



A view from the edge of the German airfield at Afule in a north-easterly direction. An AEG C.IV of bFA304 flies over the Jewish settlement Merchavya, situated beyond the mound at right. The aerodrome and adjacent railway station were the objects of recurring reconnaissance by 1 Sqn AFC in 1918.

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Flieger-Abteilung 301 and the German Aerial Force in Palestine in WWI - Part 2

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Air Operations of the German Aerial Force and Flieger-Abteilung 301 in Palestine The Palestine front in 1918

As recorded in Part 1, FA 301 was based at Jenin airfield from late 1917 until Allenby's final push in September 1918 (as was FA 303)⁵⁴. Up to this last offensive the front traversing central Palestine generally remained 'static', actions being fought and objectives gained on a local scale; a notable exception was the British operation which secured Jericho in the Jordan Valley, west of the Jordan River, in February 1918. Throughout that period the missions performed by FA 301 as 'general-duty' German flying unit would have consisted mainly of tactical reconnaissance flights, but other types of missions, such as bombing, were also carried out. Frontline missions were flown on the order of Kofl F in fulfilment of operational requirements communicated either by the Army that the unit was assigned to or by HG F command.

Two major operations were mounted from Palestine in spring 1918 against Turkish forces in Transjordan in the form of raids across the river. Both could have posed a strategic threat to Ottoman control of the region through cutting the Hejaz Railway line to Arabia and bolstering the Arab Revolt, but they proved abortive. The first Transjordan raid, beginning on 21 March and ending on 2 April 1918, established bridgeheads at

A view from the north of the aerodrome at Jenin shortly after FA 301 moved in. The eastern aerodrome is seen at centre and the town at right; the road leading out to Afule is clearly visible. Aerial photo taken by Ltnd R Simon (P) and Ltnd Deckert (O) of FA 301 from 1500m on 16 December 1917.



Hajlah and Ghoraniyeh, took Es Salt and reached Amman, but determined Turkish resistance resulted in the entire force withdrawing across the Jordan. The British were able to keep the bridgehead at Ghoraniyeh (the site of present-day Allenby/King Hussein Bridge), where an attack by the Turks on 11 April was successfully repelled. The second Transjordan raid began on 29 April with the capture of Es Salt as a more limited objective, but though the town was again taken it could not be held under the pressure of the enemy's counter-attacks and retreat across the river was completed on 4 May 1918.⁵⁵

Bombing Operations

The Transjordan battles described briefly above involved intensive combat flying by both sides, and the German flying units, including FA 301, were required to perform the added task of bombing and strafing in support of the Turkish effort to counter and drive back the raids. The FA 301 binder contains only two mission orders, and both pertain to bombing missions flown on 28 March 1918, at the height of the fighting during the first Transjordan raid. These orders for the morning and afternoon missions are included here in English translation as Appendix B1 and Appendix B2 respectively.

The mission orders make for very interesting samples of

In this view from the north Jenin is at centre, the eastern aerodrome situated to its left and the grounds of the larger, western airfield are visible at lower right; the railway line may be discerned winding along the base of the hills at right. Aerial photo taken by 1 Sqn AFC from 9000ft on 9 April 1918 at 11.30.

:AWM4, 1 Sqn AFC, April 1918: 8/4/4 Part 2

