

54. The situation in Iranian Kurdistan had not improved and on 10th October it became necessary to maintain a strong mobile detachment at Senna for the purpose of stabilising the situation by frequent patrolling.

55. Work continued on the construction of fortress areas in North Iraq and in Persia throughout the winter, all available labour, engineer resources and troops being employed. The 6th Indian Division (less one Brigade) remained in Iran and the whole of the 8th Indian Division and two Brigades of the 10th Indian Division worked on defences in Iraq. One Brigade each of the 6th and 10th Indian Divisions were employed on protective duties in the Basra-Shaiba base area, on the lines of communication Basra-Baghdad and Baghdad-Habbaniya-Rutbah, and in Kirkuk and on the oil pipe line. The 2nd Indian Armoured Brigade Group trained in North Iraq after concentrating there in November.

In spite of exceptionally severe winter conditions very good progress was made on defensive works.

At the same time work continued steadily on:—

(i) development of the main base area at Basra-Shaiba and advanced bases near Baghdad, and at Kirkuk and Ahwaz (Iran);

(ii) construction of aerodromes and satellites in North Iraq and in Iran;

(iii) improvement of road, rail and river communications in Iraq and Iran;

(iv) developments of Um Qasr and Bandar Shahpur (Persian Gulf) Ports;

(v) construction of telegraph communications systems in Iraq and Iran.

56. At the end of October plans were put in hand to receive in Iraq two British Divisions and up to eight Squadrons of aircraft, for later despatch to the Caucasus. Though no definite decision had been reached regarding the despatch of these forces, 50th Division was

ordered to move from the Middle East to Iraq as soon as possible. This Division (less one Brigade Group which had been retained by Middle East Command) began to arrive in Iraq on 14th November, and was concentrated in the Kirkuk area by 8th December.

57. On 15th November, 1941, a new directive cancelling that issued on 29th July was issued to Lt.-General Quinan. It gave details of the reinforcements he might expect to receive up to June, 1942, and instructed him that his primary task was the defence of Iraq and Iran against the enemy advance from Anatolia or from the Caucasus. In the defence of Iraq he was to act throughout in the closest co-operation with the Commander Ninth Army (Palestine and Transjordan).

He was to be prepared also for the following possible operations:—

(i) Operations in Anatolia in co-operation with troops of Middle East Command and possibly the Turkish Army.

(ii) Co-operation with the Russian Army in the defence of the Caucasus or North Iran.

He was to prepare to maintain ten Divisions and thirty Squadrons Royal Air Force in Iraq and up to six Divisions in Iran. In addition to developing road, rail and river communications as necessary to ensure maintenance of these forces, he was to ensure the maximum possible delivery of supplies to Russia.

58. In view of changes in the general situation, orders were received on 3rd January, 1942, for the 50th Division to return to the Middle East Command and the move commenced from Kirkuk on 12th January, 1942.

59. With effect from 12th January, 1942, operational control of Iraq and Iran passed from the India Command to the Middle East Command.

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