

General Service Medal with 'Iraq' Clasp 10th December 1919 – 17th November 1920.

Qualifying Period – Those who served at Ramadi or north of a line east and west through Ramadi between 10th December 1919 and 20th June 1920, and to those who were present on the strength of an establishment within the boundaries of Iraq between 1st July and 17th November 1920.

The Iraq Campaign 10th December 1919 – 17th November 1920 The Iraqi revolt against the British, also known as the 1920 Iraqi Revolt or Great Iraqi Revolution, started in Baghdad in the summer of 1920 with mass demonstrations by Iraqis, including protests by embittered officers from the old Ottoman army, against the British occupation of Iraq. The revolt gained momentum when it spread to the largely tribal Shia regions of the middle and lower Euphrates. Sheikh Mehdi Al-Khalissi was a prominent Shia leader of the revolt. Sunni and Shia religious communities cooperated during the revolution as well as tribal communities, the urban masses, and many Iraqi officers in Syria. The objectives of the revolution were independence from British rule and creation of an Arab government. Though the revolt achieved some initial success, the British had crushed the revolt by October 1920 but elements of it dragged on until 1922. During the 1920 revolt, another anti-British rebellion took place in the north Iraq by the Kurds, who were trying to gain independence. One of the major Kurdish leaders of the Kurdish revolt.

Background After World War I and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 the idea of the League of Nations creating Mandates for the territories of the defeated Central Powers began to take shape. The idea was based on the principle that the territories would eventually become independent but under the tutelage of one of the victorious Entente countries. People in Ottoman provinces began to fear the Mandate concept since "it seemed to suggest European imperial rule by another name." At the San Remo Conference in April 1920, Great Britain was awarded the Mandate for Iraq, (called Mesopotamia in the Western world at the time) as well as the Mandate for Palestine. In Iraq the British got rid of most of the former Ottoman officials and the new administration was composed of mainly British officials. Many people in Iraq began to fear becoming part of the British Empire. It was at this point that one of the most eminent Shia mujtahid, Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi, issued a fatwa "declaring that service in the British administration was unlawful." There was growing resentment to new British policies such as new land ownership laws, which upset tribal leaders, and especially for the new tax which people had to pay to be buried in Najaf, where Shia from all over the world came to be buried. Meetings between Shia ulema and tribal leaders discussed strategies for peaceful protests but they did consider violent action if the peaceful demonstrations failed to get results.

The Revolution Discontent with British rule materialized in May 1920 with the outbreak of mass meetings and demonstrations in Baghdad. The start of the revolution was centered on peaceful protests against British rule. There were large gatherings at Sunni and Shia mosques which gave proof of co-operation between the two main sects of Iraqi society. At one of the larger meetings 15 representatives were nominated to present the case for Iraqi independence to the British officials. Acting Civil Commissioner, Arnold Wilson, dismissed their demands as impractical. Armed revolt broke out in late June 1920. Ayatollah al-Shirazi issued another fatwa that seemed to encourage armed revolt. The British authorities hoped to avoid this and they arrested a sheikh of the Zawalim tribe. Later an armed band of loyal tribal warriors stormed the prison and set him free. The revolt soon gained momentum as the British garrisons in the mid-Euphrates region were weak and the armed tribes much stronger. By late July, the armed tribal rebels controlled most of the mid-Euphrates region. The success of the tribes caused the revolt to spread to the lower Euphrates and all around Baghdad. The British Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, authorized immediate reinforcements from Iran that included two squadrons of the Royal Air Force. The use of aircraft shifted the advantage to the British and played a huge role in ending the revolt. There were also tribes that worked against the revolt since they were recognized by the British authorities and profited from this acknowledgement. Eventually the rebels began to run low on supplies and funding and could not support the revolt for much longer while British forces were becoming more effective. The revolt ended in October 1920 when the rebels surrendered Najaf and Karbala to the British authorities.

Aftermath 6,000 to 10,000 Iraqis and around 500 British and Indian soldiers died during the revolt. The RAF flew missions totalling 4,008 hours, dropped 97 tons of bombs and fired 183,861 rounds for the loss of nine men killed, seven wounded and 11 aircraft destroyed behind rebel lines. The revolt caused British officials to drastically reconsider their strategy in Iraq. The revolt cost the British government 40 million pounds, which was twice the amount of the annual budget allotted for Iraq and a huge factor in reconsidering their strategy in Iraq. It had cost more than the entire British-funded Arab rising against the Ottoman Empire in 1917-1918. The new Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, decided a new administration was needed in Iraq as well as the British colonies in the Middle East so called for a large conference in Cairo. In March 1921 at the Cairo Conference, British officials discussed the future of Iraq. The British now wanted to control Iraq through more indirect means, mainly by installing former officials friendly to the British government. They eventually decided to install Faysal ibn Husayn as King of Iraq. Faysal had worked with the British before in the Arab Revolt during World War I and he enjoyed good relations with certain important officials. British officials also thought installing Faysal as king would prevent Faysal from fighting the French in Syria and damaging British-French relations. For Iraqis the revolt served as part of the founding of Iraqi nationalism although this conclusion is debated by scholars. It also showed unprecedented co-operation between Sunni and Shia Muslims although this co-operation did not last much longer than the end of the revolt.

Units Present

6th DIVISION

74th Brigade:

2/7 Rajputs, 1/15 Sikhs, 3/123 Outrams Rifles.

75th Brigade:

2/96 Infantry, 2/116 Mahrattas, 3/70 Burma Rifles.

76th Brigade:

3/23 Sikh Pioneers, 2/89 Punjabis, 2/117 Mahrattas.

Divisional Troops:

F Battery RHA, 17th Brigade RFA (10,26,92 (Howitzer) Batteries), 11,63,69 Companies 2nd Sappers and Miners, 1/12 Pioneers, 8th Machine Gun Battalion.

Additional Troops:

2nd East Yorks, 2 DCLI, 1 KOYLI, 3/153 Rifles, 2/5, 2/11 Gurkhas, Kapurthala Light Infantry.

17th DIVISION

34th Brigade:

2 Royal Irish Rifles, 1/99 Deccan Infantry, 108 Infantry, 114 Mahrattas.

51st Brigade:

2 York & Lancs, 2/6 Jat Light Infantry, 1/80 Carnatic Infantry, 1/10 Gurkhas.

52nd Brigade:

4 Royal Fusiliers, 45 Sikhs, 1/94 Russell's Regiment, 1/113 Infantry.

Divisional Troops:

19th Brigade RFA (39, 96, 97, 131 (Howitzer) Batteries), 13 Pack Artillery Brigade (13 (British), 31, 45, 49 Indian Batteries), 17th Divisional Signal Company, 9,61,64,67 Field Companies, 2nd Sappers and Miners, 1/32 Sikh Pioneers, 6,7 Light Armoured Motor Bty, 17th Machine Gun Battalion, 5th Cavalry and 32,37 Lancers.

18th DIVISION

53rd Brigade:

2 Manchester Regiment, 8 Rajputs, 86 Carnatic Infantry, 1/87 Punjabis.

54th Brigade:

2 Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, 1/39 Garhwal Rifles, 52 Sikhs, 1/7 Gurkhas.

55th Brigade:

1 Rifle Brigade, 3/9 Bhopal Infantry, 12 Rajputs, 1/116 Mahrattas, 1/3 Gurkhas.

Divisional Troops:

13 Brigade RFA (2,8,44,160 (Howitzer) Batteries), 2 Pack Artillery Brigade (14 (British), 25,35,40,50 Indian Batteries), 18 Division Signals Company, 2,6,8, Field Companies, 1st Sappers & Miners, 106

Hazara Pioneers, 27 Machine Gun Battalion, 11 Lancers, 35 Scinde Horse, 8,14 Light Armoured Motor Bateries.

7th Cavalry Brigade:

1,7 dragoon Guards, 16 Machine Gun Squadron, 8 Field Troop 2nd Sappers & Miners.

Army Troops:

5th Battery RGA, 9th Company 2nd Sappers & Miners, 132,133,138 Railway Construction Companies,

7th Light Armoured Motor Battery, 1 Railway Armoured Battery.

Baghdad Garrison:

2/9 Delhi Infantry, 2/119 Infantry.

Lines of Communication Troops:

Sam Browne's Cavalry (2 squadrons), 37 Lancers, 35 Scinde Horse, Royal Irish Fusiliers, 83

Wallajabad Light Infantry, 2/125 Napier Rifles, 2/129 Baluchis, 124,134,140 Railway Construction Companies

Royal Air Force:

6,30,55,63,84 Squadrons.

Medals are also found to the 8th Hussars, Leicestershire Regiment and royal Berkshire Regiment.