

Summary of Tanks in Palestine in the 1WW

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Eight Mark I tanks were sent to Gaza and arrived by April 1917, their names were: Sir Archibald, Otazel, Pincher and Ole Luk Oie (Male tanks) and War Baby, Kia Ora, Nutty and Tiger (Females).

They arrived too late to take part in the first offensive against Gaza

Two of the tanks took part in the second offensive against Gaza on 17th April, one was hit by artillery fire and destroyed.

The battle was resumed on April 19th and the seven surviving tanks all took part. Two of the tanks were destroyed, one fell into a gully, the other received a direct hit from a field gun. A third tank, broke one of its tracks and was caught in a redoubt, afterwards repaired and renamed 'tank redoubt'.

What became known as the Third Battle of Gaza was launched on 1st November 1917. By this time General Sir Edmund Allenby had replaced General Sir Archibald Murray. At the same time three Mark IV tanks had been sent out from Britain to replace the three tanks that had been earlier destroyed. So once again the Detachment numbered eight tanks, six of which would go into action while the other two were held in reserve.

In all, the six tanks were given twenty nine objectives in the battle, which JFC Fuller says 'foredoomed them to failure', yet the battle itself was a success.

While tanks and infantry attacked on the left to grab Turkish attention, Allenby sent the main force, supported by cavalry, sweeping round to the right through Beersheba and out flanked the defensive position.

After this the fighting in Palestine became faster and more open, more suited to cavalry and armoured cars than tanks, which were too slow. In fact they were never used again. Despite a request for Whippet tanks, the Tank Detachment was disbanded.