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### **‘IRAQ COMMAND REPORT APRIL, 1924-NOVEMBER, 1926.’**

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<b>Reference</b>	IOR/L/PS/20/C204
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#### **About this record**

This volume is a report submitted to the British Air Ministry by Air Vice-Marshal John Frederick Andrews Higgins. It consists of a chronological narrative of significant military events in Iraq during his time as Air Officer Commanding, British Forces in Iraq, from April 1924 until November 1926. It is divided by year and by geographical area.

The report discusses general military activities undertaken during the period, including the aerial observation of settlements and groups deemed potentially dangerous to the Government, the movements of British and Iraqi troops, and the training of the Iraq Army by British officers.

It notably covers the following:

- Turkish attempts to assert control over the Mosul Vilayet, including ‘infiltration’ of northern Iraq by Turkish personnel, the build-up of troops on the Turkey-Iraq border, and incursions of Turkish cavalry units across the border, which were stopped by British aerial bombardment
- British planning for the defence of Mosul in the event of a full-scale Turkish invasion, the eventual resolution of the Turkey-Iraq border dispute by the decision of the League of Nations, and a subsequent agreement between Turkey, Iraq, and Britain
- Kurdish resistance to British occupation and the central Iraqi Government, focusing on

the continuing anti-British activities of Shaikh Mahmud Barzanji [Maḥmūd Barzanjī], particularly: British ground and aerial attacks on Kurdish villages; a clash between Assyrian levy troops and local Muslim inhabitants at Kirkuk; the suppression of an uprising led by Shaikh Mahmud, including discussions with Riza Khan [Reżā Shāh Pahlavī, Shāh of Iran] about coordination between Iraq and Persia [Iran] against Shaikh Mahmud; British attempts to protect Jaf [Jaff] tribespeople from Shaikh Mahmud's demands for money during their migration to Persia; and punitive attacks by the British on tribesmen from the Auroman [Hawraman] region for supporting Shaikh Mahmud

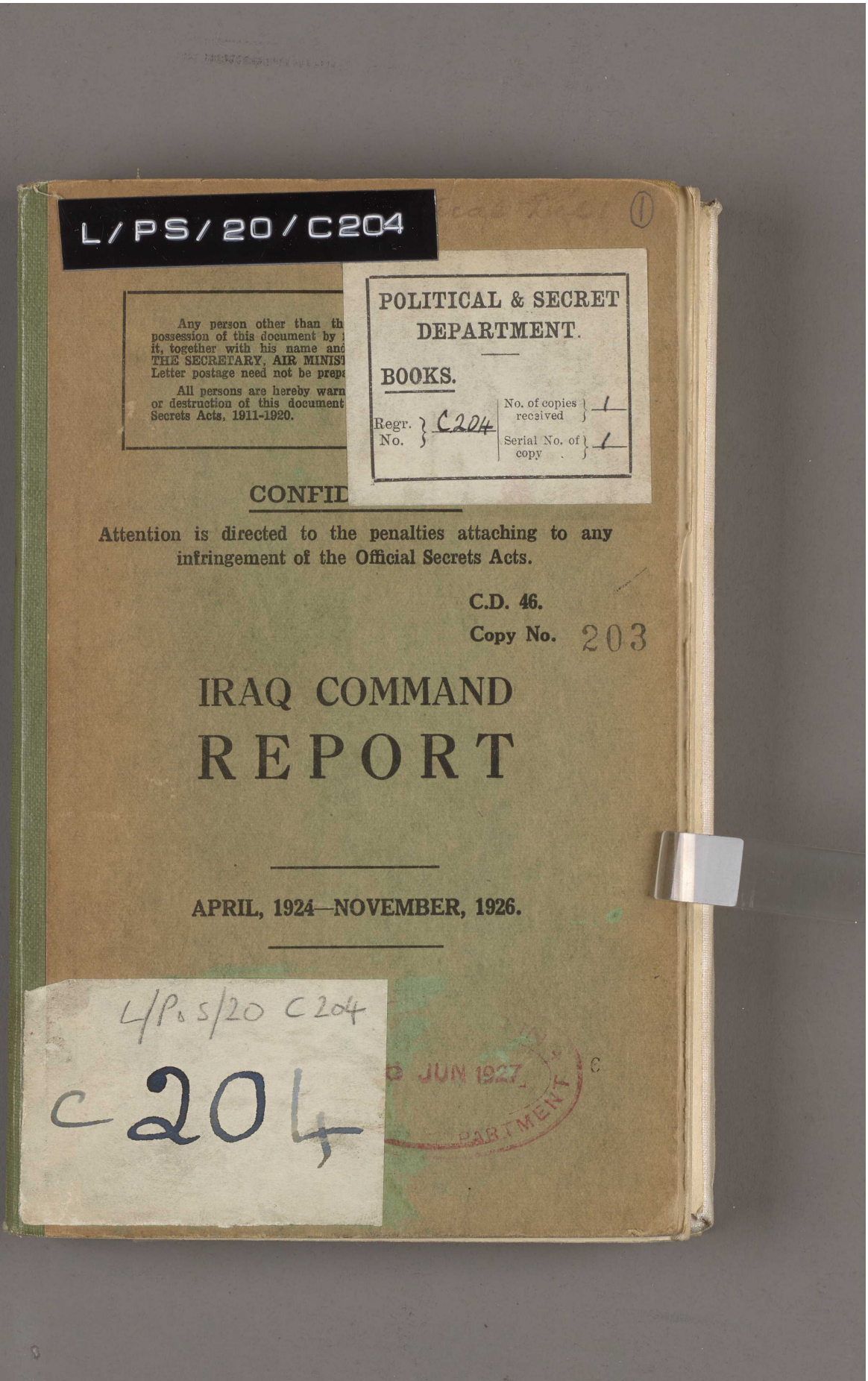
- Issues in southern Iraq, primarily involving Akhwan [Ikhwān] raids on nomadic Iraqi herding communities, including: steps taken by the British Government to prevent these raids, such as improved communications in the desert borderlands; aerial bombing of raiding groups; and the detailed mapping of the area to improve the accuracy of British counterattacks against the Ikhwan. The report also mentions the bombing of the house of Shaikh Salim Al Khayun [Sālim al-Khayyūn] in the village of Chubaish [Al-Chibayish], and the Shaikh's subsequent surrender to Government authorities

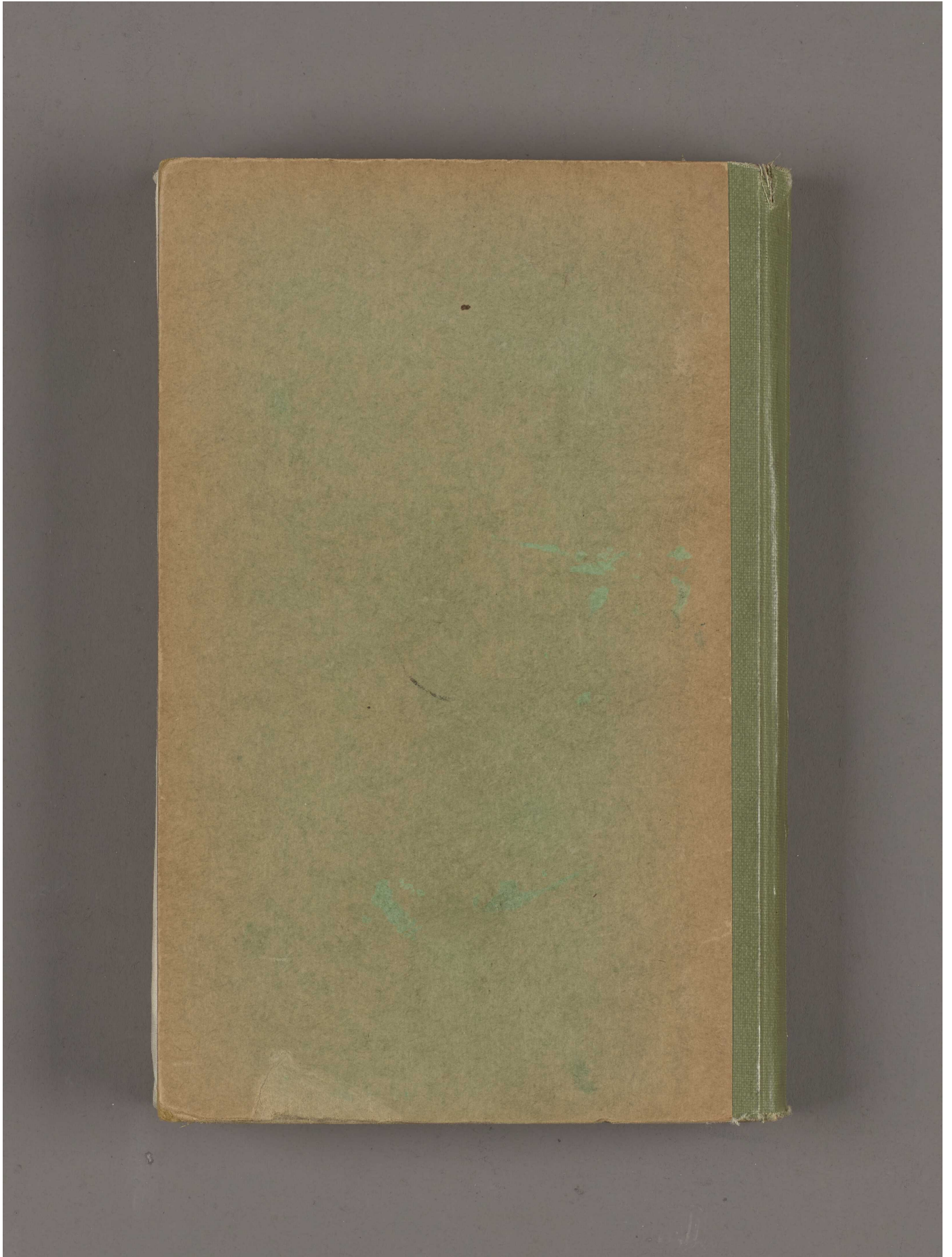
- Fighting between the forces of 'Daham, Chief of the Syrian Shammar Jarba' [Dahhām bin al-Hādī bin al-Āṣī al-Jarbā] and 'Ajill, Chief of the Iraqi Shammar Jarba' ['Ujayl al-Yāwar al-Jarbā], and details the deployment of British armoured cars and aeroplanes to assist Ajill in fighting Daham's forces.

The report contains six appendices:

- 'Appendix A- Forces in Iraq, April, 1924'
- 'Appendix B- Note on History of Sheikh Mahmud Prior to April, 1924'
- 'Appendix C- Composition of Frontier Force under Colonel Commandant H.T. Dobbin, C.B.E., D.S.O., September, 1924'
- 'Appendix D- Composition of Chapforce under Colonel Commandant J.G. Chaplain, C.B.E., D.S.O.'
- 'Appendix E- Anti-Akhwan Organisation'
- 'Appendix F- Reduction of Garrison Following Treaty with Turkey'.

Four maps are included in the report. These are catalogued as "Iraq-Persia Map No. 1" (IOR/L/PS/20/C204, f 32); 'Map No. 2' (IOR/L/PS/20/C204, f 33); 'Map No. 3' (IOR/L/PS/20/C204, f 34); and 'Basra. Map No. 4' (IOR/L/PS/20/C204, f 35).







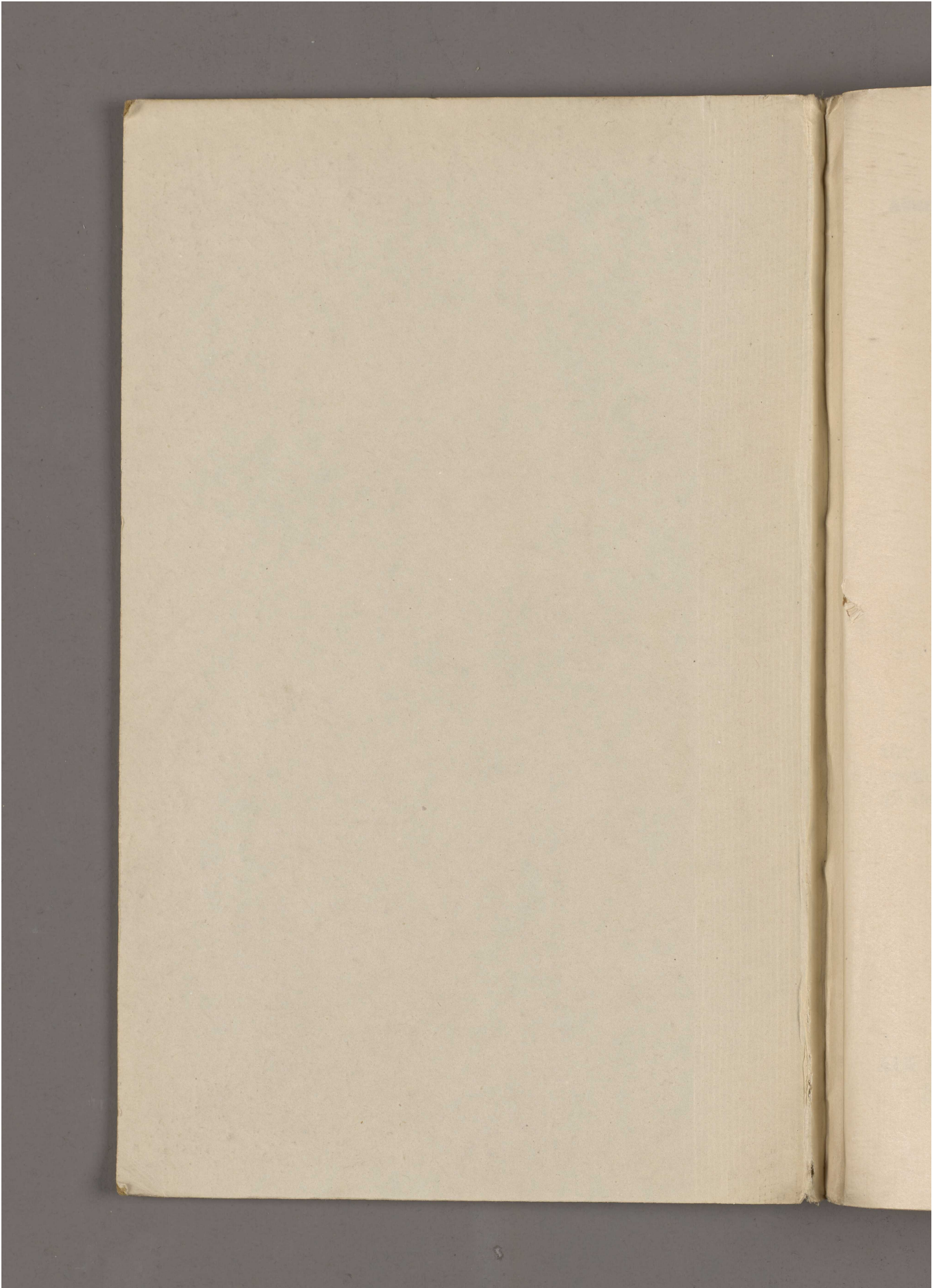


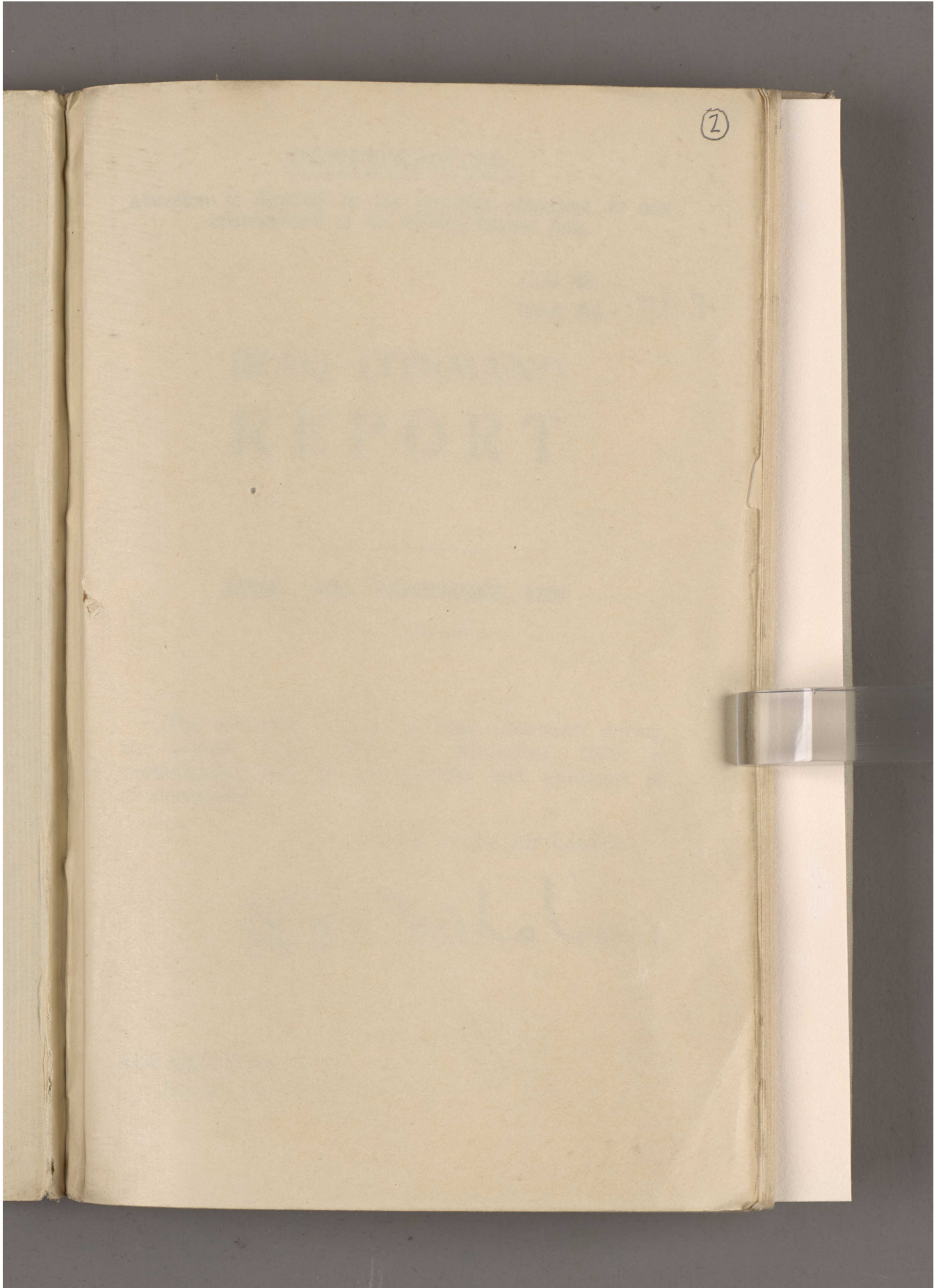
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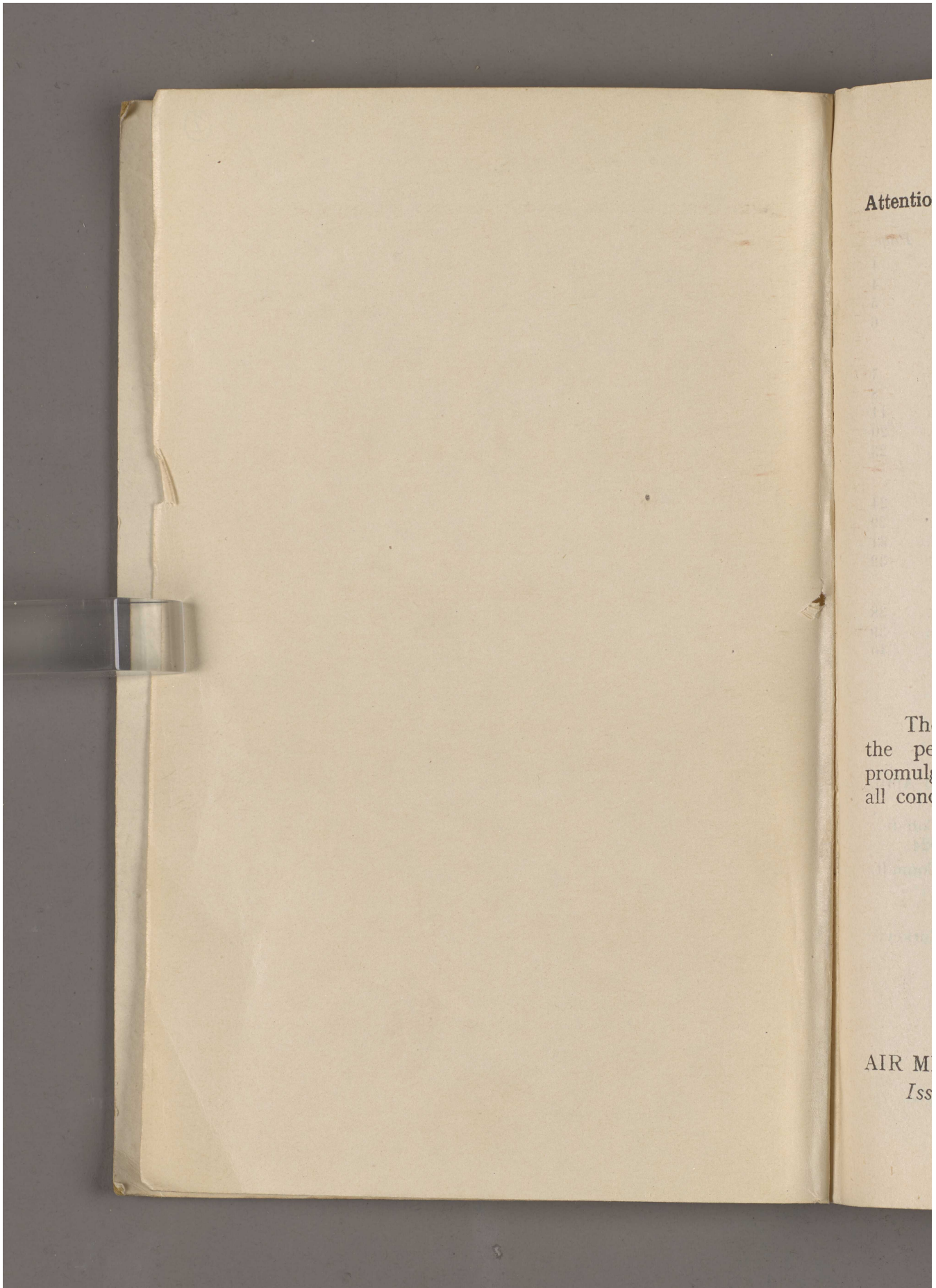












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C.D. 46.

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IRAQ COMMAND  
REPORT

APRIL, 1924—NOVEMBER, 1926.

The following Report of Iraq Command during the period April, 1924, to November, 1926, is promulgated for the information and guidance of all concerned.

By Command of the Air Council.

W F Nicholson

AIR MINISTRY.

Issued May, 1927.

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MAPS.

- 1.—General Map of Iraq.
- 2.—Sulaimani Area.
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Air Headquarters,  
British Forces in Iraq,  
Baghdad.

19th November, 1926.

To:—The Secretary,  
Air Ministry,  
Adastral House, Kingsway,  
London, W.C.2.

SIR,

I have the honour to submit a report covering the period of my command of the British forces in Iraq from 7th April, 1924, when I took over from Air Marshal Sir John Salmond, K.C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O., to 19th November, 1926, when I handed over to Air Vice-Marshal Sir Edward Ellington, K.C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E.

2. The forces of which I assumed command are enumerated in Appendix A, where it will be observed that they had, two months previous to my arrival, been reduced to the four battalion basis originally envisaged by the Cairo Conference in 1921.

I had also, delegated to me by His Excellency the High Commissioner, the executive command of the Iraq levies, whose strength is set out at Appendix A.

Finally, practically speaking, I had operational control of the Iraq army, the strength of which is enumerated in the same appendix.

3. Thus the task confronting me was to apply the theory of air control supported only by the minimum ground forces laid down by the Cairo Conference three years previously. Moreover, as pointed out by Sir John Salmond in his despatch, the conditions prevailing on the northern frontier of Iraq were not visualised by the Conference at the time of its decisions. The forces at my command had been settled as the minimum with which, in the then condition of the country, internal security in Iraq could be maintained; they were not designed to meet external aggression by the Turks or any other power. True, the energetic action taken by my predecessor in April, 1923, had dealt a severe blow to Turkish designs and had driven back their forward posts to the Administrative Boundary. But, as I was subsequently to learn, Turkish ambitions had been checked—not defeated.

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## REVIEW OF THE SITUATION.

4. A brief review of the situation in Iraq in April, 1924, may conveniently be divided under four main headings: Political, Northern Iraq, Sulaimani District and Southern Iraq.

### POLITICAL.

5. The internal political situation in Iraq had been improving steadily; at this time the British-Iraq Treaty had not yet been signed, but whatever the feelings of the pro- and anti-treaty factions, their activities were conducted on constitutional lines and gave little anxiety from the military standpoint. The treaty was eventually ratified by the Constituent Assembly on 10th June. Elsewhere the situation was stable and, except for the minor rebellious activities of small sections here and there, calls for no comment. The whole country, excepting the Sulaimani Liwa, had during the previous two years been brought under the direct control of the Government.

### NORTHERN IRAQ.

6. In Northern Iraq the Turkish situation was the dominating factor.

Prior to the Lausanne Treaty, Turkish threats against Iraq were essentially a form of diversion; that is to say, their main forces lay with their main ambitions in other directions, in Europe and Asia Minor. Whatever their threats on the northern frontier of Iraq, they could only produce on the spot relatively minor forces with which to carry them out.

On the conclusion of the Lausanne Treaty, Turkey arose convinced of the success of forceful diplomacy and with the avowed intention of adding the Mosul Vilayet to her recent gains. Moreover, the troops were now released from Europe for such activities as Turkey thought necessary to gain her ends. The Turkish Government had categorically refused to abandon its claim to Mosul and, though a decision had been deferred for a year in the hope that an amicable arrangement might be reached by the two Governments, the absorption of Mosul within the Republic had now become one of the principal planks in the platform of the National Government.

Such was the situation with Turkey at the time of my assumption of command in Iraq. For the time being it was reasonable to suppose that activity would be confined

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to propaganda, with the possibility of a tribal incursion discreetly supported by regular forces. In the issue this proved to be an under-estimate of the lengths to which Turkey would go.

The actual military situation at this time was not unfavourable. Turkish infiltration had been checked and their outposts, previously so far south as Koi Sanjak (fifty miles inside Iraq territory), had been driven back to the Administrative Boundary.

#### SULAIMANI DISTRICT.

7. The Sulaimani district, in its broader interpretation, is one generally regarded as bounded on the west by a line drawn almost due north and south through Chemchemal, on the north-east and east by the Persian frontier, and on the south by the Aq-Su and Ab-I-Sirwan rivers. It is a wild and mountainous country, the topography of which takes the form of a series of ranges running right through it from the north-west to south-east. These ranges, rising to some six thousand feet, are only negotiable to troops over certain well-defined passes. Communications are almost non-existent, consisting merely of tracks impassable to motor vehicles at all times and to all wheeled traffic at certain times. Only one motor route, and that a poor one, exists in the area, the Kirkuk-Chemchemal-Sulaimani road.

The inhabitants are Kurds, whose independent spirit and lawless ways have proved a source of trouble to the Turks from time immemorial, and to ourselves since our occupation of Iraq. Moreover, the Kurd is distinctly anti-pathetic to the Arab and viewed with dismay the establishment of a government which he disliked and mistrusted.

Thus the topography of the country, the character of its inhabitants and their feeling of national insecurity presented a picture of considerable military difficulty. To this must be added, however, a still less attractive military feature viewed from the standpoint of settled government, namely, the character and personality of Sheikh Mahmud. This man did exercise considerable temporal, and does exercise considerable religious, influence in Southern Kurdistan. As the military history of the Sulaimani district is largely centered in his personality a brief sketch of his career up to 1924 is given at Appendix B.



8. At the time I assumed command Sheikh Mahmud's fortunes were in the ascendant. In the previous year, on returning to Sulaimani after our evacuation, His Excellency the High Commissioner had informed him that, provided he confined his activities to a defined area, he would not for the time being be molested. He had on the whole obeyed this injunction. Where he failed to do so, it at once became obvious by an outburst of lawlessness on the part of the villages which had succumbed to his intrigue. Prompt air action, however, invariably quieted the situation for the time.

From the political view-point it will be admitted that this was not a satisfactory nor could it ever be a permanent solution of the Sheikh Mahmud problem. Moreover, it was militarily unsatisfactory, in that Sheikh Mahmud was a rallying point within Iraq for foreign intrigue which might easily prove a serious encumbrance in the event of operations in the north. Meantime he was living in Sulaimani town, whence he controlled almost the entire Sulaimani Liwa, levying harsh taxes, principally on small villages and such migratory tribes as had the misfortune to pass through his territory, intriguing persistently and a perpetual menace to the peace of the surrounding country.

It was generally recognised that this was a condition of affairs demanding termination as soon as the necessary forces were available, and to it I gave early attention.

#### SOUTHERN IRAQ.

9. In Southern Iraq the area of the Tigris was quiet. The Euphrates tribes, who had played such a prominent part in the rebellion of 1920, had been steadily brought under Government control during the previous two years; there were still several lawless sections requiring attention, but on the whole the situation was better than it had ever been before.

Apart, however, from the settled river area, that part of Southern Iraq, desert in the real sense of the word, which marches with the frontiers of Ibn Saud, Sultan of Najd, presented a problem with peculiar and difficult features of its own.

10. The desert country of Iraq south of Kerbela to a distance of some 150 miles west of the Euphrates (namely, to the Najd border) is peopled by nomadic tribes whose sole source of livelihood is their flocks. In the summer,

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when all vegetation disappears on the desert, they move in to the river; in the winter they return to the desert up to and across the Najd frontier.

When out in the desert these shepherd tribes have always presented an irresistible temptation for loot to the Akhwan, the warlike subjects of Ibn Saud.

Thus, the lot of the shepherd tribes was not a happy one. It was obvious that if the new Government did not protect the Iraq shepherds, the latter would be forced to secure the protection of Ibn Saud by paying him grazing taxes, even when in Iraq territory, a condition of affairs which was bound to affect adversely the prestige of the government.

In March, 1924, just prior to my arrival, a large Akhwan raid had taken place involving 146 deaths and the loss of 30,000 animals to the raided tribe. Moreover, the Kuwait Conference between Iraq and Ibn Saud, assembled for the purpose of adjusting this problem by negotiation, broke down in April. Raiding and counter-raiding was at this time the order of the day.

11. This, in brief, was the situation in Iraq in April, 1924. I have reviewed it generally in order that the military problems confronting me should be clearly understood and in order that the various steps which were taken to meet frontier problems and to bring the whole of Iraq under the central government at Baghdad may be followed without difficulty.

#### APRIL—DECEMBER, 1924.

##### DIWANIYAH LIWA.

12. On 26th April an incident occurred in the Diwaniyah Liwa, some one hundred miles south of Baghdad, subsequently necessitating air action. It is quoted, not because of any outstanding features it contains, but merely because it was the first of its kind I conducted and is a typical example of the minor uses of aircraft which constantly take place in Iraq, but which will not again be mentioned in this report.

13. Owing to the refusal of four sections of the Albu Nashi to obey the instructions of the Government, a party of 150 police under a Commandant was sent out to enforce authority. While returning to Afaj the police were attacked by the tribesmen, pursued into the town, and lost four killed, including the Commandant. It is an

affair of this sort which, if not instantly checked, spreads with incredible rapidity until what was originally an incident becomes an insurrection.

14. The same evening a wireless station personnel and one section of armoured cars were despatched by special train from Baghdad to Diwanayah to establish and guard a base at that place.

On the morning of the 27th, after the usual warning, the insurgent villages were bombed by eight Vernons from Hinaidi and by nine Snipes. Operating from the base established at Diwanayah, air action was again taken in the afternoon. As the insurgents then fled, this concluded the operation. With the exception of three, who did not long elude justice, all the insurgent leaders, surrendered to Government. The Vernons returned to Hinaidi on the 29th; the Snipes remained at Diwanayah for close co-operation with and as a moral support to the police until 9th May.

#### SULAIMANI AREA.

15. On the morning of 4th May, a serious affair arising out of the most trivial incident occurred at Kirkuk. Three men of the two companies of the 2nd Battalion Assyrian Levies stationed at Kirkuk became involved in an altercation over prices with a Moslem shopkeeper in the Bazaar. High words passed; the Levy soldiers went back to barracks but re-entered the town armed with sticks. In the dispute that followed an Assyrian soldier was unfortunately shot dead. The men thereupon returned to barracks and, in spite of the efforts of their officers, seized their rifles and ran amok in the town, where they occupied sites dominating the Police Serai and the Bazaar. There were at the time only two British officers of the battalion in Kirkuk, and of these one was sick in bed while the other had only just joined. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the Moslems, some thirty of whom were killed and sixty wounded. It was necessary to confine the Levy Cavalry to their barracks; being Moslems they could not be relied upon to stabilise the situation.

News of this affair reached me at noon; it was clear that only British troops were adequate to meet a situation in which religious and racial feelings had been so passionately aroused. I ordered two platoons of the 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers to be moved by

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air from Hinaidi to Kirkuk immediately, and meantime a section of armoured cars was ordered to Kirkuk from railhead at Kingerban.

Sixty-six officers and men of the Royal Inniskillings arrived at Kirkuk by troop-carrier the same afternoon, a distance of 150 miles. British troops and armoured cars at once patrolled the town and by evening the situation was well in hand. Although general firing continued throughout the afternoon, the volume lessened and gradually the Assyrians were disarmed, largely through the efforts of their own officers and those of Colonel-Commandant H. T. Dobbin, C.B.E., D.S.O., Officer Commanding the Iraq Levies. This officer was in Baghdad at the time of the affair and was immediately conveyed to Kirkuk by air. At sunset the two Assyrian Companies with their women were marched to a point some six miles out of the town under armoured car escort.

There is no doubt that by their speedy arrival and presence the British troops saved the British Officials and Christian inhabitants from savage reprisals by the Moslems. Reprisals involving the death of eight Christians were in fact started the next day but were quickly suppressed.

16. On 5th May His Excellency the High Commissioner accompanied by an officer of my staff visited Kirkuk by air; on the following day I flew to Kirkuk and subsequently, as a precaution, ordered two additional platoons of the Royal Inniskillings to be moved by air from Hinaidi. This move was completed the same day, bringing the strength in British infantry at Kirkuk up to 152 officers and men. Throughout this period extensive air reconnaissance of the surrounding district was made by a flight of No. 30 (Bombing) Squadron; but though a certain amount of tribal movement was observed, particularly in the vicinity of Chemchemal, no serious unrest materialised in the Kirkuk area.

17. Meantime, these events provided Sheikh Mahmud at Sulaimani with what he believed to be the necessary material to stir up trouble on a large scale. He declared a jihad or holy war against the English and Assyrians, and commenced to assemble a large lashkar for the purpose. Moreover, so alarmed had the people of Halebja become by his activities, they declared that they must for their own safety go over to his cause. He was, too, in close communication with the Turks.

18. His Excellency the High Commissioner, after consultation with me, decided that the time had arrived to put a definite curb upon the activities of this rebel.

19. As a preliminary the whole of No. 30 (Bombing) Squadron was concentrated at Kirkuk; messages were dropped upon Sheikh Mahmud and the inhabitants of Sulaimani calling upon him to report himself to the nearest Government forces on or before 26th May and warning him that in default the town would be bombed on the 27th. Arrangements were also put in hand to concentrate in the vicinity of Kirkuk a large force of aircraft with which to operate against him.

As, by 26th May, Sheikh Mahmud had not surrendered the concentration was carried out on that date. By evening a force of forty-two aircraft disposed as follows:—

Nos. 6 (Army Co-operation) and 8 (Bombing) Squadrons at Kingerban.

Nos. 30, 45, 55 and 70 (Bombing) Squadrons at Kirkuk.

Operations were commenced the following morning at dawn, and were continued without cessation, and without losses, for two days. A total of twenty-eight tons of bombs, the equivalent in explosive to 15,000 eighteen-pounder shells, were dropped upon the town; the Bazaar was gutted by fire, and the Custom House and Tobacco Khan destroyed; the inhabitants, forewarned by proclamation, had abandoned the town and therefore suffered no casualties.

During the operations Sheikh Mahmud fled to the caves of the Qara Dagh. He returned on 1st June, but was received by the inhabitants with marked hostility. During June his position steadily deteriorated and he was deserted by a large portion of his following. Finally, in mid-June, he placed his money and his family in a place of safety across the Persian border.

20. The situation now justified the definite occupation of Sulaimani; on the morning of 19th July the town was re-occupied without opposition by two regiments of Iraq cavalry and 100 police, supported by armoured cars and aircraft.

Strict instructions were issued that the troops were to make no incursions into the mountain areas beyond the town. I fully appreciated that the pacification of the Sulaimani Liwa in the face of the guerilla tactics of the

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rebels would be a slow and tedious labour, a matter not of months but of years; meantime Government administration was firmly established in and to the west of the town.

Except for some minor activity, Sheikh Mahmud gave little trouble for the remainder of the year. On one occasion a tribe under his influence, and led by one of his principal lieutenants, was successful in surprising and capturing some fifty of the Iraq Army on patrol. Prompt air action compelled their release the following day.

Meantime, more urgent military considerations demanded my attention elsewhere.

#### NORTHERN IRAQ.

21. The Turkish situation, *vis-a-vis* Iraq, in April, 1924, has been briefly described in paragraph 6.

On 9th June, owing to the uncompromising attitude of the Turks, the Mosul Conference at Constantinople broke down; the British case was, therefore, put forward for examination by the League of Nations at the session opening on 29th August.

From June onwards, that is from the breakdown of the Conference at Constantinople, my attention had been drawn to reports of Turkish troop movements. In view of the Turkish political attitude a close watch was kept on these movements and a steady concentration of troops was observed to be taking place in the vicinity of the frontier.

Although I considered an organised invasion of Iraq by Turkish troops to be improbable, the possibility of Chettah (irregular) band activities, discreetly supported by regular forces, had to be kept in view. I judged it highly probable that the Turk would endeavour to prejudice our case before the League of Nations by some such project, and that he would attempt to justify his action by any means lying close to his hand.

22. The news of these troop movements and the parallel negotiations being conducted by the Turks with the Kurds and Arabs immediately north of the frontier created instant alarm among the Assyrians settled on both sides of the frontier. The Assyrians, a people whose misfortunes are well known, are a small Christian nation who fought with the Allies during the war and had been subjected to virulent persecution by the Turks. These people were convinced that the movement was directed against them and, in my own mind, I believed that the Turks would make the Assyrians their excuse for a forward movement across the frontier.

On 7th August Turkish officials and escort came into conflict with the Assyrians at Hani, ten miles north of the border; this incident marked a definite stage in the sequence of their troop movement. For the next month they were reported to be steadily reinforcing garrisons along the frontier north of Amada and Zakho, while headquarters of the VIIth Corps was moved to Jazirah.

From 6th September reports indicated that Turkish troops were concentrated on the right bank of the Hazil Su (the frontier) and at Biespon, almost on the frontier. On 11th September it was reported that small parties had crossed into Iraq. Aircraft reconnaissance observed no movement on the 12th, but confirmed the concentration at Biespon.

Whatever the object, a flagrant violation of Iraq territory had taken place and firm action was necessary.

23. I appreciated the situation as follows:—

(a) The Turks had now brought down important formations of their VIIth Corps, and these were closing in on the Iraq frontier. It was known that they were determinedly fixed in their idea to obtain the Mosul Vilayet. Any situation which could be created in the vilayet to the embarrassment of the Iraq Government or to the improved prestige of the Turks might fairly be expected to weigh in the Turks favour during the frontier negotiations, and since they had not categorically pledged themselves to accept the ruling of the League of Nations in these negotiations, they would at any rate be in much better position to take or threaten such steps as they considered necessary if they rejected the ruling.

(b) They had already the excuse of 7th August to move against the Assyrians or, alternatively, the pan-Kurdish movement as an excuse for a move against the Kurds. Either would lead to unrest and disaffection among the tribes within our northern boundary. Any overrunning eastwards by the Kurds might seriously disturb the tribes around the north-eastern flank down to Rowanduz, which had been perfectly peaceful since the operation of 1923, and thence on to Sulaimani, which had recently been occupied.

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(c) Their primary intention therefore appeared to be—

(i) To establish themselves in the Mosul Vilayet for the reasons outlined in (a) above, and

(ii) To drive out the Assyrians and obtain the submission of the Northern Kurds.

(d) The forces at my disposal were designed for internal security only and, therefore, an inactive policy had to be avoided. If the situation was to be faced, early action was required to force upon the Turk the lesson that he could not violate our frontier with impunity. Though the crossing of the Hazil River by regular troops was a bold move, I felt convinced that the Turk was relying largely on our anxiety not to compromise by action the negotiations then in progress, and that if force was met by force he would hesitate before committing himself too deeply.

24. His Excellency the Acting High Commissioner agreed with these conclusions, and on 12th September the Turkish officials were warned that armed forces encountered within our borders would be fired upon.

25. On the 13th urgent warnings were received that the Turks would seize Zakho that night. I gave orders for an offensive patrol by No. 6 (Army Co-operation) Squadron for the following morning.

Nine Bristol Fighters arrived at Zakho on the morning of the 14th and proceeded along the Hazil River. At 0805 hours three hundred cavalry were observed crossing the River Borana close to Biespon and only six and a half miles from Zakho. The formation leader reported the facts by W/T and added that he was withholding action. I received the message in Baghdad, three hundred miles away, at 0812. I ordered immediate offensive measures. At 0821 the aircraft came into action; by 0830 the Turks were in full retreat. One pilot was wounded, but succeeded in reaching Zakho.

The formation continued its patrol, observing other enemy bodies, but its ammunition being exhausted, no action was taken. It returned, refuelled and re-armed at Zakho, and at 0945 attacked a party of one hundred and



fifty enemy horsemen at Birkar. The aircraft were met with heavy rifle fire but inflicted casualties to men and animals.

26. Although confident of being able to hold off any attack on Zakho by air action, I considered it advisable to instruct Colonel-Commandant H. T. Dobbin, C.B.E., D.S.O., Commandant of the Levies, to be prepared to form a Frontier Force from the Mosul Garrison for operations on the northern frontier.

I reinforced No. 6 Squadron by one flight of No. 55 (Bombing) Squadron from Baghdad, and despatched one section of No. 5 Armoured Car Company and one troop of the 3rd Iraq Cavalry to Zakho in order that their presence would reassure the inhabitants.

27. On the night of the 14/15th the police post at Bersivi was attacked by a tribal force stiffened with Turkish regulars. The attack was repulsed; three of the enemy were killed, including a Turkish regular officer.

28. On the 15th I placed all units in the Mosul area, exclusive of aircraft, under Colonel-Commandant Dobbin. These forces are enumerated in Appendix C. They included Iraq Army units, and I have here to record my appreciation of the promptitude with which they were placed at my disposal by His Majesty King Feisal and the Council of Ministers.

29. Meantime, reports between the 16th and 19th September revealed an eastward movement by Turkish forces from the immediate vicinity of Zakho towards the Assyrian settlements. The latter at once commenced to evacuate their homes and move south towards Amadia.

30. On 18th September I formed Aero wing at Mosul, under the command of Wing Commander W. H. Primrose, D.F.C. It consisted of two squadrons (Nos. 6 and 55) based on Zakho and Mosul respectively, and also No. 5 Armoured Car Company, which was responsible for the supply route to Zakho base. The squadrons were allotted to the areas west and east of the Khabur River respectively. On the 18th the remainder of No. 55 Squadron were moved to Mosul, followed by the ground personnel in Vickers Vernons the following morning.

31. On the 19th the Kurdish Goyan tribes, who had crossed into Iraq territory, were warned by proclamations that any further offensive would meet with severe air

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action. A sustained and vigorous air offensive was maintained against the Turkish line of communication, which eventually compelled its change to a longer, more circuitous and difficult route. Air attack on an enemy position in the village of Desht-I-Masik inflicted casualties on 32 officers and men.

32. Meantime, my attention was directed to the Amadia sector, north of which the Turks were reported to be advancing. As it happened, the annual inter-unit relief was at that time in progress at Amadia, where there were, therefore, two companies of Levies. I ordered Lieutenant-Colonel C. R. Barke, C.B.E., T.D., Commanding 3rd Battalion Iraq Levies, to move forward with the two companies, less two platoons, and to secure Banavi, a key position. His column reached Banavi on the 18th, where it was reinforced by some seventy Assyrian tribal volunteers. On the 19th two companies of the 3rd Battalion Iraq Levies were ordered from Diana to Amadia as reinforcements.

On the 21st Lieutenant-Colonel Barke was deserted by the tribal volunteers on his flank; as, moreover, the Kurds behind him were in an uncertain temper, he wisely decided to retire to the Ser Amadia Pass and there to await reinforcements from Diana and Mosul, which had been ordered up.

Throughout these operations Lieutenant-Colonel Barke was energetically supported by aircraft, against whom the Turks brought up artillery. The battery was, however, located and bombed.

33. At this time I was able to form the following appreciation of the situation, which was afterwards generally confirmed.

One of the immediate objects of the Turks, namely, the eviction of Assyrians, had been accomplished.

The Turkish operations had been carried out by three columns.

No. 1 Column, the 1st Cavalry Division, under Mursal Pasha, appeared to have been the principal striking force. Its main body crossed at Hauris on 12th September and reached Challek on or about the 16th. Thence it subsequently recrossed the border and, apparently in co-operation with the 2nd Column, moved on Ashita, which was occupied on the 20th. Its activity was much hampered by air action, from which it suffered considerable casualties. Our own casualties were two officers

and one airman wounded. Further, it was handicapped by the awkward line of communication through Roh Pasagah-Pirakh-Shiranis, necessary to avoid air action.

The combined strength of the 2nd and 3rd Columns was approximately two-thirds of a division.

The 2nd Column proceeded from Shernakh to Beit-es-shebab and subsequently to Ashita carrying out punitive measures in proximity to its line of march.

The activities of the 3rd Column appear to have been confined to a demonstration march down the Zab from Julamerk to Darawa.

34. I flew to Mosul and Zakho on the 22nd and reconnoitred the enemy's and our own lines by air.

Local information gave no indication of the next movements of the Turks, but it was clear that—

- (i) They were not retiring.
- (ii) They still occupied a line within Iraq.
- (iii) They were making every endeavour to retain the allegiance of the Kurdish tribes which had been badly shaken by air action.
- (iv) They were spreading propaganda regarding their early reoccupation of the Mosul Vilayet.
- (v) They still had two-thirds of a Corps (the VIIth) close to the boundary with advanced headquarters now moved forward to Besbin, only ten miles from Zakho.

35. This was a grave situation.

With resources designed only for internal security I had no intention of committing small ground forces to expeditions so far into the mountains, nor did I wish to split up my ground forces, at all with the exception of a possible movement in the Amadia sector to steady the Assyrians in the valleys.

For diplomatic reasons it was inadvisable to take air offensive against the Turkish bases and headquarters, but it was necessary nevertheless to prevent a further advance into Iraq, to deflect Kurdish support from the Turks, and to hamper troop movements in and out of Ashita.

I decided to intensify air action against the Line of Communication and the Turks within Iraq, and also, with the concurrence of His Excellency the High Commissioner, to bomb Ashita.

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36. On the 22nd September Ashita was bombed.

On the 23rd Lizan, Challek, Shiranis, Banik and parties near Chakallu.

On the 24th Challek and a convoy near Desht-I-Masik, the latter causing much destruction. Enemy fire from Shiranis was particularly persistent; Shiranis was immediately bombed in eight successive raids.

37. On the night of the 24th it was learned that the principal Kurdish tribes had withdrawn their support from the Turks and retired complaining of air action and lack of food, the latter probably due to the disorganisation of the convoy system caused by aircraft.

The same day I received the Home Government's instructions in accordance with which I ordered that air action was now only to be taken if machines were fired upon or ground forces attacked.

38. Meanwhile there was the question of the Assyrian refugees. Once again in its history this small Christian nation had been driven from its home and came swarming down through the mountains to British aid in a state of wretched poverty-stricken despair, and in numbers likely to prove an embarrassment to the defence of the Amadia sector; moreover, they were in such a destitute condition that it was feared they would raid Kurdish villages for food.

His Excellency the High Commissioner issued comprehensive instructions for their resettlement. For this it was important that the fertile Berwari Valley should be reoccupied to prevent the complete destruction of the villages, to provide accommodation for the Assyrians and to enable the crops to be harvested.

A general forward movement for this purpose was commenced by Lieutenant-Colonel Barke on the 24th September. He was supported by four hundred volunteers from the refugees, a force raised by Flight Lieutenant G. S. Reed, O.B.E., an officer with twenty years' experience of the Assyrians.

The Turks resisted with machine gun and rifle fire, but the line Benawi-Mai-Ain D'nuni was established after the Assyrians had behaved with dash and determination in attacking the machine gun posts near Mai and inflicting casualties on the enemy. Government was re-established in Ain D'nuni, and a series of forward posts held by Levies covered the newly occupied area.

As the Turks had fired on our aircraft from that place, retaliatory air action was taken against Ashita on the 2nd October; it was met by artillery fire, intended primarily, it may be assumed, for moral effect on the tribes. On the 3rd, one hundred and fourteen bombs were dropped on Ashita, inflicting, it was learned later, casualties to the extent of fifty men and fifty animals.

39. On the same day, 3rd October, I received cable instruction that the British and Turkish Delegations at Geneva had undertaken to maintain the *status quo ante* pending a final settlement of the frontier. I therefore confined offensive action to territory within the Administrative Boundary. I believed, however, that there might be considerable variance between the British and Turkish interpretation of the *status quo ante*. A strict watch on Turkish movements was therefore essential. Up to the 8th October there were no signs that withdrawal was taking place. On the contrary, reports pointed to the arrival of reinforcements.

The most effective and economical method of securing a withdrawal would have been to bomb by day and night the Turkish bases outside Iraq, but higher policy forbade this. I was, however, prepared with plans to attack his back areas with several tons of bombs every few hours should the situation at any time demand it. A Vernon squadron was detailed to be ready at short notice to undertake night bombing.

40. Meantime, the Turkish Government was equivocating with H.B.M.'s Government as to the exact interpretation of the *status quo ante*. Urged by His Excellency the High Commissioner, His Majesty's Government formally warned the Turkish Government on 8th October that, if a return to the line previously communicated to them was not carried out at once, complete liberty of action to adopt all necessary measures to restore the situation would be resumed as from midday 11th October.

I received instructions on the 9th to communicate this ultimatum to the Turkish Commanders and to acquaint them with the line to which they were required to withdraw.

41. I sent a senior Staff Officer, Colonel W. Dent, C.B.E., D.S.O., by air to Zakho with a letter for Jaffar Tayar Pasha, the Turkish Corps Commander. After some difficulty Colonel Dent succeeded in delivering the letter

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personally to the Corps Commander at Rubahi Kale, behind the Turkish lines, at 0900 hours local on 11th October. It was apparent from the interview that Jaffar Tayar Pasha was without instructions from his Government. While prepared to resist any advance by us, he agreed to refrain from further hostile movement himself pending the receipt of definite instructions.

As it was not possible for him in these circumstances to have withdrawn by noon on this day I suspended immediate action.

A similar message was delivered by a British Officer to the local Turkish Commander in front of the Amadia sector.

42. Further Notes were being exchanged between the two Governments.

On the 13th official instructions were received to suspend offensive action. On the 15th the two Governments agreed to institute no movement in modification of the line then held. The line held by the Turks was approximately Roh Pasagah, Shiranis Islam, Banik, Shilun, Challek, Alamun, Geramus, Ashita.

I confined activity to air reconnaissance of our own forward posts, issued instructions that neither ground nor air forces were to approach Turkish posts, and informed the Turkish Commander of my action, requesting reciprocal orders on his part.

43. On the 12th October, the Turkish withdrawal commenced; it was completed on 20th November, on which date I withdrew all aircraft to normal stations and commenced to move the Levies to their winter quarters.

The Provisional Boundary, now known as the Brussels Line, was approved by the League of Nations on the 30th October and came into force on 15th November. It was substantially identical to the original Administrative Boundary. By 28th November the Provisional Boundary was manned with Iraq Police Posts and the situation normal.

44. I am satisfied that the success of our operations was due to the vigorous air offensive initiated on 14th September, and continued with unflagging energy. Even had I possessed the ground troops necessary to meet the situation, much time would have been lost, in a country devoid of modern means of concentration, in organising

an expedition. Moreover, our line of communication would have offered provocative temptation of loot to the Kurds.

Relying almost entirely on aircraft I was handling an absolutely flexible force. I was able to rely upon finding my aircraft concentrated back at their base within an hour or so of air action and able to throw the full weight of all my local air forces at any unexpected spot along the frontier at any time. The simplicity with which this principal of economy of force is accomplished is a factor of great confidence to an Air Force Commander, and brings results out of all proportion to the forces employed.

Throughout I was handicapped by the fact that, for good reasons of higher policy, I was unable to attack the enemy's Headquarters, nerve centres and arteries in accordance with the fundamental principles of air warfare. I was, therefore, compelled to await his initiative in each phase and deal with it only as it arose—a valuable asset to an enemy hampered by no such niceties. Nevertheless, except in his ejection of the Assyrians, the enemy entirely failed to obtain his object and eventually retired to his original line with a loss of some two hundred killed and wounded.

The success of the air defence was attributable to the great flexibility of an air command, to the power of concentration at the immediately important point thus afforded, and finally, and not least, to the dash and determination of the pilots and their gunners.

#### SOUTHERN IRAQ.

45. In the meantime the situation as regards the shepherd tribes, who were periodically raided by the Akhwan, called for my attention. (*See* paragraph 10.)

From 1920 onwards these tribes in the Southern Shamiyah Desert (*see* Map 4) had lived in a constant state of terror and uncertainty. Not only were their losses in property considerable, but the Akhwan idiosyncrasy of slaughtering all males in cold blood had completely broken their nerve. Compelled by fear to camp in large numbers in congested areas close to the railway or river, they had been unable to find suitable grazing for their sheep, such as they can secure by spreading far and wide over the face of the desert.

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The situation was complicated by the presence within Iraq of a large number of Akhwan refugees who, incurring the displeasure of Ibn Saud, had fled across the border into Iraq for safety. No sooner ensconced in safety than these refugees commenced a policy of petty raids against their former fellow-countrymen, thus providing the Akhwan with an excuse, if excuse were needed, for increased incursions into Iraq territory.

46. As a result of these raids by Akhwan refugees during the summer of 1924 the prospects in November, when the shepherd tribes commenced to move out from the river, were ominous in the extreme.

The principal difficulty in meeting these raids with force is to obtain a report of their occurrence within a reasonable time. Far out in the desert, where the quickest means of communication is the camel, it is not surprising that a raid can be carried out and the raiders regain the frontier some time before information of it even reaches the nearest Government centre. Periodic air patrol of the desert, while of value in heartening the tribes, was unlikely to happen upon a raid or raiding party; it therefore exercised little deterrent effect upon the Akhwan, who had not as yet encountered air action.

47. After considerable discussion between His Excellency the High Commissioner, the Iraq Government and myself, the first step towards improving these conditions was taken by sending Major W. J. Bovill, O.B.E., 1st Baluch Regiment, attached Iraq Army, and Captain J. B. Glubb, O.B.E., M.C., Royal Engineers, Special Service Officer, on an extended reconnaissance of the desert early in December in order to find routes suitable for armoured and other cars, to improve knowledge of the local topography and to ascertain any suitable spots for advanced stations where information could be collected and transmitted by wireless. These two officers, whose intimate knowledge of the Bedouin and shepherd tribes particularly fitted them for this task, made a most valuable report on the conclusion of the reconnaissance. (As a result orders were given for Abu Ghar to be placed in a state of defence; when done, it was occupied by two platoons of the Iraq Army and a W/T detachment. The actual occupation took place on 8th January, 1925. (See paragraph 60.))

48. On 26th December, 1924, a large Akhwan raid was made upon the Bani Huchaim tribe at Umm Rahal, a



point forty miles south of the railway. As it happened, the local Intelligence Officer, Captain J. B. Glubb, M.C., Royal Engineers, was on his way to the Bani Huchaim camp at the time of the raid. He pushed on and obtained ocular proof that a raid was actually in progress. He then got away by camel and, after an exhausting ride, reached the nearest telegraph at Jalibah on the morning of the 27th. Unfortunately, snow and rain on the 27th prevented the pursuit of the raiders by aircraft from Shaibah. On the 28th, however, they were overtaken and bombed; and again on the 29th.

On 31st December a further raid was carried out by a separate body of Akhwan on other sections of the Bani Huchaim in the vicinity of Haddiniyah, some seventy miles south-west of Samawah. The Iraq tribes lost heavily. News of the raid was slow to come in. On the 6th January, however, the raiders were located from the air by the Special Service Officer near Nuqrat Salman. On the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th they were bombed by aircraft of No. 8 (Bombing) Squadron operating from Samawah, killing fifty-three men and seventy-six animals. This raiding party, unaware that the raiders of a few days previously had been punished by aircraft, were making a leisurely retreat up to the 7th January, their pace being much reduced by the necessity of getting away the looted sheep. With the arrival of the aircraft, however, they commenced to abandon the slower moving animals and made the regaining of Najd territory in safety their principal object.

49. There was little doubt that the most satisfactory method of stopping raiding was by negotiation with Ibn Saud. Unfortunately negotiations had for the time being broken down. It had again been impressed on me as a result of these raids that if in the meantime the Akhwan was to be met by force, our first necessity lay in the continued improvement of the organisation of the intelligence system, so that warning of approaching raids might be obtained and their occurrence reported with rapidity and certainty. The air attacks of the end of December and the beginning of January had caused many casualties and considerable moral effect upon the Akhwan. Provided that in the future I could get aircraft to the scene of a raid with reasonable rapidity, I was satisfied that a big check could be administered to raiding. For the first time the raiders had been met by force and for the first time they had realised that the forces of the

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British Government were behind the wretched tribesmen, and it subsequently transpired that as a result orders were issued by Ibn Saud that raiding was to cease for the time being.

A difficulty requiring early rectification was the grossly inaccurate maps of the area in question; these were, in places, as much as forty miles out. I determined that early in 1925 it was essential to produce an accurate map of the Akhwan raiding area.

#### HAMMAR LAKE DISTRICT.

50. Throughout the autumn considerable trouble was fermented and inconvenience caused to Government by the growing pride and insubordination of Sheikh Salim Al Khayun. Living as he did in the most inaccessible marsh country, an area unadministered by the Turks in their time for this reason, he incited the people to varying acts of disobedience against Government forces. In late October these culminated in the definite hold up of a police party by the armed garrison of a fort at Al Amairah. Being few in numbers the police were compelled to retire.

It was decided to take action, not against his dupes, but against Sheikh Salim himself. He was therefore warned on the 24th November that if he did not submit to Government within five days air action would be taken against him. He did not do so.

His house and guest-house were situated on the outskirts of the village of Chubaish, the inhabitants of which had committed no offence. On 29th November the inhabitants of Chubaish were warned by air proclamation that the Sheikh's house would be bombed on the following day, while strict orders were issued to the unit concerned that great care must be exercised to bomb only the property of the insubordinate chief.

On 30th November and 1st and 2nd December Salim's house and guest-house were bombed and totally destroyed by aircraft of No. 84 (Bombing) Squadron from Shaibah, without any injury to the inhabitants of Chubaish or damage to their property. The accuracy of the bombing reflected credit on the pilots and gunners concerned. During the period of the operation a gunboat was moved into the Hammar Lake and the railway at Ghabishiyah protected by armoured cars from Basrah as a precautionary measure.

The way in which Sheikh Salim was punished in the midst of his tribes, but without any injury to them, created an immense impression on the tribesmen and had a far-reaching influence throughout the Hammar Lake District.

Sheikh Salim surrendered unconditionally on 5th December.

1925.

SULAIMANI AREA.

51. The climatic conditions of Kurdistan compelled the rebels to inactivity during the winter of 1924-25. In the early spring, however, it became evident, as was expected, that Sheikh Mahmud was preparing for a renewal of his struggle. From the safety of his retreat a few miles across the Persian frontier he was carrying on active propaganda and enlisting followers from both the Persian and Iraq sides of the border. He did not commence operations until April, when he appeared with a large following in the vicinity of Sulaimani, where he collected taxes. At the same time, 13th April, tribesmen of the Nauroli Jaf, at the instigation of Mahmud, entered Halebja and looted the bazaar. In driving them out the police suffered several casualties. On the 17th air action was taken against the two villages concerned; on the 22nd the loot was returned.

52. It was no part of the intention of His Excellency the High Commissioner that the elusive Sheikh Mahmud should be pursued by regular force up and down the valleys of Southern Kurdistan. Such a policy was no more likely to be successful in his case than it was in that of De Wet. On the contrary, it was intended steadily to increase the Government sphere of influence by means of police posts on our lines of communication and the establishment of military garrisons in the principal towns of strategic importance. As a preliminary it was decided to garrison Halebja with a force of Levies, and to protect the Sulaimani-Halebja road with police posts.

In pursuance of this decision the 2nd Levy Cavalry Regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel B. T. Lawrence, V.C., left Sulaimani on 20th May en route Halebja, a two-day march. The same evening, while encamped at Arbat, the regiment was attacked by rebel forces. As approaching darkness forbade mounted action, a dismounted bayonet

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attack was successfully launched against a commanding strong point. The enemy was driven off, leaving nineteen prisoners and a quantity of arms and ammunition in our hands. Next day the march was resumed. On arrival in the valley south of Giryazah the column was attacked by strong enemy forces estimated at some five hundred rifles under the leadership of three of Mahmud's principal lieutenants. Hard fighting continued to a late hour, but eventually the valley was cleared and the march resumed. At a most critical moment a delicate situation was turned in our favour by the arrival of a flight of No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron from Sulaimani, which I had ordered to support the column. The Snipes caught a large body of the enemy in the open and practically annihilated them. Enemy casualties in the day's fighting were sixty-eight killed and some ninety wounded. The 2nd Levy Cavalry Regiment lost ten killed and sixteen wounded. The column arrived Halejaba the following day, 22nd May.

The regiment fought well in this their first action, a severe one, in which the conditions favoured the enemy. Moreover, a large percentage of the men were Kurds fighting rebel Kurds. The determination with which they fought was a fine tribute to their British officers and non-commissioned officers.

This early reverse was a decided set-back to Sheikh Mahmud's plans for the year.

53. Sheikh Mahmud now appeared with some four hundred followers in the Sharbazher district, north of Sulaimani, where it may be said his influence was at this time undisputed. It was therefore decided to occupy Choartah, the principal village of that area, with a column of Assyrian and Iraq Army troops from Sulaimani under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel G. C. M. Sorel-Cameron.

As a preliminary a strong point was constructed on the Azmir Pass, which leads into the Sharbazher district. This was completed and wired in on 6th June. The same night it was attacked by the rebels; they were driven off but not, unfortunately, before a British Officer attached to the Iraq Army had been killed.

On the 7th the column left Sulaimani and, passing through a deserted countryside, occupied Choartah without opposition the same day. Occupation was immediately followed by the installation of permanent Government

representatives. The rebel chief had been in the village up to 5th June, but on that date had left hurriedly for Penjwin, presumably to augment his forces from the Pizhder tribes and dispute our occupation of the new district. Anticipatory air action was taken on 19th June with good results against certain sections of the Pizhder known to be enlisting in his forces.

54. On 20th June Sheikh Mahmud, now ready for battle, was reported to be moving back in the direction of Choartah with a force of some eight hundred to one thousand rifles. On the 21st his main body was stated to be concentrated in the vicinity of Marnah, six miles north-east of Choartah, with a line of outposts running between Waras and Nurabab. His occupation of Marnah was confirmed by air reconnaissance on the 24th. From 21st June, patrols were sent forward by Sharcol, but touch was only made with the enemy at Harman, four miles south of Choartah. It was obvious that the rebels were approaching the village from several directions.

I had no intention of interfering with Mahmud's preliminary arrangements. I was anxious that he should be drawn on and that, with the help of the ex-Turkish officers in his following, he should make such dispositions as he thought fit. It was only by engagements such as the one now impending that the Regular forces could make the most of their superior armament and training. I had previously, therefore, instructed the column Commander to use every endeavour to tie down the rebels to a major engagement.

With this object in view a reconnaissance in force was made by the column on the 25th in a northerly direction towards Kinaru. It was partially successful; that is to say, successful in the sharp fighting which ensued, but unsuccessful in that the enemy did not wait to see the fight to an issue. With that mobility which is a feature of tribal warfare, the enemy forces suddenly disintegrated, in the literal sense of the word. Our casualties were four killed and nine wounded; the enemy's—forty killed, wounded unknown. Aircraft of No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron co-operated; one aeroplane was brought down but landed alongside the column. On the same day air action by No. 30 (Bombing) Squadron was directed against the enemy base in Marnah village.

Two days later a reconnaissance was carried out to Kinaru, where the enemy, some three hundred strong, was dislodged and the village burned.

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As a result of these operations the Sharbazher area was brought under direct Government control and Sheikh Mahmud was deserted by his Pizhder followers. He was compelled to disband the remainder of his following and once more to retire into Persia.

By the beginning of July Government prestige and administration was sufficiently established in the Sharbazher to warrant the withdrawal of the column. It first made a demonstration march to Penjwin and returned to Sulaimani on the 10th July. It was engaged in minor fighting en route.

The tribal villages which had actively supported the rebels with men and arms were punished by air action.

55. After this reverse rebel activity for the remainder of the summer was largely confined to the areas Penjwin, Ab-I-Tanjero, Qara Dagh and Sangao, areas which we were not as yet ready to bring under control. Small rebel bands continued to appear here and there for the purpose of robbing the inhabitants of defenceless villages; they were, however, more a matter for police than for military attention. Any attempt to suppress them by military methods would merely be striking at the air; with their small numbers, thorough knowledge of the country and superior mobility, they could elude with ease the regular forces of the Government.

In an area very nearly as large as Southern Ireland, where indeed a similar lesson was previously learned, regular forces were no match for mobile bands of rebels operating some forty strong—more particularly when, as in this instance, our available forces amounted to two battalions of infantry and two regiments of cavalry.

56. Nevertheless, throughout the autumn the military garrison of Sulaimani was not idle in regard to these small rebel parties.

Under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel (now Colonel Commandant) J. G. Browne, C.M.G., D.S.O., night marches, raids on villages suspected of harbouring rebels and sorties into the hills by night in localities where rebels were thought to be lurking, were made by small mobile columns marching light and unhampered by baggage. The effect of this admirable activity, together with the establishment of police posts on the Sulaimani-Halebja road, had a most gratifying effect on the security of the district, in the Sulaimani valley itself, and along the Halebja road.

In addition to the normal garrison, the Officer Commanding at Sulaimani had at his disposal a force of seventy Assyrian Irregulars. These men had been enlisted as part of a larger force during the summer to operate independently against the rebel forces and it had been hoped that they might chance upon one or other of the principal rebel leaders, who would be less well-informed as to the movements of a loose irregular force than as to that of a regular column. While, in fact, the achievements of the Irregulars did not in this respect come up to expectations, they fought with vigour and gallantry in support of Camcol during the operations around Choartah. (See Para. 54.) They were also of great value to Colonel Browne in the local operations referred to above.

They were finally disbanded in November.

57. While the system of gradually extending Government administration under the protection of a series of police posts and small garrisons must in the end achieve its object, it was clear to me that in the meantime military pressure might be exerted in other directions upon the mainspring of the trouble—Sheikh Mahmud.

It had been his custom for many years to supplement his resources by means of a bi-annual levy upon the Jaf. The Jaf are a nomad tribe who graze their flocks in the lowlands of Southern Kurdistan during the winter; in June they move to the Persian uplands, where they remain until September, when they return. Their annual trek to and from Persia is compelled by the configuration of the country to follow certain definite routes, which converge at the entrance to the Penjwin Plain, namely, at the Kani Manga and Qizilja Passes. At these two places Sheikh Mahmud would establish his followers and levy his taxes as the Jaf passed through.

58. I therefore arranged, in consultation with His Excellency the High Commissioner, for a column to leave Sulaimani early in September and take up a position flanking the rebel tax collectors.

While the migrating Jaf were warned by air proclamations that they must not pay tribute to Sheikh Mahmud, a column, 750 strong, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel (now Colonel Commandant) J. G. Browne, C.M.G., D.S.O., left via Choartah for Gola, a dominating position some ten miles north of the passes mentioned

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above. Gola was reached on 23rd September. The rebel forces immediately withdrew without fight; the Jaf passed through unmolested and the column returned to Sulaimani on the 30th.

This successful little operation deprived the rebel leader of considerable resources with which to stir up trouble and pay his followers; its full value was appreciated by the ensuing inactivity of the rebels.

As usual, after a reverse, Mahmud retired to Persia.

59. This ability on the part of Sheikh Mahmud to retire at will into Persia, where he could in complete immunity reorganise his forces and plan fresh troubles, is a serious complication to any military plans for his destruction. If, however, the co-operation of the Persian Government could be secured in an active sense it might be possible once and for all to follow the rebel leader to a finish instead of, as always, being brought to a standstill on every occasion by an international barrier.

With the concurrence of His Excellency the High Commissioner and of the Air Ministry and with this object in view, I flew on 7th October from Baghdad to Teheran, where I discussed the matter with Riza Khan, then Prime Minister of Persia. I also interviewed the Persian District Commander at Kermanshah on my way back. It was agreed that it was now too late in the year to initiate operations, but it was hoped that some form of joint action would be feasible in the following year. In the issue, however, it remained a hope. With the accession of Riza Khan to the throne of Persia the internal situation changed and the troops could not be spared.

There was little activity in the Sulaimani area for the remainder of the year.

#### SOUTHERN IRAQ.

60. The steps necessary to improve our anti-Akhwan organisation have previously been indicated (*see* para. 47).

After the 18th January, 1925, when Abu Ghar fort was garrisoned with Iraq Army troops and a wireless station installed, there was at our disposal a centre from which early information of events in the desert would emanate.

I also moved a flight of No. 8 (Bombing) Squadron from Hinaidi to Samawah, where it would be readily available for operations in the northern sectors of the Shamiyah Desert.



One other step was, however, as previously stated, necessary to the efficiency of the desert air patrols—accurate maps.

For this purpose I utilised the services of an Army Officer on my staff, Lieutenant W. J. Dynes, Royal Engineers. He commenced work on 13th February, first by car from Shaibah, and subsequently by air from Samawah. By 13th May the work was completed. Thirty thousand square miles of desert had been re-mapped and detail inserted, using air traverse, air sketching, compass and car traverse and also theodolite traverse. Certain points in the featureless desert were selected, fixed astronomically and lettered in white for the benefit of air patrols. Needless to say, an area of this extent could not have been covered in a space of three months without the assistance of aircraft. I was particularly impressed by the value of aircraft in this role.

As a further precaution, His Excellency the High Commissioner, on my urgent representations, decided to call upon the Iraq Government to move to a point more remote from Najd territory those Akhwan refugees who invited retaliation by raiding their former fellow-countrymen. (*See* para. 45.) The move was made during the months of May, June and July under the supervision of Flight-Lieutenant G. M. Moore, M.C. He carried out the task, one calling for considerable tact and knowledge of the Bedouin character, with complete success.

61. Throughout the desert grazing season constant air patrols were carried out. They achieved their object, in that no single raid was attempted by the Akhwan—now aware of the rapidity with which aircraft could overtake and punish him.

Abu Ghar was evacuated at the end of the grazing season, when the shepherd tribes had withdrawn to the east. Later in the year the Akhwan raided the Dhafir, a Bedouin tribe, southwest of Abu Ghar, and escaped with 1,700 camels into Najd territory before any information was received of the raid. Subsequently the majority of the camels were returned.

62. In October, 1925, Sir Gilbert Clayton's negotiations at Bara were successfully concluded and a treaty on the subject of frontier relations signed between the Iraq and Najd Governments. By this agreement both Governments are pledged to do all in their power to prevent raids; moreover, the local officials on each side of the frontier

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are empowered together to investigate and settle minor differences. This should do much to eradicate the causes of raids.

63. As a precaution, Abu Ghar was re-occupied in November.

In addition an organisation was set up for giving the alarm in case of a raid and for co-ordinating the action of all concerned in relation to it. The detail of this organisation is given in full at Appendix B.

In the issue no raids materialised.

The confidence with which the tribesmen moved out into the desert for grazing, right up to the frontiers of Majd, was due largely to the untiring efforts and zeal of Captain J. B. Glubb, O.B.E., M.C., the Special Service Officer, who spent a large part of his time moving about with them and in touch with the latest situation across the border; nor were the Akwhan themselves unaware of his activity, which, no doubt, they took into account in their decision to abstain from raiding.

#### IRAQ ARMY.

64. Before turning to events in the north I must divert to recount briefly the re-organisation of the Iraq Army, initiated in the year under review.

In 1921, under the supervision of a small British staff, the first steps were taken to organise a national army in Iraq. In a space of four years there was built up a force of three cavalry regiments, four batteries of artillery, five battalions of infantry and three transport companies; no small achievement under the circumstances.

Towards the close of 1924 it was realised, however, that if the Iraq Army was at a reasonably early date to take over the responsibilities then being fulfilled by Imperial troops, its expansion must be considerably accelerated and its training improved.

65. With a view to studying this problem on the spot and laying down a definite scheme for decreasing the Imperial financial contribution, Iraq was visited in March, 1925, by the Secretaries of State for Air and for the Colonies, the Right Honourable Sir Samuel Hoare, Bart., C.M.G., M.P., and the Right Honourable Mr. L. C. M. S. Amery, M.P. Their investigations satisfied them that, in the then financial condition of Iraq, any reorganisation of the army must take the form of increased efficiency

rather than of expansion. In this opinion, but for other reasons, His Excellency the High Commissioner and I agreed. Any large increase in the army ignored the factor of air control. We held the view that a large army without aircraft was useless; with aircraft it was unnecessary.

Before the Secretaries of State left a scheme was evolved for the immediate intensification of training under an increased staff of British officers supervised by an Inspector-General of the rank of Major-General. The system agreed upon was to form a small number of exemplar units under British officers, each with an Iraqi understudy. Training would be concentrated upon in these units for a year or more until they were considered efficient, when the instructing staff of British officers would be transferred to other units, which in their turn would be exemplar. Expansion was, for the time being, limited to one infantry battalion; thus efficiency, not size, was the object. In this connection it should be remembered that the primary role of the Iraq Army will be internal security; it was for this purpose that it was originally formed, and it is in this responsibility that it will ultimately relieve Imperial troops.

66. In the autumn of 1925 the Inspector-General, Major-General A. C. Daly, C.B., C.M.G., arrived with his staff and immediately set to work with most satisfactory results.

The original exemplar scheme has been modified in certain respects as the result of experience, but the object remains the same—the achievement of a small but highly-trained force. I confidently expect that in due course the new scheme will produce a fighting force ready to compare favourably with forces in other countries trained under the supervision of British officers.

#### NORTHERN IRAQ.

67. The events of the autumn of 1924 had definitely checked Turkish penetration into Iraq. Turkish propaganda, however, redoubled, while the Turkish Government more than ever re-affirmed its intention to obtain Mosul, by force if necessary.

Though largely dependent on political negotiations, the military situation was one which I regarded with a certain amount of anxiety.

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68. On 16th January the Boundary Commission of the League of Nations arrived in Baghdad and almost immediately moved north to commence its investigations, which lasted until 23rd March, 1925. As might be expected among an ignorant people who have been visited by an imposing body of strangers and questioned as to their views on the existing order of Government, trouble soon broke out in certain areas visited by the Commission. This first declared itself in the Jabal Sinjar area, some seventy miles west of Mosul, where certain Sheikhs, in defiance of the orders of Government, commenced a series of attacks on weaker tribes early in April. They were warned on the 16th April that unless fighting ceased immediately and they reported in person to the local government authority they would be subjected to air action. They refused to submit. On the 17th and 18th they were attacked by aircraft, which were heavily fired upon. Air action was resumed on the 24th. By the end of the month the situation was restored to normal and the recalcitrant chiefs had made their submission.

No sooner suppressed, than this affair was followed by an incident near Marsis, five miles south of the Brussels line, on May 4th. One, Jamil Agha, ambushed a party of policemen, killing six and wounding two. Air action was directed on the 5th May against the four villages of this chieftain, who fled across the frontier into Turkish territory, where he has since remained.

These two instances are quoted, firstly, to show the air of unrest created in certain quarters by the visit of the League of Nations Commission, and secondly, as an example of the rapidity with which punishment could be successfully meted out to the offenders.

69. Meantime the League of Nations had postponed its decision on the Mosul question until the autumn, when it would have the opportunity of considering the report of its Boundary Commission. In the interim the problem occupied a prominent position in the Home Press. The attitude of an ill-informed but influential section of this press was such that one might reasonably suppose the Turks would be influenced by it in the direction of a coup d'etat; at the same time it disturbed the Iraqis to an extent which might shake their loyalty in the event of a Turkish attack.

70. In the spring of 1925, the Kurdish revolt broke out on a large scale in south-eastern Anatolia. Admittedly

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this revolt needed extensive troop movement with which to suppress it, but it also provided the Turk with the opportunity, nominally to suppress the rebellion, but equally to make a concentration of force which could with ease be diverted against Mosul Vilayet.

By May, 1925, two additional divisions had been concentrated in the VIIth Corps area, immediately beyond the frontier; moreover, the following divisions had been moved south to the fringe of the VIIth Corps area:—

- 3rd Infantry Division.
- 5th Infantry Division.
- 12th Infantry Division.
- 15th Infantry Division.

Extensive drafts had, too, been sent to the VIIth Corps, and a partial mobilisation ordered.

71. By September the Kurdish revolt had practically been suppressed; the Turks, however, showed little sign of reducing their concentration. On the contrary, at this time, and subsequently, they were endeavouring to pass additional troops in large numbers from west to east along the Aleppo-Nisibin railway.

72. Briefly, I appreciated the situation as follows:—

- (a) Large forces out of all proportion to the necessities of the Kurdish rising had been and were being concentrated immediately to the north of the frontier.
- (b) The decision of the League of Nations was not expected until December, and I did not think that the Turkish Government would compromise a possible decision in its favour by any definite attempt against Mosul while there was still a chance of gaining the object by peaceful means.
- (c) In December, it is true, the rains commence, and from December to April is the period of the year least suited to operations in that area. On the other hand, this disability would handicap us equally. Every day of inactivity on the part of the Turks, subsequent to a decision in our favour, would harm their position politically; moreover, with delay Turkish national enthusiasm, now well aroused, would decrease. The troops were available and ready; delay, too, would not improve the military situation in their favour; it would do so in ours.

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(d) I believed that if resort to force was intended, it would follow immediately upon the decision of the League, and on that assumption I made my plans.

73. I considered that, irrespective of the season of the year at which hostilities opened, the most probable line of advance would be down the right bank of the Tigris. True, this would involve the violation of French Mandated territory; a consideration, however, which would not seriously deter the Turk. Probable secondary attacks against Rowanduz and Amadia might be anticipated, but the severity of the winter in the mountain country would prohibit their development in any serious strength.

I was strongly of the opinion, backed by my experience of the previous year, that Mosul should be defended with determination to the full ability of the forces at my disposal; beyond that, of course, it was a political matter. Any weakening on our part in the north would react tenfold upon our lines of communication, and in this connection my plans had to cater, not only to meet a Turkish advance, but to effect a withdrawal through a probably hostile country in the event of policy demanding our exit.

Except that the Turks had infinitely larger forces with which to strike and I correspondingly less with which to resist, my situation was not dissimilar to that which confronted Sir John Salmond in January, 1923; nor to my mind was there any doubt as to the method by which to meet the situation—the forward policy. (See Sir John Salmond's Report, Air Publication 1105, Sections 46 to 58.)

74. It is now neither necessary nor desirable to examine my plans in detail. Broadly they fall under four main headings as follows:—

- (a) Air Action.
- (b) Defence North-west of Mosul.
- (c) Defence North-east of Mosul.
- (d) Tribal Action.

75. (a) *Air Action*.—Arrangements had been made to concentrate a striking force of four squadrons at a new aerodrome in the vicinity of Mosul. In addition, one squadron (No. 6) would be placed at the disposal of Chapforce (see (b) below) for Army co-operation, and one

squadron (No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron), employed against enemy aircraft, of which he was known to possess two squadrons of eight machines each in that area.

The energies of the striking force would in the first instance have been directed against enemy back areas. These bombing squadrons would later work in closer co-operation with the ground forces, bombing enemy formation headquarters and concentrations of troops and transport.

I have here to record my appreciation of the freedom of action conceded me by His Majesty's Government to take such steps as I thought fit against any Turkish centre within radius of my aircraft should the frontier be violated by foreign troops. Convinced that if preliminary attacks were firmly met the Turks would abandon their attempt, I regarded this concession as of the utmost importance.

(b) *Defence North-west of Mosul.*—The ground troops I determined to divide into two bodies; the main force, to be known as Chapforce, under the command of Colonel Commandant J. G. Chaplin, C.B.E., D.S.O., was to fight delaying actions from the frontier; its composition is set out in Appendix D. In November, Colonel Commandant Chaplin reconnoitred the area over which he would have to fight; certain selected positions were chosen by him at which he would check the Turkish advance pending the arrival of reinforcements from India. (The question of reinforcements is considered separately below.) With the limited ground resources at my disposal I had no intention of getting too closely involved with the superior numbers of the Turks.

(c) *Defence North-east of Mosul.*—The second and smaller force, Eastforce, under the command of Colonel Commandant H. T. Dobbin, C.B.E., D.S.O., would hold Khanawatman, Aqra and Amadia. For its composition see Appendix D.

Both forces were to have been independent, each directly under Air Headquarters.

(d) *Tribal Action.*—It was also proposed to raise three tribal forces of a total strength of 2,000 rifles; one to operate on the left flank of Chapforce, one to support Eastforce, and one to raid the Turkish lines of communication.

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76. Reinforcements from India, at any rate in the first instance, were limited. The first echelon, with necessary ancillary services, was due to arrive in the theatre of operations on the thirty-fifth day after demand. Political considerations, which it is now unnecessary to examine, forbade the despatch of reinforcements before some definite aggressive act had been made by the Turks. This seriously reduced their value. I was confident, however, that I could largely hold the Turk with my aircraft. The remaining two echelons were due upon dates so distant from the opening of hostilities that they would probably only have arrived when the Turkish advance had been definitely checked.

77. It was intended, on the arrival of the first echelon, to place all ground forces other than Eastforce under the command of Major-General A. C. Daly, C.B., C.M.G., Inspector-General of the Iraq Army.

78. In November my attention was directed to the extensive movement of troops from Aleppo to Nisibin. In the early part of the month some six thousand Turkish troops were reported to have passed east along the railway, while only some twelve hundred had been passed in the opposite direction. Strong representations were made by His Excellency the High Commissioner to ensure that the French Government should exercise a stricter control. In agreement with His Excellency, however, I placed little faith in the ability of that Government to achieve anything in the matter. French attention in Syria was primarily devoted to the delicacy of its own situation.

In the same month the Turks closed the frontier and prohibited either ingress or egress; this turned the whole of the north into a secret area.

79. On 16th December the League of Nations reached the unanimous decision that—

- (a) the frontier of Iraq should be the Brussels Line, and
- (b) the British Government should conclude a treaty with Iraq for a continuance of the Mandate to twenty-five years, unless Iraq joined the League before the end of that period.

80. Direct negotiations were almost immediately opened by Sir Ronald Lindsay, His Britannic Majesty's Minister at Constantinople, to reach a friendly settlement with the Turkish Government.



On 5th June, 1926, an agreement settling the entire problem was signed at Angora on behalf of the British, Turkish and Iraqi Governments.

The Turkish menace to Iraq no longer existed.

1926.

SULAIMANI DISTRICT.

81. Throughout the winter of 1925-26 Sheikh Mahmud remained inactive in Persia. His failure to tax the Jaf in September, 1925 (*see* para. 58) had left him short of funds with which to pay his followers. He made several offers of submission to His Excellency the Acting High Commissioner, but as these invariably drew a subtle distinction between submission to the British Government and submission to the Iraq Government they could not be entertained; to a large extent they were probably insincere.

82. In late February straitened circumstances compelled him to commence tax-collecting rather earlier than the winter conditions allowed. A large party of rebels in that month appeared in the Qara Dagh but collected only some few hundred rupees. They were returning towards Penjwin when, reinforced by a second party under Kerim Fatteh Beg and his son Sabir, they returned to the Qara Dagh, where they arrived on 8th March.

Meantime, owing to heavy rains, the Ab-I-Tanjero River, which they had just crossed westwards, rose to flood height and became unfordable, thus cutting off the retreat of the rebels except at one point, where there existed a timber bridge. (*See* Map.)

This offered a favourable opportunity to effect a capture of Kerim Fatteh Beg and his son, from which the prestige of Mahmud would long suffer; moreover, the former was wanted for the murder of two British Officers under peculiarly brutal circumstances some years previously.

83. Despite the severity of the weather, two columns were ordered out from Sulaimani to intercept the rebels. The main body, Camcol, under Lieutenant-Colonel Sorel-Cameron, moved on the 9th March to the bridge over the swollen river. A smaller column, Grimcol, under Captain F. R. Grimwood, D.S.O., entered the Qara Dagh with the object of driving the rebels into the arms of

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Camcol at the bridge. On the same day (9th) I moved a force of Iraq infantry from Halebja to the junction of the Ab-I-Tanjero and Ab-I-Zalm to intercept the rebels should they double back to the south-east.

On 12th March Grimcol gained touch with the rebels for the first time at the village of Faqra, on the top of the Baranand Dagh. Touch, however, was unfortunately lost after a brief engagement chiefly owing to the mobility of the enemy and the severity of the weather.

On the night of the 13th-14th, owing to a sudden drop in the river, the rebels succeeded in eluding Camcol and crossing the Ab-I-Tanjero at a ford seven miles east of the bridge.

The bad weather not only hampered the movement of the troops but it deprived the columns to a very large extent of valuable information as to the rebel movements which might have been obtained by air reconnaissance. Nevertheless aircraft co-operated with the ground forces throughout the operations, maintaining close touch between the two columns by means of message picking up and signal code.

The escape of the rebels was unfortunate, and was due chiefly to the sudden fall in the river and to the weather; the latter inflicted severe hardship on the troops engaged. On the other hand, the unexpected appearance of Government forces at this time of the year frustrated the rebel attempts to raise money and taught them, what they did not know before, that Government troops could operate against them in the worst months of the year.

#### SYRIAN FRONTIER WEST OF MOSUL.

84. About this time my attention was directed to a growing feud between Daham, Chief of the Syrian Shammar Jarba, and Ajill, Chief of the Iraqi Shammar Jarba. On 7th March a minor collision took place between the followers of the rival Chiefs. In order to prevent a serious breach of the peace on the Syrian frontier, in consultation with His Excellency the Acting High Commissioner, I despatched a section of armoured cars from Mosul to Ajil's camp. This unit was instructed that its role was, not only to support Ajil if he was attacked, but also to prevent him entering Syrian territory to attack Daham. Constant reconnaissance and demonstration flights were made by aircraft of No. 6

Squadron, firstly to locate Daham, and secondly to convince him that we were watching the situation in Ajil's favour.

85. For some time it appeared as if our precautions had overawed Daham and that the situation was stabilised. Unfortunately, tribal jealousy overcame Daham's judgment.

Early on the morning of 2nd April the Armoured Car Detachment was fired upon while patrolling on the Iraq side of the frontier. In accordance with their instructions the cars withdrew and took up a defensive position. They were immediately pursued. Throughout the morning fighting continued between Ajil's followers, supported by armoured cars, and the followers of Daham, the latter estimated at two thousand horse and foot. By 10.30 hours local the raiders were compelled to withdraw, but took up an entrenched defensive position well within Iraq territory.

I ordered out a flight of aircraft from Mosul to deal with the situation.

At 13.15 hours the aircraft arrived and attacked the raiders with bombs and machine gun fire.

Within a few minutes Daham's entire forces were fleeing in disorder across the frontier with a loss of some fifty killed in addition to wounded. Aircraft and armoured cars had strict instructions not to cross the frontier; pursuit was, therefore, impossible.

The following morning air reconnaissance failed to locate a single tent on the Syrian side of the border.

There has been no further trouble in this area.

#### SOUTHERN IRAQ.

85A. On the 6th October it was reported that the previous day a party of Shammar Abdah raiders from Syria, some two hundred strong, had raided into Kuwait territory, south of Basrah, and were returning through Iraq with about eleven hundred looted camels.

The following morning a party of the raiders was located at Buswah. As I was by no means convinced that air action was the proper medium through which to recover the loot I withheld action on that day; the political authorities had, however, just previously issued stringent anti-raid orders, and Government was anxious to teach the raiders a sharp lesson. In these circumstances I

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authorised air action on the morning of the 8th. On that morning aircraft of No. 84 Squadron located a party of raiders near Zum and, after messages dropped ordering them to turn north to Abu Ghar had been disregarded, fire was opened by the aircraft and casualties inflicted. At noon a second formation located a further party and attacked them with good results. Fire was returned by the raiders; one machine carrying the Administrative Inspector, Captain J. B. Glubb, was hit and compelled to leave the formation, but reached Abu Ghar in safety.

On the 9th October I reinforced No. 84 Squadron with two flights of No. 8 Squadron from Hinaidi, based on Samawah. Action was continued with success. Some fifty camels were recovered, but, unfortunately, many were killed.

On the 10th, as the raiders had split up into small parties, and as they were passing out of radius of action of the aircraft based on Samawah and Nasiriyah, I suspended activity in the south. The raiders on their journey to Syria were bound to cross a line more convenient to further operations, namely the trans-desert car and air route between Baghdad and the west.

With this object in view I despatched a flight of No. 55 Squadron and a section of armoured cars to Rutbah on the 13th October. From the 14th to the 20th aircraft reconnoitred the desert south of Rutbah continuously, but it was not until the 20th that a large party was located fifty miles south-east of Rutbah. The raiders were at once engaged by aircraft and armoured cars; ninety camels were recovered, twenty-four prisoners taken and several of the enemy killed. Our losses were one policeman wounded. On the 23rd further parties were located forty miles north of Rutbah and attacked by aircraft, including inflicting casualties.

Owing to lack of communications, operations from Rutbah were conducted under considerable difficulty; supplies had to be delivered to the aircraft and cars at their base entirely by aircraft of No. 45 (Bombing) Squadron. Some idea of the laborious work involved can be gained from the fact that between the 13th and 22nd October five Vernons of this squadron delivered at Rutbah 3,576 gallons of petrol and two tons of stores, an achievement which reflects credit on the unit concerned.

The prisoners taken on the 20th were brought in by air and handed over to the police at Ramadi.

While the raiders were deprived of only some four hundred camels, they lost over fifty men in killed and prisoners, and there is no doubt that the almost continuous pursuit to which these men were subjected will put a stop to raiding for a considerable time; it was for this purpose that the operations were primarily initiated, and I have no doubt that the coming winter will prove their efficacy.

#### SULAIMANI AREA.

86. The annual migration of the Jaf to the Persian uplands commenced in June. (See paragraph 57.)

In order to shepherd them out of the country without disturbance and to prevent Sheikh Mahmud extorting taxes from them, I ordered a composite column under Lieutenant-Colonel G. C. M. Sorel-Cameron, C.B.E., to proceed from Sulaimani to the bridge across the Ab-I-Tanjero and there to await the arrival of the Jaf. The column, consisting of three companies of infantry and two squadrons of cavalry, reached its rendezvous on June 5th.

Moving with the Jaf the column arrived Sarao on the 10th and Koalas on the 11th. That night a cavalry picquet engaged some snipers.

The following day the column moved to the ford across the Qarachulan Chai, one mile north of Nalparaz. Throughout its march the flank and rear guards engaged hostile parties; moreover, all villages en route were deserted. It was clear that Sheikh Mahmud was going to oppose the column and interfere with the Jaf.

87. Fighting on the 13th and 14th revealed the fact that the enemy was established in considerable strength on commanding positions along a front of some five miles from Mulak on the south-east to a point 6228 on the north-west; he held the Kani Manga Pass, through which the Jaf must pass, in strength.

The fighting on the 14th was severe. At 13.00 hours local the camp was attacked simultaneously from two directions, Kani Manga and Mulak. The attack lasted four hours, but was beaten off. In one case a party of the enemy were dislodged from a commanding position at the point of the bayonet by Lieutenant H. M. Curteis, Highland Light Infantry, with a platoon of the 3rd Battalion Iraq Levies.

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This same day a machine of No. 30 Squadron, while on reconnaissance behind the enemy's position, was compelled by engine failure to land. The pilot and gunner were captured by the rebels.

At this time the rebel forces were heavily reinforced by Auroman tribesmen from the Kurmal district; moreover, the Jaf had proceeded on their way to Persia, and, in some instances at least, had paid tribute to Sheikh Mahmud.

From military considerations alone a retirement might, under these circumstances, have been advisable, but on political grounds this course was most undesirable.

I therefore determined that the column should remain in its position and that an attempt should be made to dislodge the enemy by air action.

On the 17th, 18th and 19th intensive air action was directed against the enemy position by the aircraft of No. 30 (Bombing) Squadron from Kirkuk, and the detached flight of No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron from Sulaimani.

On the afternoon of the 19th the rebels again attacked the column camp, but were driven off with the help of air co-operation, after suffering a considerable number of casualties. The same evening they evacuated their positions, and by the following morning their forces were completely dispersed. Sheikh Mahmud retired first to Penjwin and subsequently Persia, bringing with him his two prisoners.

88. The capture of Flying Officer F. M. Denny and Leading Aircraftsman Hirst placed an unfortunate advantage in the hands of Sheikh Mahmud. The prisoners were well treated, but, in the meantime, the rebel chief put forward the most extravagant and impossible demands as the price of their liberty. The fact that they were in Persia tied my hands in taking any steps to effect their release by force, while the influence of the Persian Government, however willing that Government might have been to help, was slow to take effect.

89. On 21st June Penjcol moved forward without further opposition and occupied Penjwin, where it remained until the 24th.

In order to punish the Auroman tribes who had furnished a lashkar to Sheikh Mahmud, the column proceeded to Khormal, where it arrived on the 26th. There its advanced guard severely punished a body of rebels

who had just ambushed an Iraq Army convoy, wounding a British officer.

The column was employed from this time on the destruction of the crops of the rebel tribesmen; certain villages in the vicinity were dealt with by air action after the usual half hour's notice. On July 31st Penjcol returned to Sulaimani.

90. On the night of the 29th June, Kerin Fatteh Beg was killed in a small skirmish with the inhabitants of a village near Chemchemal. His death deprives Sheikh Mahmud of his ablest leader and is a severe blow to rebel prestige throughout the Sulaimani district. The fact that the villagers were emboldened to resist this famous robber was directly attributable to the activity in patrolling the district shown by the 1st Levy Cavalry Regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel L. W. Alexander.

91. At the end of July there appeared in the Auroman country, just across the Iraq border, the exiled Persian Prince Salar-Ud-Dowlah; he at once raised the standard of rebellion in Western Persia, and succeeded in persuading to his cause considerable numbers of Auroman and Persian Jaf. Throughout the month of August his forces fought Persian regular troops with varying fortune. As the fighting was close to the Iraq frontier, and as, in consequence, it was thought possible that Iraq territory might be violated by one or other of the belligerents, a small column was moved from Sulaimani to Khurmali. The column arrived Khurmali on the 8th September and was placed at the disposal of the civil authorities for their assistance should the frontier be violated. Actually, the situation across the frontier quietened and the column was moved for operations elsewhere on 14th October. (*See* paragraph 98.)

92. Sheikh Mahmud was now reported to be pressing on with his preparations for the taxation of the Jaf, due to commence their movement down into Iraq. On the 15th September, he occupied the Kani Manga Pass with a small force (*see also* paragraph 57). Accordingly, on the 16th September I moved out a strong column (known as Gocol) from Sulaimani under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel C. R. Barke, C.B.E., T.D., with a view to dislodging the force at Kani Manga Pass, and, subsequently, to ensure the unmolested progress of the Jaf into Iraq. The column reached Gola on 20th September without opposition; on its arrival at that place the rebel

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forces, as in the previous year (*see* paragraph 58), evacuated the pass immediately and retired towards the Persian frontier. The column moved forward and reached Penjwin on the 23rd; aircraft co-operating with the column were fired on to the north of Penjwin on the 22nd and 23rd, otherwise the rebel forces showed no signs of hostility.

93. Meantime, reports indicated that the two prisoners, Flying Officer F. M. Denny and Leading Aircraftsman Hirst, were ill. While I was unaware of the nature of their illness, I was somewhat exercised by the reports that typhoid had made an appearance in the area of their imprisonment. With the concurrence of His Excellency the High Commissioner, proposals were therefore made to Sheikh Mahmud that he should afford safe conduct to a British doctor to visit the prisoners; to this he consented. Captain F. R. S. Shaw, M.C., Royal Army Medical Corps (attached Iraq Levies), at that time Medical Officer to Gocol, volunteered his services. On the 23rd a truce was arranged with Sheikh Mahmud pending the departure and return of Captain Shaw. On the morning of the 24th, escorted by a rebel guard, he proceeded to Bashmakh, where he interviewed Sheikh Mahmud, and thence to Walajir, where he saw the prisoners.

On the 26th September, accompanied by Najd Effendi, an ex-Turkish Officer and one of the rebel leaders, Captain Shaw rejoined the column.

He reported that the prisoners were in a low state of health and recovering from catarrhal jaundice. He had pointed out to Sheikh Mahmud that they were in an anæmic state of health, were living under conditions to which Europeans were unaccustomed, and were, in their then condition, by no means certain to survive the severe Kurdish winter; moreover, should any ill befall them at his hands he might cease to hope for further consideration from the British Government. In the issue, Sheikh Mahmud agreed to release the prisoners, and to that end he promised their delivery at Khurmali within a fortnight. In order, however, that it might not appear to his followers that he had been compelled to do so by force he asked that the truce be continued until they had been handed over.

94. Extremely anxious as were both His Excellency the High Commissioner and myself to obtain the immediate



release of the prisoners, we agreed to the extension of the truce. In any event, the immediate object of the column had been secured in that the migration of the Jaf was proceeding without incident, though it was reported that certain sections of the tribe had already paid tribute to Mahmud while still in Persia. The column left Penjwin on the 29th, and on the 1st October camped at Serao. On the 6th October I ordered it into Sulaimani, which was reached the same day.

On October 9th Sheikh Mahmud arrived Khurmali and handed over Flying Officer Denny and Leading Aircraftsman Hirst.

95. Here I should like to record my appreciation, not only of the ready way in which Captain Shaw volunteered to visit the prisoners, but also of the tact with which he handled a most delicate situation; to his conversations with Sheikh Mahmud I largely attribute their release.

96. Najd Effendi, who accompanied Captain Shaw back to Gocol, stated on his arrival that Sheikh Mahmud was anxious to make peace with Government and to open discussion on the terms of his surrender immediately.

Conditional first upon the release of the prisoners, His Excellency the High Commissioner sent Mr. K. Cornwallis, C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O., Adviser to the Ministry of Interior, to Khurmali, where he met Sheikh Mahmud.

The latter has agreed generally to the terms that he shall live outside Iraq, probably in Persia, for three or four years and abstain from all politics and intrigue until by such abstention he shall have satisfied the Government of his good faith, when he may be allowed to re-enter the Sulaimani area; meantime, he will be permitted to enjoy the rents of his sequestered estates. There remains the settlement of the terms in detail, and it may, of course, be found impossible to reach an agreement on this.

97. Although the majority of the Jaf were now moving peacefully and unmolested down to their winter habitat, the Roghzadi section of this tribe still hung back to the north of the Shalar River. This section had committed many misdeeds against the Iraq Government and, although urged south into Iraq by the approaching winter, conscious of their guilt, they now feared punishment on re-entering the country.

While Gocol remained out from Sulaimani the Roghzadi loitered just this side of the Persian frontier, and it was

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for this reason that I had ordered it right back from Serao into Sulaimani on 6th October. With the apparent disappearance of the column the Roghzadi prepared to move.

98. By the end of the month the Roghzadi were definitely on the move south, at the same time unsuccessfully endeavouring to conceal their flocks from air reconnaissance. On the 31st I ordered the Paikhuli Pass to be blocked by Bencol, which moved down from Khormal for the purpose; meantime Gocol again moved out to the Ab-I-Tanjero bridge. The Roghzadi were held up without incident at Paikhuli and some of their chiefs arrested as hostages for good behaviour and payment of fines; the two columns then returned to their respective bases.

99. The chain of fortified police posts, which is nearly complete, renders the incursion of robber bands into the area a matter of difficulty and will do much to limit their activity. Prior to the negotiations with Sheikh Mahmud, the rebels had been forced back to the Persian frontier until nothing remained to them but the relatively small Penjwin Plain area. It was the steady decline of his power under our forward policy, the gradual loss of his country and the personal discomfort under which this policy compelled him to live, that forced Mahmud to seek terms from the Government.

If a satisfactory settlement with Mahmud is reached the whole of Iraq will have been brought under the direct control of the central administration at Baghdad, and the military side of the task implied by our Mandate completed.

In these circumstances, and in view of the settlement of the Northern Frontier Question with Turkey, I have, with the approval of His Excellency the High Commissioner, agreed to considerable reduction in the garrison of the country; these reductions are enumerated at Appendix F.

100. This concludes the narrative of the period of my command.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd.) J. F. A. HIGGINS,

*Air Vice-Marshal.*

*Air Officer Commanding, British Forces in Iraq.*

APPENDIX "A."

FORCES IN IRAQ, APRIL, 1924.

(A) *Imperial Forces.*

- 1 Pack Battery.(a)
- 1 Battalion Pioneers.
- 1 Company Sappers and Miners.
- 3 Infantry Battalions (1 British, 2 Indian).
- 2 Transport Companies.(b)
- 8 Squadrons Royal Air Force.
- 4 Armoured Car Companies.(c)
- 3 Defence Vessels.

(B) *Iraq Levies.*

- 3 Cavalry Regiments.(d)
- 1 Pack Battery.
- 4 Infantry Battalions.

(C) *Iraq Army.*

- 3 Cavalry Regiments.
- 1 Field Battery.
- 2 Pack Batteries.
- 4 Infantry Battalions
- 2 Transport Companies.

*Notes.—*

- (a) Left Iraq 28th March, 1925.
- (b) One Company left Iraq 30th April, 1924.
- (c) One Armoured Car Company disbanded 1st April, 1925.
- (d) One Regiment disbanded 31st May, 1924.

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APPENDIX " B. "

NOTE ON HISTORY OF SHEIKH MAHMUD PRIOR TO  
APRIL, 1924.

1. Born about 1885, Sheikh Mahmud was recognised prior to 1923 as the paramount figure in southern Kurdistan, particularly in the Sulaimani districts.

His father, Sheikh Said, was the object of considerable religious veneration, no small part of which is now reflected upon the son. The Turks made several attempts to break the power of the family, and finally murdered the father in 1909.

2. When the British first occupied Kifri, in 1918, it was intended to make Mahmud the British representative in Sulaimani, and for this purpose the Sheikh had already been in communication with our forces. Our subsequent retirement, however, frustrated this scheme. The Turks, who had doubtless heard of his negotiations with us, imprisoned him at Kirkuk on their return; subsequently, however, circumstances compelled them to instal him as Turkish Governor of Sulaimani.

3. With the return of the British, Sheikh Mahmud quickly declared himself on our side and was appointed Governor of Southern Kurdistan. A few months, however, revealed the fact that he was intriguing far outside the district assigned to him in an endeavour to acquire a power quite inconsistent with the ideas of reasonable government; steps therefore had to be taken to curb his ambition.

4. Seeing his plans undermined, Mahmud resorted to force. In May, 1919, he called up his followers and, enlisting forces from across the Persian frontier, he seized Sulaimani and imprisoned the British Administrative Staff. Immediate action was taken to suppress him, and he was decisively defeated, wounded and taken prisoner at the Bazian Pass.

Sentenced to ten years imprisonment, he was interned in India, but was later allowed to reside in Kuwait.

5. After our evacuation of Rania and Koi Sanjak in September, 1922, when British administration had ceased in Sulaimani, it was decided to reinstall Sheikh Mahmud, advised by a British Administrative Officer, as the only means by which Government authority could be exercised in that area.

The experiment was not a success. In November Mahmud began to reveal decided anti-British tendencies, and by the end of the year was in almost open correspondence with the Turks at Rowanduz.

As it had been reliably ascertained that he was contemplating an attack on Kirkuk in February, 1923, and as he refused to visit Baghdad to explain his actions, Sulaimani was bombed on 3rd March. He evacuated Sulaimani the following day and, accompanied by a large portion of the Levy Garrison, settled in the Dukhan district; meantime his followers under Kerim Fatteh Beg gave themselves up to wholesale pillage and terrorisation in the neighbourhood of Sulaimani.

After a meeting with Euz Demir, the Turkish Commander in Rowanduz, he returned to Sulaimani at the beginning of April. Operations in the Rowanduz area claim prior attention at this time, but he was soon compelled to move out again by the temporary occupation of Sulaimani by our troops. Up to May, 1923, he remained a fugitive in the hills near the Lesser Zab, but returned to Sulaimani in the summer, where he proclaimed himself as King of Kurdistan.

6. An endeavour was made to limit his sphere of influence by organising the tribal districts bordering the Sulaimani Valley under local officials who were judged to be inimical to him, and he was informed that so long as he confined himself to the area thus delimited he would not be molested. This concession failed, however, to restrain him. On Christmas Day, 1923, his house in Sulaimani was bombed and destroyed, but he himself escaped, fled the town for a short time and later returned.

7. The man himself is an ignorant fanatic of overweening ambition, considerable cunning, but relatively inferior brain power. Though unscrupulous to a degree and, like all Kurds, ferocious, it is probable that he possesses a sense of humour. His religious influence cannot be lightly disregarded, and he has among his following several trained Turkish ex-officers, including, incidentally, an ex-Turkish pilot. In appearance he is of medium height, thick lower lip, and wears a dark heavy moustache.

8. Such was the man and the situation in April, 1924.

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APPENDIX "C."

COMPOSITION OF FRONTIER FORCE UNDER COLONEL  
COMMANDANT H. T. DOBBIN, C.B.E., D.S.O.,  
SEPTEMBER, 1924.

*Mosul.*

*Army.*

1/2nd Bombay Pioneers.  
113th Dardoni Pack Battery.  
116th Animal Transport Company.

*Iraq Levies.*

1 Squadron 1st Cavalry Regiment.  
1 Company (less 1 Platoon) 3rd Infantry Battalion.

*Iraq Army.*

Headquarters Mosul Brigade.  
3rd Cavalry Regiment, less 1 Squadron.  
3rd Iraq Infantry Battalion, less 1 Platoon.  
1st Iraq Pack Battery.  
1st Iraq Transport Company.

*Tel Afar.*

*Iraq Army.*

1 Squadron, 3rd Iraq Cavalry Regiment.

*Zakho Pass.*

*Iraq Army.*

4th Iraq Infantry Battalion.

*Amadia.*

*Iraq Levies.*

1 Company 4th Infantry Battalion.  
1 Company 3rd Infantry Battalion.

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APPENDIX "D."

COMPOSITION OF CHAPFORCE UNDER COLONEL COMMANDANT  
J. G. CHAPLAIN, C.B.E., D.S.O.

- 1 Army Co-operation Squadron Royal Air Force.
- 1 Iraq Cavalry Regiment.
- 1 Iraq Field Battery.
- 2 Iraq Pack Batteries.
- 1 Field Company, Sappers and Miners.
- 1 Brigade Signal Section (improvised).
- 1 Armoured Car Company.
- 1 Section Armoured Car Company (remainder of this Company detailed for protection of Line of Communication Mosul-Kala-Shergat).
- 1 British Infantry Battalion.
- 1 Indian Infantry Battalion.
- 2 Battalions Iraq Levies.
- 3 Battalions Iraq Army.
- 1 Frontier Company, Iraq Army.
- 2 Sections, Field Ambulance (improvised).

COMPOSITION OF EASTFORCE UNDER COLONEL COMMANDANT  
H. T. DOBBIN, C.B.E., D.S.O., AND SUBSEQUENTLY, COLONEL  
COMMANDANT J. G. BROWNE, C.M.G., D.S.O.

- 1 Levy Pack Battery.
- 1 Indian Pioneer Battalion.
- 2 Battalions, Iraq Levies.

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APPENDIX " E. "

ANTI-AKHWAN ORGANISATION.

(Map 4.)

1. *Information.*

According to information that has been received, a possibility exists that the Akhwan tribes may carry out raids on the Iraq tribes within Iraq territory in the immediate or near future.

The Iraq tribes liable to be attacked are at present grouped roughly in the area Rumailah-Chahdah-Haisamah and in the vicinity of Abu Ghar.

The country south of the line Rumailah-Haisamah, as far as the line Hulaibah-Al Matiyahad-Al Itaimiyat is hard gravel, and suitable for Rolls Royce armoured cars.

2. *Intention.*

The object of these orders is to ensure—

- (a) The rapid transmission of raid warnings to all concerned.
- (b) That everyone makes the necessary preparations for action beforehand, and that a minimum has to be done when the warning is received.
- (c) That all concerned in the action to be taken on receipt of a warning know the role they are to fulfil and the action that will be taken by others.

3. *Necessity for Quick Action.*

The raids carried out by the Akhwan are very rapid, and it may happen that very little or no time will elapse between the receipt of the warning and the commencement of the raid. Indeed, it is possible that the first information regarding a raid will be that it has actually taken place.

4. *How Warnings will be received.*

A number of agents are at present in the Shamiyah Desert on the lookout for impending Akhwan raids. These men, in case of an alarm, have instructions to—

- (a) Notify the nearest Government post in case of urgent alarm, *e.g.*, Abu Ghar, Shaibah, etc.
- (b) Warn the Iraq tribes direct.



5. *Action to be taken by W/T Stations on receipt of Warning.*

The W/T station receiving a raid warning will immediately communicate it direct to the following, prefixing their message "O":—

Abu Char; Air Headquarters, Baghdad; Nasiriyah; Shaibah.

Recipients of the first warnings are to be careful to transmit the exact wording of the information received from the informants, so as to enable higher authority accurately to judge the facts of the case. The following points are to be particularly noted:—

- (a) Has the raid set out, or is it about to set out? The believed date of starting is to be given.
- (b) Name of leader of raid.
- (c) Objective of raid (if known), e.g., Shagrah area, Abu Ghar, etc.

Warnings will be classified as "A" or "B."

Officer Commanding No. 84 (Bombing) Squadron will be responsible for deciding into which category they fall.

An "A" warning will be sent out when the report is to the effect that a raiding party has actually set out for Iraq.

Other warnings will be classed as "B."

On receipt of a warning message, Officer Commanding No. 84 Squadron will immediately signal to Air Headquarters, Abu Ghar, and Nasiriyah, whether the warning is to be treated as "A" or "B."

In the case of a "B" warning, no further action is necessary.

6. *Action to be taken on receipt of "A" Warning.*

(a) *Movements of Special Service Officer, Akhwan Defence.*—The Special Service Officer will, in future, notify his movements to the W/T stations mentioned in paragraph 5. If he is not at a W/T station when a warning is issued, the W/T personnel at Nasiriyah will immediately repeat the message to him by land line, marking the wire "Urgent."

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(b) *Action by No. 84 (Bombing) Squadron, Shaibah.*—  
No. 84 Squadron will immediately send one or more machines to pick up the Special Service Officer, wherever he may be. To enable this to be done, the Special Service Officer will keep the squadron informed of all his movements.

The number of machines to be detailed will depend on the position of the Special Service Officer.

All previous orders as to the minimum number of machines required for flights in varying circumstances will be adhered to.

If the Special Service Officer is not in the vicinity of an aerodrome, the squadron will notify the Special Service Officer by land line "Urgent" of the landing ground to which the machines will proceed to pick him up.

All machines at Shaibah will be fully equipped with 20-lb. bombs and ammunition, and will stand by for action.

Arrangements will be made by Air Headquarters, if considered necessary, to relieve the Squadron of all other duties.

(c) *Action by No. 4 Armoured Car Detachment, Basra.*—  
All serviceable Rolls Royce armoured cars will concentrate at Shaibah, equip with rations for seven days, and await orders. (Officer Commanding No. 84 squadron must inform the detachment when an "A" warning is issued.)

#### 7. *Role of Special Service Officer in Action.*

Should an Akhwan raid occur, the Special Service Officer will normally accompany the pursuing aircraft. It is possible, however, that, should the armoured cars obtain an opportunity for action, his presence might be more valuable with them.

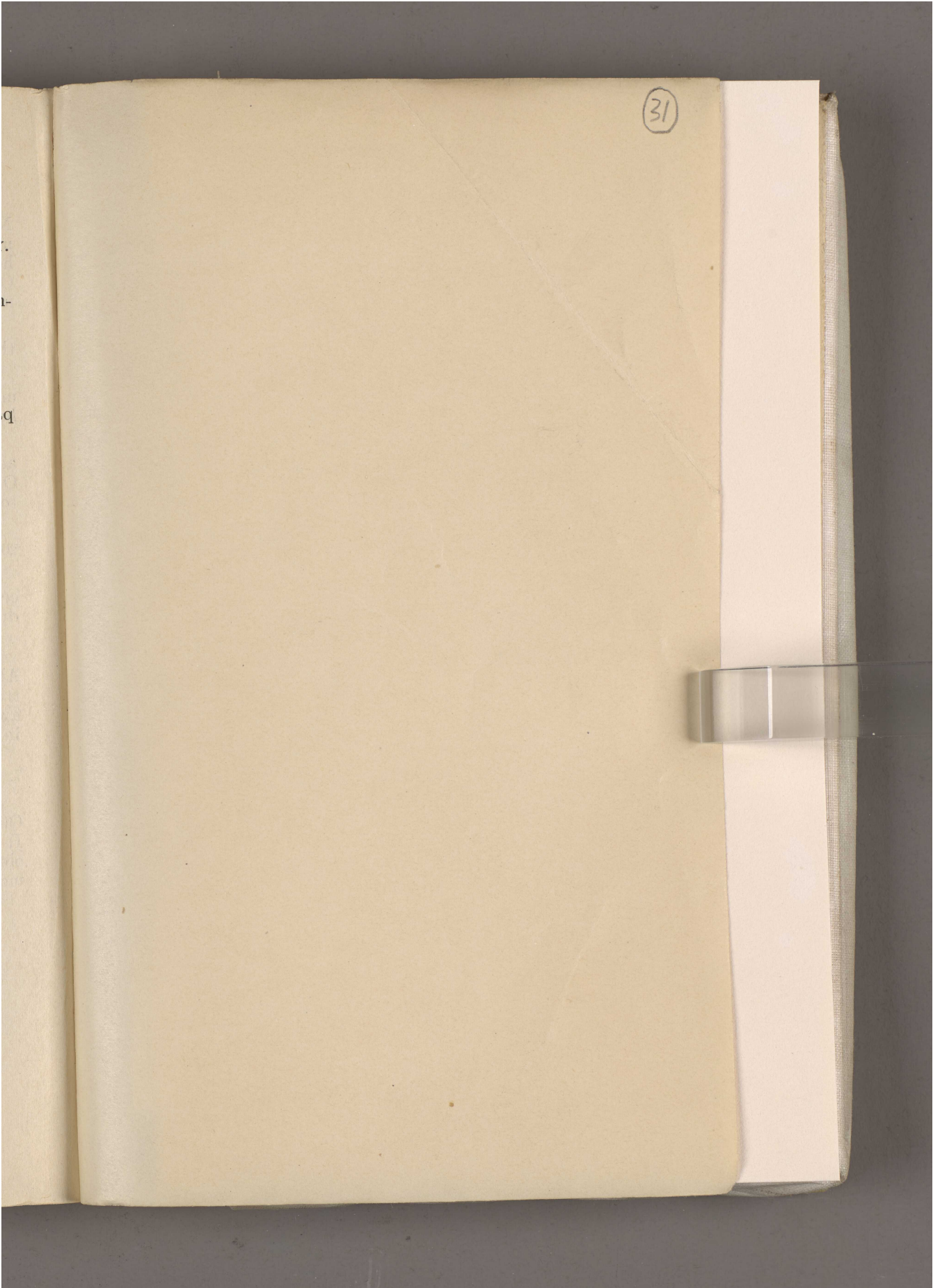
56

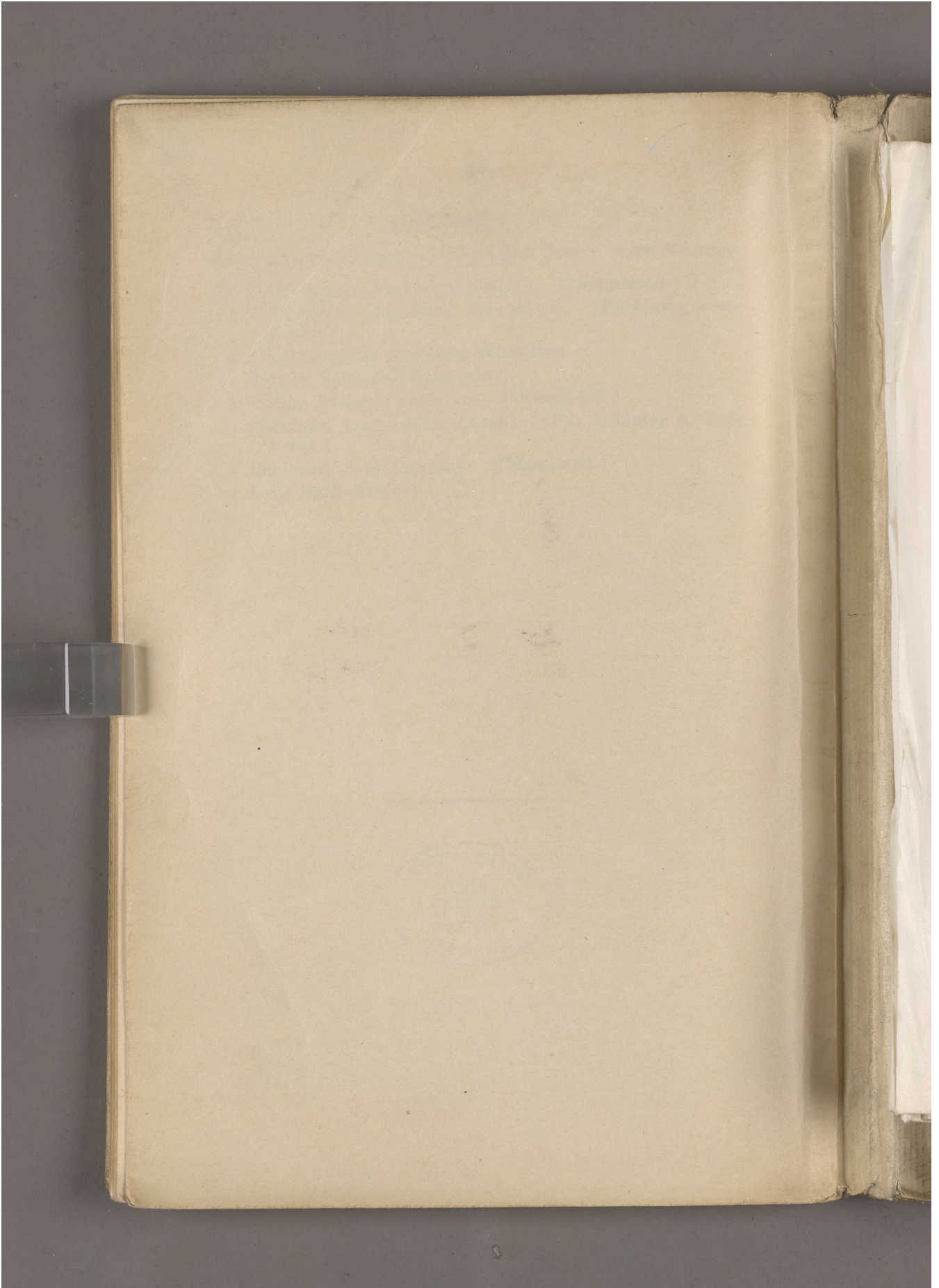
APPENDIX " F. "

REDUCTION OF GARRISON FOLLOWING TREATY WITH TURKEY.

- 1 Single-seater Fighter Squadron. (Completed.)
- 1 Twin-engine Bombing Squadron. (Partially completed.)
- 1 Single-engined Bombing Squadron.
- 1 British Infantry Battalion.
- 1 Indian Pioneer Battalion. (Completed.)
- 1 Battalion Iraq Levies (Arab). (For transfer to Iraq Army.)
- 1 Regiment Levy Cavalry. (Completed.)
- 1 Levy Pack Battery.







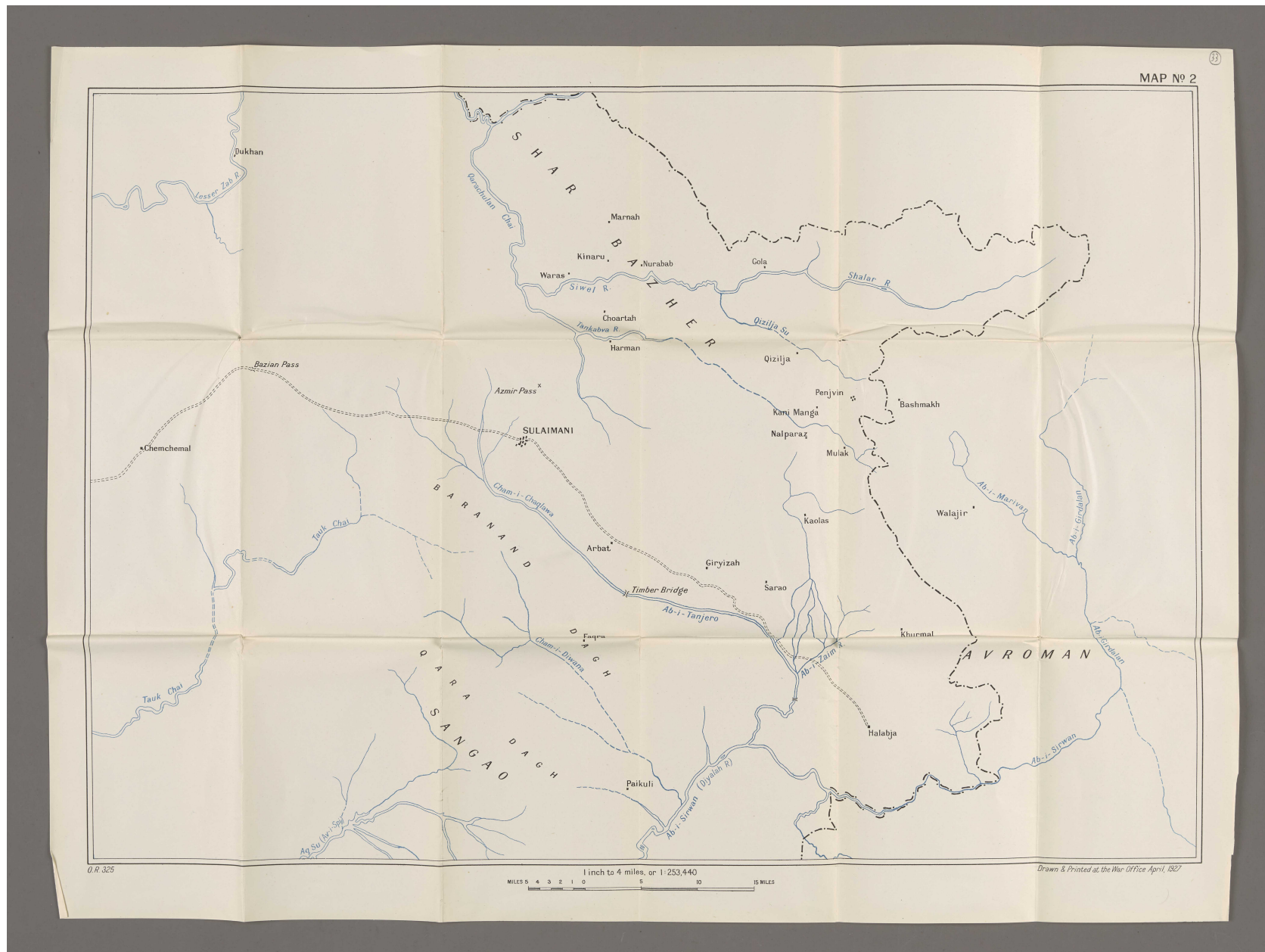
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“Iraq-Persia Map No. 1’ [32v] (2/2)

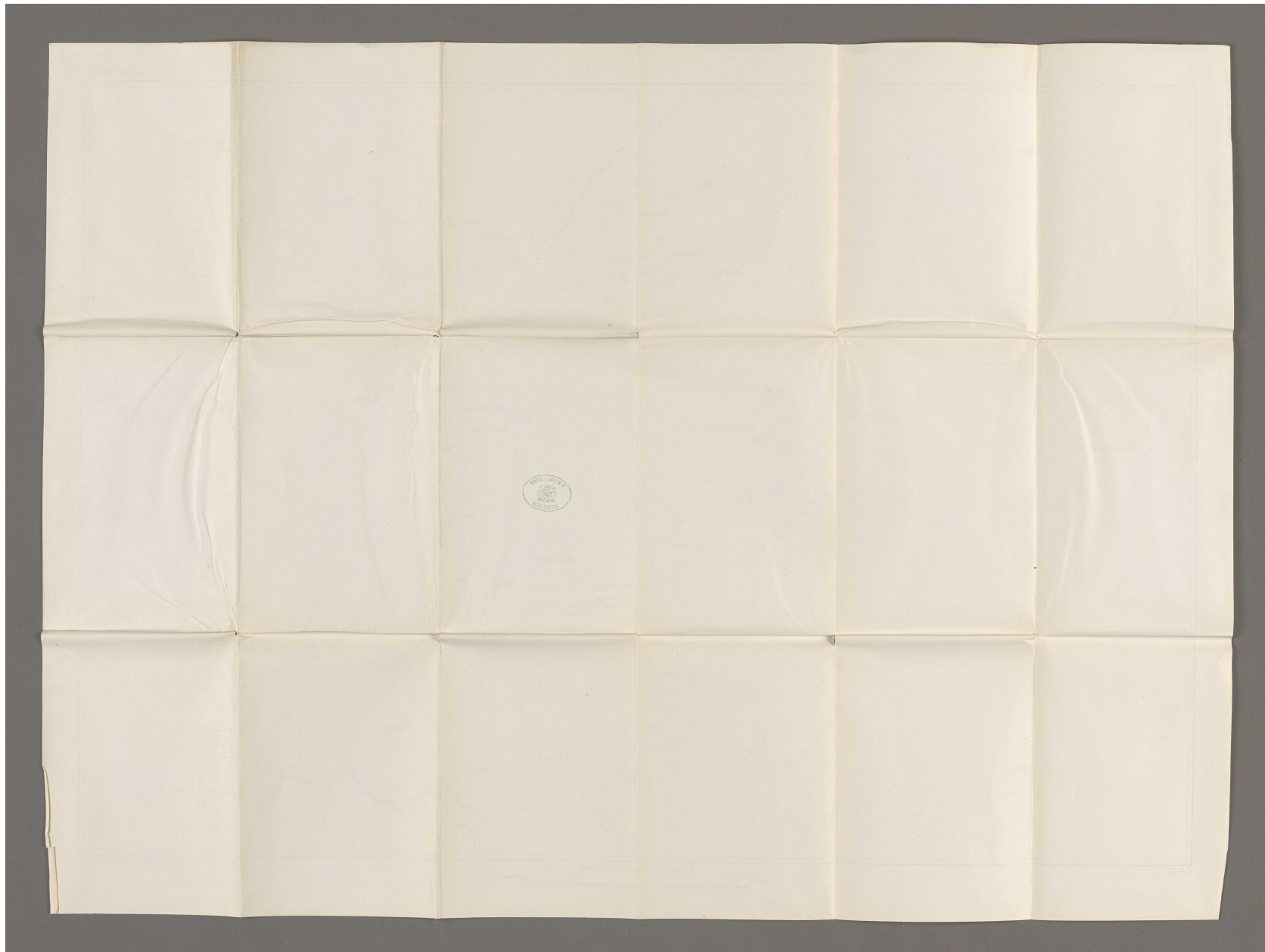


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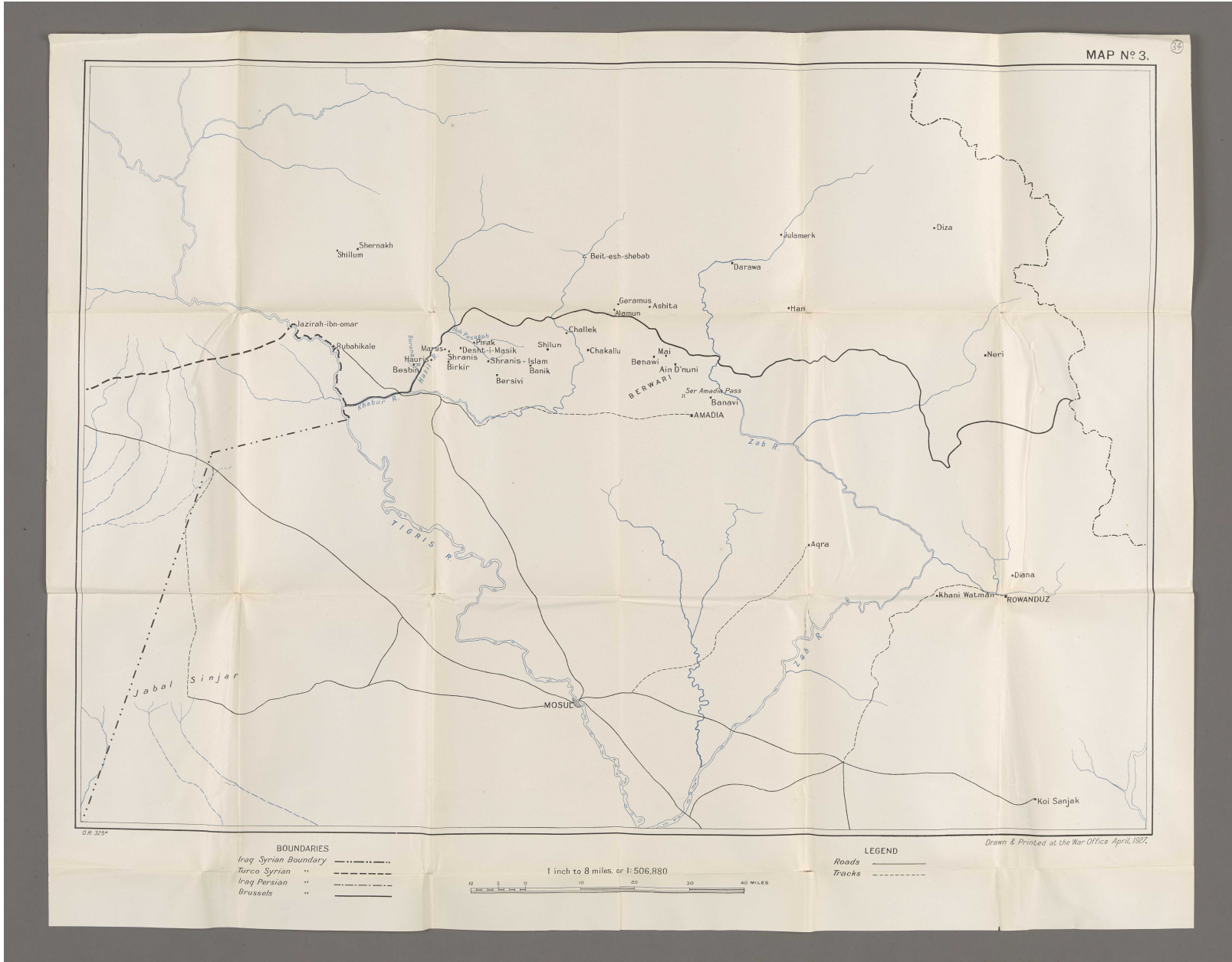




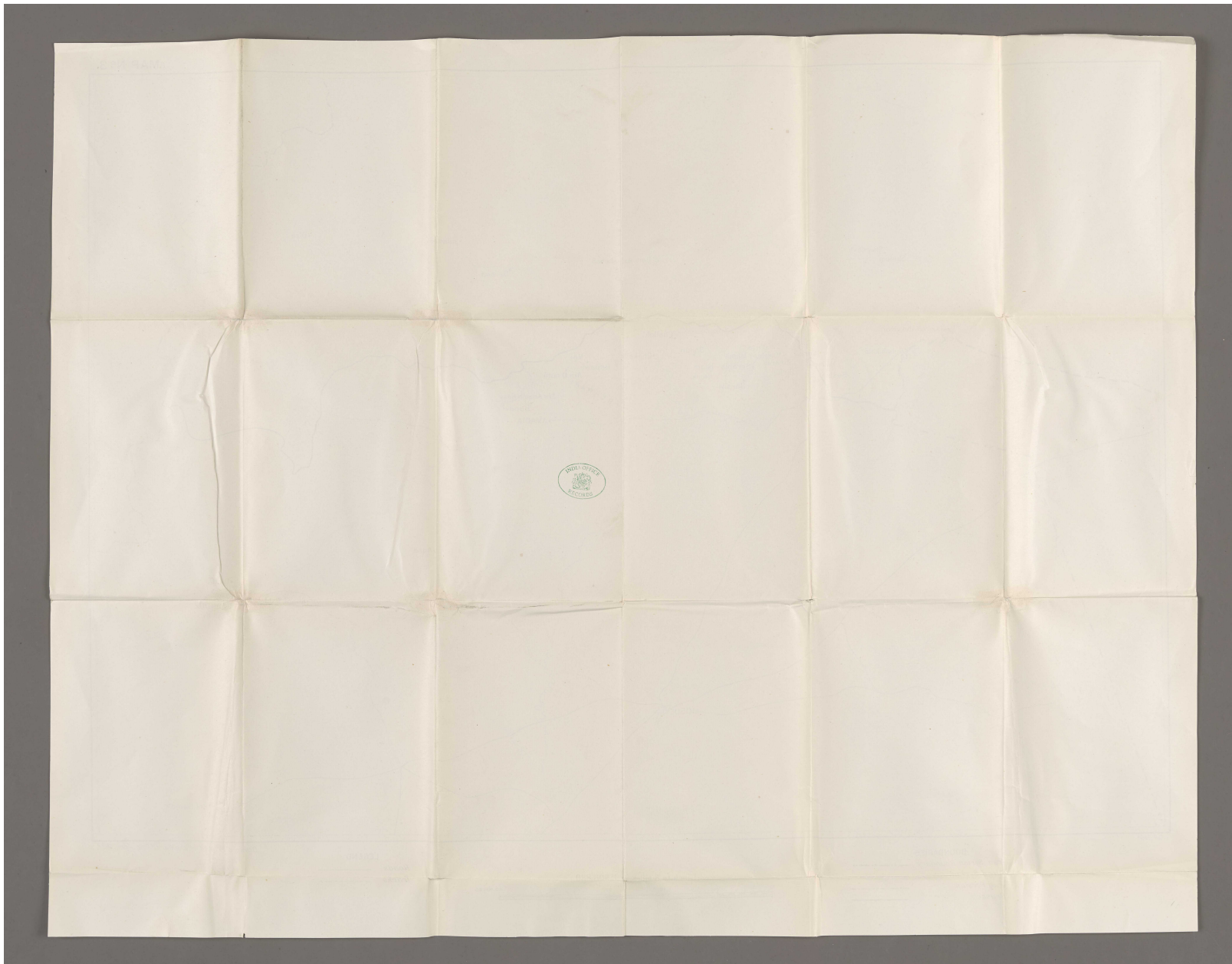
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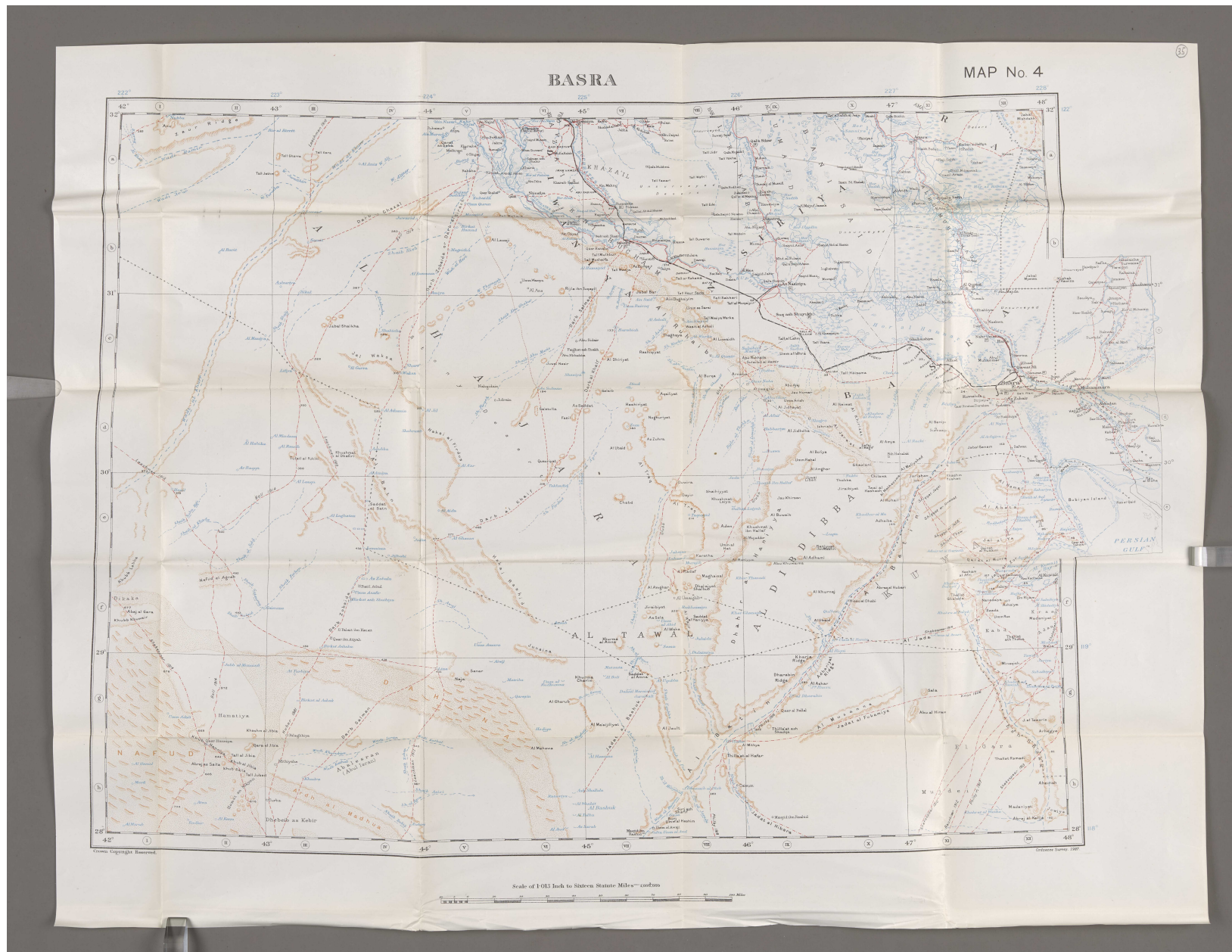
'Map No. 3' [34r] (1/2)



'Map No. 3' [34v] (2/2)



'Basra. Map No. 4' [35r] (1/2)



'Basra. Map No. 4' [35v] (2/2)



