

Assault on Baghdad

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Report of Major-General John Hawkwood

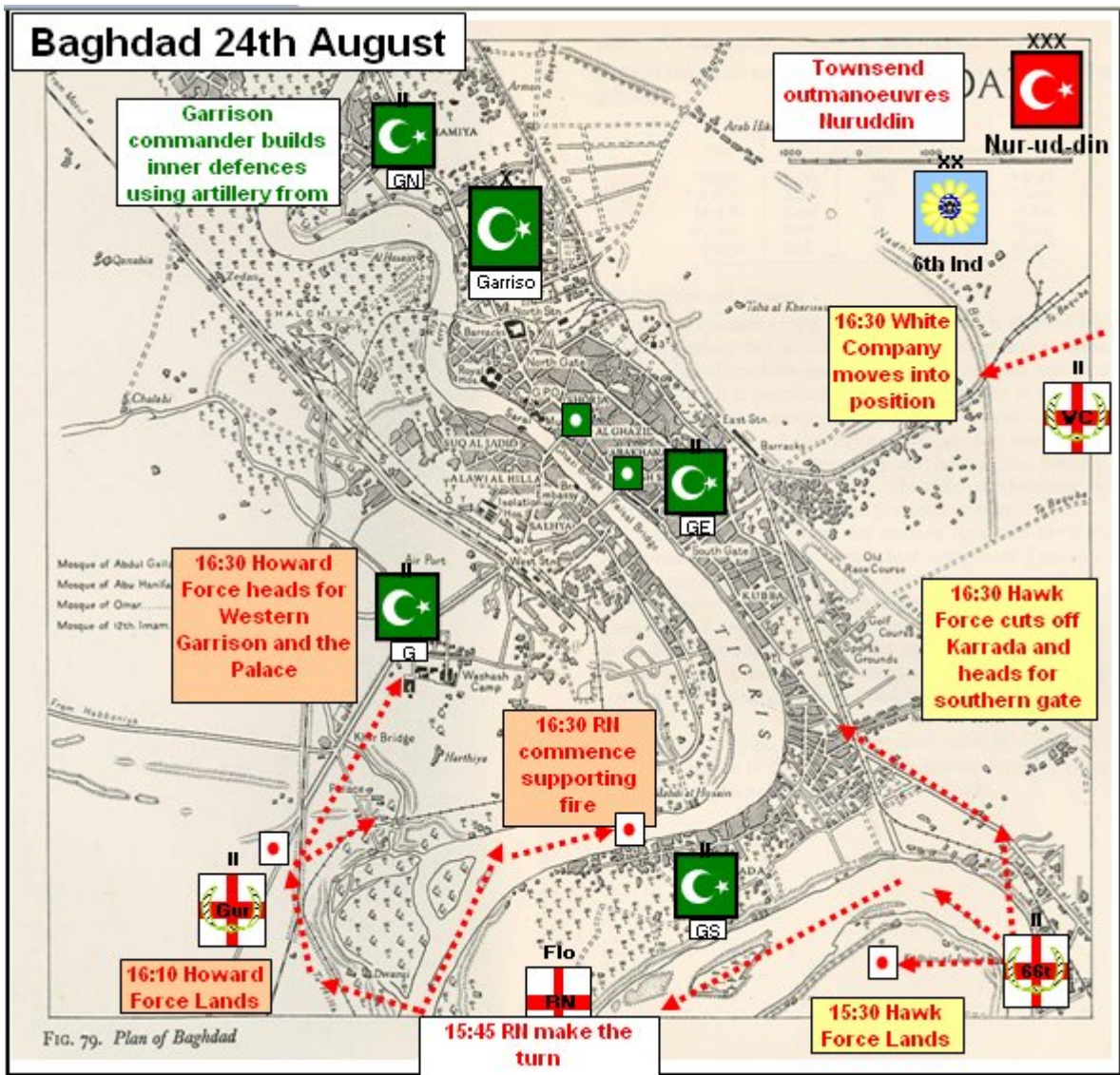
On the evening of August 24th, 1915, 4 battalions of the 2nd Indian Corps with naval and artillery support successfully attacked the Ottoman city of Baghdad and, after fierce fighting, captured the city and took surrender of the city garrison. This forced the remaining Ottoman units in the area to retreat north. There were limited casualties on both sides.

Following the attack, we will hold the city and push north to secure the railway to its limit at Tikrit.

Battle report

The opportunity to take Baghdad was made possible when Nuruddin was forced to take a wide approach to attack the positions on Ctisiphon and the 4 Navy gunboats provided a deterrent to a straight-line retreat. As Nuruddin retreated from the defended position in Ctisiphon, a decision was taken to make an immediate strike for the city whilst the main body of the army pursued the Ottoman forces.

The transport ships were ready at Ctisiphon apart from those transporting the 66th Punjabi Bn from Kut and already approaching Ctisiphon.



16:00 our forces approached Baghdad and the 2 battalions on board (7th Gurkha rifles and and 66th Punjabi battalions along with engineers and some mountain guns) were disembarked and continued their approach on either side of the bank.

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The left bank was commanded by Colonel Howard and the right by Bigadier Hawkwood. The White Company had been instructed to sweep wide on the right flank to meet up close to the South Gate.

Whilst the gunboats made progress up the river, the 66th cleared the defences from the warehouse areas and the Gurkhas moved to secure the Palace and the Western Garrison. Fighting was brief but fierce with the Ottoman troops taking cover in underground bunkers and our forces taking fire from machine guns in the warehouse district.

The White Company successfully flanked the Ottoman positions and attacked the East Gate and from there surrounded the East Barracks.

At this point 2 platoons were detailed to secure the key routes and also guard a significant number of prisoners.

The attack prompted a small uprising in the south of the city.

Over the next 2 hours we fought our way through the city. Many of the defending troops were captured early with the seizure of both barracks but the city garrison commander had deployed his men and most of the artillery pieces in the city to defend the bridges. One of the gunboats was badly damaged by gunfire from an emplaced position and the fiercest fighting of the day took place as both bridges were assaulted and the guns taken. In this fighting both commanding officers were wounded.

By nightfall, the bridges had been secured and but the remains of the garrison had been pulled back into the north of the city.

The Norfolks completed a force march from Ctisiphon to reinforce the attack and the wounded were ferried back to Ctisiphon.

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Overnight there was continued sporadic fighting with both sides waiting to see if Nuruddin would be able to evade Townshend and retreat to the city. We found out later that Townshend had successfully blocked Nurrudin's retreat, forcing him north.

At dawn, the garrison commander realised that the Ottoman 51st Division would not be reinforcing the garrison and surrendered.

The Turkish units involved (with casualties were) :

| Brigade | Battalion | Casualties | Captured |
|---------|-----------|------------|----------|
| xxx | xxx | tba | tba |
| xxx | xxx | tba | tba |
| xxx | xxx | tba | tba |
| xxx | xxx | tba | tba |
| Total | | 0 | 0 |

The British units involved (with casualties were) :

| Brigade | Battalion | Casualties |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 16th Brigade | Norfolks | 0 |
| 30th Brigade | 7th Ghurkhas | tba |
| 33rd Brigade | 66th Punjabis | tba |
| 1st Natal Brigade | 1 Bn White Company | tba |
| Total | | 0 |

Commendation to Colonel Howard who personally led the charge to take the Saladin bridge whilst under machine gun and artillery fire and was wounded in the ensuing melee.