (ME) Med. Rehab. Unit.			
<u>Miscellaneous Units.</u>			
Levant Petrol, Oil & Lubrications Unit.		Ein Shemer.	
No. 5 (ME) M.T.R.U.	Tel Litwinsky.		
No. 9 Mobile Parachute Ser. Unit.	Aqir.		
Oxygen Production Centre.	Aqir.	Section of 160 M.U.	

PART II - UNITS NOT UNDER FULL CONTROL OF A.H.Q., LEVANT.

<u>R.A.F.</u>	<u>Location.</u>	<u>Operational Control.</u>	<u>Admin. Control.</u>
R.A.F. Station, AMMAN.	Amman.	MED/M.E.	AHQ., Levant.
No. 651 AOP Sqn. H.Q.	Qastina)	H.Q. Brit.	
Nos. 1907, 1908 & 1910 Flts.	Qastina)	Troops thru'	AHQ., Levant.
No. 1909 Flight.	Ramat David.)	1 Div.	
3651 Mobile Serv. Section.	Qastina)		
Airborne Contact Car Unit.	Aqir.	Army.	AHQ., Levant.
No. 3 R.A.F. Hospital.	Tel Litwinsky.	MED/M.E.	A.H.Q. Levant.
Met. Section, AQIR.	Aqir.	MED/M.E.	AHQ., Levant.
M.E. Officers' School of Admin.	Amman.	MED/M.E.	AHQ., Levant.
No. 2 Fire Fighting School.	Amman.	MED/M.E.	AHQ., Levant.
No. 2 General Serv. Trng. School.	Amman.	MED/M.E.	AHQ., Levant.
Air Support Training School.	Ein Shemer.	Army.	AHQ., Levant.
Security Coy. Arab Legion.	Amman.		AHQ., Levant.
No. 20 RAF Mov. Unit (Emb). Detachment.	Haifa.	MED/M.E. thru' AHQ Levant; 20 RAF Move. (Emb) Unit.	HQ. 205 Group.
- ditto -	Famagusta.	- do -	- do -
No. 1 A.I.S. Centre Det.	Aqir.	MED/M.E.	AHQ., Levant.
No. 4 District H.Q. (Levant).	Jerusalem.	3 RAF Police Wing H.Q.	AHQ., Levant.

PART III - UNITS IN THE LEVANT AREA UNDER FULL CONTROL OF OTHER FORMATIONS.

H.Q. No. 2 Works Area.	Jerusalem.	MED/M.E.	MED/M.E.
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1. A.H.Q., LEVANT has limited administrative responsibility for the Unit shown in Part III, above, e.g.

Works Services.
Welfare.

Civilian Labour.
Medical, etc.

2. Queries to be referred to Organisation III, A.H.Q., LEVANT, Ext. 77.

3. This Order of Battle cancels that issued as at 1st August, 1947, which is to be destroyed by fire.

(signed) F.H. FITTOCK, W/O.,
for Air Commodore,
Air Officer Commanding,
Royal Air Force,
L E V A N T.

Reference :-
LEV/S.3331/1/Org.

SECRET.LOCATIONS OF UNITS IN THE LEVANT AREA AND CYPRUS.PALESTINE AND TRANSJORDAN.AMMAN.

R.A.F. Station.
No. 2 G.S.T.S.
M.E. Officers' School of Admin.
Security Coy. Arab Legion.
No. 2 Fire Fighting School.
1 Flt. No. 1 Arm'd Car Sqdn.

AQIR.

R.A.F. Station.
No. 160 Maintenance Unit.
Oxygen Production Centre.
Airborne Contact Car Unit.
No. 9 M.P.S.U.
No. 6562 A.M.E.S.
No. 15052 A.M.E.S.
No. 1 A.I.S. Centre Det.
Levant Communication Flight.
Met. Section.

EIN SHEMER.

R.A.F. Station.
No. 32 Squadron.
No. 38 Squadron.
B(87) Flight No. 38 Squadron.
No. 208 Squadron 'A' Flight.)
'B' (253) Flight.)
No. 58 Squadron, RAF Regiment.
No. 66 Squadron, RAF Regiment.
Levant P.O.L. Unit.
Air Support Training School.
Sector Ops. Room (South).
No. 20 Wing, R.A.F. Regt.
1 Flt. No. 1 Arm'd Car Squadron.

DEIR QADDIS.

No. 14074 A.M.E.S.

HAIFA.

No. 14071 A.M.E.S.
No. 20 RAF. Movement (Emb).
Unit Detachment.

JERUSALEM.

Air Headquarters, Levant.
H.Q. No. 2 Works Area.
R.A.F. Unit, Jerusalem.
No. 4 District H.Q. (Levant).
No. 62 Sqdn. RAF. Regt.
Joint Ops. Room (RAF. Comp).
1 Flt. No. 2 Arm'd Car Sqdn.

RAS-EL-AIN.

No. 120 Maintenance Unit.
No. 52 Sqdn. RAF. Regiment.
No. 65 Sqdn. RAF. Regiment.

KOLUNDIA.

No. 53 Sqdn. RAF. Regiment.

QASTINA.

R.A.F. Station (C & M).
H.Q. No. 651 AOP. Squadron.
No. 3651 Mobile Servicing Section.
Nos. 1907, 1908 & 1910 Flights.

RAMAT DAVID.

No. 1909 Flight.

RAMLEH.

R.A.F. Station.
No. 19 Wing, RAF. Regiment.
No. 2 Arm'd Car Sqdn. RAF Regiment.
H.Q. and 2 Flights.
No. 1 Arm'd Car Sqdn. RAF Regiment.
H.Q. and 1 Flight.

TEL LITWINSKY.

No. 3 R.A.F. Hospital.
No. 5 (ME) M.T.R.U.
No. 3 A.M.U. H.Q. & 3 Sections.
No. 10 (ME) Med. Rehab. Section.

LOCATION OF UNITS IN CYPRUS.NICOSIA.

R.A.F. Station.
Sector Ops. Room (North) (Unmanned).
No. 826 A.M.E.S. (Unmanned).

FAMAGUSTA.

No. 20 R.A.F. Movements (Emb).
Unit Detachment.

S E C R E T.

From:- Air Headquarters, Levant (Advanced).

To :- See Distribution.

Date:- 8th May, 1948.

Ref :- LEV/24/DIR.

AIR SUPPORT - "D" DAY - PALESTINE.

1. On "D" Day in Palestine there will be three columns on the move.
 - (a) 2 Brigade. Northern Convoy plus elements of the Palestine Police and the R.F. who will travel only as far as Ramleh.
 - (b) 2 Brigade. Southern Convoy.
 - (c) 3 Brigade. Southern Convoy plus elements of RAF in (a) who will join up at Ramleh.
2. Convoy Commanders of the three columns will be the responsible authority for calling forward Air Support and for authorising aircraft to open fire. This authority is delegated to them by the A.O.C., Levant, until their respective columns have finally evacuated on D + 1 Day.
3. To each column (Para. 1 (a) & (b), above) will be attached a fully manned Air Contact Team with a tentacle of No. 2 A.S.S.U.

For 3 Brigade column (Para. 1 (c) refers), see Para. 4.
4. A tentacle will accompany 3 Brigade during their evacuation south.

It has been agreed that an Air Contact Team is not an operational necessity for this column, but, should occasion arise, any demands for Air Support from the Convoy Commander will be met on equal priority with those of the 2 Brigade columns.
5. For the 2 Brigade columns (see Para. 1 (a) & (b) requests for Air Support will be passed by the Convoy Commander to the Air Contact Teams, who will call forward in the normal way.
6. O.C., RAF. Ramat David is to select two suitable RAF pilots to act as Controllers for the tentacles detailed in Para. 3. These officers will be flown to Kolundia on D - 1, under arrangements made between AHQ Levant and O.C. Levant Communications Flight.
 - (i) The Controller with the Northbound Convoy (Para. 1 (a), refers) will be returned to RAF Ramat David on completion of his task.
 - (ii) The Controller with the Southbound Convoy (Para. 1 (b) refers) will leave the column at Rafah and will be returned to Ramat David by Auster of 651 A.O.P. Sqn.
7. O.C. 824 A/AL Group (G.11 Air) will detail Air Liaison Officers to accompany the two tentacles referred to in Para. 3, above.
8. All Service aircraft operating on "D" Day and "D + 1 Day" will come under the command of the A.O.C. Levant.

9. Above instructions subject to amendment if the internal security situation materially alters.

10. 'D' timings and details will be notified separately.

FOR INFORMATION.

Note I The A.O.C. Levant has issued instructions to Squadrons to ensure that they obtain maximum serviceability by 'D' Day.

Note II. Provision for certain pre-arranged air support has been made. This includes a patrol of the Jerusalem - Kolundia Road between 0800 and 0900 B hours on 'D' Day and armed recess of roads in advance of moving columns.

In addition, limited cab-ranks may be put over certain areas.

The principle will be, however, to hold armed aircraft at Ramat David at short call.

(signed) R.H. Waterhouse, W/C.
for Air Commodore,
Air Officer Commanding,
Royal Air Force,
L. E V A N T.

Distribution.

<u>External</u>	Tac. HQ Palestine (7 copies)	<u>Internal</u>	A.O.C.
	RAF Ramat David (2 copies)		S.A.S.O.
	RAF Nicosia (1 copy)		C.R.O.
	RAF Amman (1 copy)		
	AHQ Levant Rear (1 copy)		
	HQ RAF MED/M.E. (1 copy).		

SECRET.

SUBJECT: Air Support during period
23 June - Z day.

HQ PALESTINE
Tel 4488.
G/2247/18 (0)

18 June 48.

1 Guards Brigade (2)

Commodore, PALESTINE (2)

Adv Air HQ Levant (2)

Copy to : NORTH PALESTINE Dist
2 ASSU

G(Air)
X

General

1. This instruction gives details of method of call for air support during the period 23 June to Z day (i.e. day of final evacuation). Up to Z - 1, inclusive, the procedure differs in no way from that at present in use. On Z day the RAF will maintain a cab-rank over HAIFA town and the port area from dawn to dusk, or until called off by Air Officer Commanding.
2. The principles to be observed in the use of aircraft in support of land or sea forces are :-
 - (a) Aircraft will not fire except when the lives of members of the forces are endangered.
 - (b) If the use of fire is resorted to, it will be restricted to the absolute minimum necessary to achieve the object.
3. Whenever possible reference will be made to the General Officer Commanding before aircraft are ordered to open fire.

23 JUNE to Z - 1 (BOTH INCLUSIVE)

Support for forces on land.

4. An Air Support Signals Unit tentacle type A is attached to HQ 1 Guards Brigade. Commander 1 Guards Brigade has authority to call for support direct from CYPRUS, where RAF Spitfires are based. (See para. 3, above).
5. As soon as Commander 1 Guards Brigade has called for this support, the G2(Air) located at his HQ will pass this information to Air HQ on board HMS "PHOEBE".

Support for HM Ships and Forces embarked in the Harbour Area.

6. An RAF set on board HMS "PHOEBE" will maintain direct communication with RAF Station CYPRUS.

All call for air support will be transmitted at the request of Commodore PALESTINE through this means. (See para. 3, above).

7. A cab-rank is being maintained by RAF Spitfires throughout the hours of day light.

Calls for additional aircraft from CYPRUS will be initiated only by Air Officer Commanding, Levant, established on HM Ship.

Support for Forces on Land.

8. Commander 1 Guards Brigade has authority to call down aircraft through G2 (Air) located at his HQ, as and when required. (see para. 3, over).

The Air Support Signals Unit tentacle with 1 Guards Brigade will NOT be used for calling aircraft from CYPRUS on this day.

Support for HM Ships and Forces embarked in the Harbour Area.

9. The VHF set established on board HMS "PHOEBE" maintains direct communication with aircraft overhead. Aircraft will be called down through Air HQ on board on request of Commodore PALESTINE. (see para. 3, over).

Brigadier,
Chief of Staff.

S E C R E T.

AIR SUPPORT ON 'D' DAY AND 'D' + ONE.

(Issued to Column Commanders by the G. O. C.)

The policy of H.M.G. with regard to the Royal Air Force in PALESTINE is that the R.A.F. is not to be used offensively against Arab or Jew, except in cases of emergency. The definition of an emergency includes cases in which failure to use the air arm would clearly result in casualties, or increased casualties, as the case may be, to British land forces. The A.O.C. has a personal responsibility that this policy is observed.

On 'D' day and 'D' + 1 day, it will not be practicable for calls for air support to be referred to the A.O.C. Therefore, the G.O.C. and the A.O.C. have agreed that on those days calls for air support will be made direct from Column Commanders to the Air Operations Room at RAMAT DAVID. All aircraft will be armed, and the authority to authorise aircraft to open fire, and the responsibility for observing the conditions set out in para. 1, above, are delegated to Army Column Commanders.

MESSAGE TO THE THREE SERVICES FROM H.E. THE HIGH
COMMISSIONER ON DEPARTURE FROM PALESTINE.

On leaving PALESTINE, I wish to send to the three Services my most grateful thanks for the constant and efficient support they have given to the Government of PALESTINE during the period of my term of office. The lesson of co-operation between them, learnt in the hard school of the last war, has been most successfully maintained and applied in their tasks in PALESTINE.

To the Navy I owe special thanks for the manner in which they have faultlessly carried out a distasteful task, and maintained throughout those high traditions for which they are famed.

To the Army, with whom I have had more personal associations, I would only say that I know that no other Army could have come through the ordeal they have had to face with their name unsmirched. As a soldier, I well know the high standard of discipline and self restraint which has been required to achieve this result. Even if it were for their record in PALESTINE alone, I am proud to have been one of them.

The personnel of the R.A.F., too, have, on many occasions had to undergo similar difficulties to the Army, and have shown themselves no less British in their patient and tolerant attitude. But I must particularly thank the R.A.F. for their ready helpfulness at all times. For the extremely efficient way in which they have carried out their tasks over the sea and the land, and their unreadiness to accept failure, even under the worst conditions.

To all members of all three Services in PALESTINE I send a personal wish for their good fortune in the future.
