

with a view to selecting a suitable aerodrome for use as an advanced Base in accordance with my previous plan. After three days' stay there I decided that Las Khorai was not suitable for the purpose for which I had intended it by reason of the great difficulties which would be presented by the landing of stores on the open beach from native boats. In addition the Monsoon blew for six hours practically every day, which, besides absolutely precluding the landing of stores being made on the beach, raised a continuous form of sand-storm some 200 feet high. As the site at Las Khorai which I had reconnoitred might, and actually did, prove of assistance in the case of a forced landing, I established a small stock of petrol and oil there.

6. Having been disappointed in my selection of a suitable site for a good advanced landing ground at Las Khorai, I decided, after conferring with His Excellency the Governor and the Officer Commanding Troops, Somaliland, to proceed to Eil Dur Elan to reconnoitre for a possible advanced Base there. I reached Eil Dur Elan accompanied by an escort of the Camel Corps on December 6th, and discovered a suitable site about half a mile from a supply of running water.

7. In order to provide for the alternative line from which it was decided to operate should the Mullah escape south to his mountain fortress at Tale after having been ousted from the north of the country, I had sites reconnoitred at Burao and Eil Dab, and work of preparation commenced.

8. As preparations on both the Eil Dur Elan and Burao Eil Dab lines were so well advanced by December 12th, I decided to cable at once for the main body of the expedition, which was assembling in Egypt, to be sent on to Berbera in H.M.S. "Ark Royal." This aeroplane-carrying ship had been lent by the Admiralty for the purpose of transporting the personnel and aeroplanes in one complete shipment—a feat which would otherwise have been impossible.

9. H.M.S. "Ark Royal" left Alexandria on December 21st and arrived at Berbera on December 30th, 1919, and unloading was commenced at once. As the facilities for handling ships' cargoes at Berbera were of the most primitive nature, recourse had to be made to various improvised means. A large open lighter, completely decked in with ships' hatches, proved invaluable for the unloading of aeroplanes and vehicles, and, thanks to the whole-hearted assistance rendered by Commander P. Waterer, R.N., and the ship's company of H.M.S. "Ark Royal," the whole of the aircraft material, transport and stores was discharged in a very short space of time.

10. The erection of the aeroplanes was commenced on the 1st January, 1920, and by the 8th of January the first three were tested in the air.

11. The Director of Public Works, Somaliland, rendered invaluable service by making the camel tracks from Berbera to Las Dureh fit for light motor vehicles, and by the 17th the aerodrome at Eil Dur Elan was complete with stores and personnel except for those who were to fly from Berbera.

12. The eight aeroplanes which had been erected started by air from Berbera for Eil Dur Elan on January 19th, but one had to turn back owing to engine trouble, and eventually

arrived the next day. By January 20th, therefore, everything was ready for the operations, which were timed to commence on January 21st.

13. The first raid was carried out on January 21st by six machines from Eil Dur Elan against the Mullah's hutments and stock in the Medishi area. By reason of clouds four machines failed to reach Medishi, but bombed Jid Ali Fort and stock in the surrounding country with good results. One machine found Medishi successfully, and bombed the encampment there. The remaining machine, however, was forced to land through engine trouble at Las Khorai, on the sea coast.

It was afterwards confirmed that the bombs dropped by the machine which attacked Medishi killed the Amir, on whom the Mullah was leaning, and actually singed the Mullah's clothes.

Bombing of Medishi, Jid Ali, and the surrounding locality was continued with maximum intensity and good effect during the 22nd and 23rd of January, causing severe casualties to the Mullah's Dervish following and their stock, and also many fires amongst the bush wood huts which were scattered about round the forts. Besides bombing, the machines descended to 300 feet and engaged the Dervishes and stock with machine-gun fire, which proved particularly effective.

A reconnaissance carried out on January 24th revealed the fact that Medishi and Jid Ali and the country within a radius of thirty miles were apparently deserted; no Dervishes and only a small amount of isolated stock being observed. From this it was deduced that the Mullah had commenced his "trek" south. I was of the opinion that the moment had arrived to conclude the semi-independent action on the part of the Air Force and divert activities to close co-operation with the troops of the Somaliland Field Force, who had meanwhile been taking up position to intercept the Mullah in the flight which it was anticipated that he would make when bombed out of his northern strongholds. I therefore gave instructions for the aeroplanes to engage in combined operations on the morning of 25th January.

14. Combined operations were carried out during January 25th, 26th, 27th, and up till 30th, and consisted chiefly in keeping touch with the two portions of the Somaliland Field Force: (a) The Somaliland Camel Corps, with one and a half companies of 101st Grenadiers (Indian Army), operating from El Afweina in an easterly direction; and (b) the Somaliland Camel Corps who were advancing in a westerly direction from the neighbourhood of Mussa Aled some 45 miles to the north-west of Jid Ali.

Keeping touch consisted of locating the troops of each force and communicating their position by dropping messages on the Officer Commanding the Somaliland Field Force, and also in conveying despatches between the commanders of the two forces and the headquarters of the Somaliland Field Force, to which end temporary landing grounds had been constructed at El Afweina and Las Khorai. By this speedy means of communication the movements of the two forces were co-ordinated and information was rapidly passed.

Latterly, after its capture by the King's African Rifles on 24th January, machines were