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# FEBRUARY 24, 1917 : BRITISH TROOPS RECAPTURE KUT IN MESOPOTAMIA

The Allied war against Turkish forces gains momentum (and ground) in Mesopotamia as British and Indian troops move along the Tigris River in early 1917, recapturing the city of Kut-al-Amara and taking 1,730 Turkish prisoners on February 24.

Ten months after nearly 12,000 British and Indian troops had been captured there—considered by many the most humiliating surrender in the history of the British army—Kut fell into the hands of a British corps commanded by Sir Frederick Maude. After being appointed commander of the Tigris Corps in Mesopotamia in July 1916 and of the entire Mesopotamian front a month later, Maude had immediately begun to reorganize and re-supply the troops in the region in preparation for a renewed offensive against Kut.

In early January, Maude's 150,000 troops launched their attacks

on Khadairi Bend, a heavily fortified town on the Tigris north of Kut. It fell on January 29, and the British troops continued onward to the main offensive, the Second Battle of Kut, which began with attacks on both Turkish flanks on February 17.

Overwhelmed, Turkish forces under commander Karabekir Bey retreated from Kut on February 24. They were pursued by a flotilla of British naval gunboats, including the *Mantis*, *Moth* and *Tarantula*. Outrunning their counterparts on the ground, the crew of the British ships found themselves under fire from four Turkish vessels some 30 kilometers north of Kut at Nahr-al-Kalek. In the gun battle that followed, the British soundly defeated the Turks, destroying three of the Turkish ships and capturing the fourth, the former British monitor ship *Firefly*.

Encouraged by their victory at Kut, Maude's forces pushed on towards Baghdad, which would fall on March 11.

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