305386 - The military campaigns of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)

the question

How many military campaigns did the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) go on?

Summary of answer

The number of campaigns and expeditions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is approximately one hundred or more. As for the campaigns in which he himself fought, there were nine campaigns.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The difference between a military campaign (ghazwah) and an expedition (sariyyah)

Many scholars who wrote about the Prophet’s biography (sirah) differentiated between military campaigns (ghazwah) and expeditions (sariyyah).

The word ghazwah (military campaign) refers to campaigns on which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went out and led the Muslims himself, whether fighting occurred during that campaign or not.

The word sariyyah (expedition) refers to campaigns in which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not go out; fighting may or may not have occurred during these campaigns.

What is most likely to be the case is that the number of expeditions was small. See: *Ghazawat ar-Rasul sall Allahu `alayhi wa sallim: Durus wa `Ibar*.

There is only one exception to this terminology, namely the military expedition of Mu'tah (Ghazwat Mu`tah). The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not go out on this campaign, yet despite that it is usually called a ghazwah. Perhaps that is because of its great significance, the large numbers involved and the fact that a great battle occurred during this campaign, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took a great interest in it, among other reasons.

The number of military campaigns of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)

The scholars, both those who wrote biographies of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and others, differed regarding the number of campaigns on which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went.

- Some of them said that there were nineteen campaigns.
- Some of them said that there were twenty-one campaigns.
- And it was said that the number was twenty-six, or twenty-seven.
- And there were other views. Some of them said that the total number of his campaigns and expeditions was more than one hundred, and that he himself fought in eight or nine campaigns.
- The most correct view that has been narrated concerning that is what al-Bukhari narrated in his *Sahih* (3949) from Abu Is-haq, who said:

I was beside Zayd ibn Arqam when it was said to him: How many campaigns did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) go out on?

He said: Nineteen.

It was said: How many campaigns did you go on with him?

He said: Seven campaigns.

I said: Which was the first one?

He said: Al-`Usayrah or al-`Ushayr. I mentioned that to Qatadah and he said: Al-`Ushayr.

Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar said in *Al-Fat-h* (7/280): What he meant was the campaigns on which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went out himself, whether fighting occurred or not.

But Abu Ya`la narrated via Abuz-Zubayr from Jabir that the number of campaigns was twenty-one. Its isnad is authentic and the original report is in Muslim.

Based on that, Zayd ibn Arqam omitted to mention two of them – perhaps they were al-Abwa' and Buwat. It is as if he was unaware of them because of his young age.

What supports my view is what Muslim narrated: I said: What was the first campaign he went out on? He said: Dhat al-`Ushayr or al-`Ushayrah…

Ibn Sa`d expanded on that and said that the number of campaigns on which the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went out himself was twenty-seven. He followed al-Waqidi in that, and it is in accordance with what Ibn Is-haq listed, except that he did not regard Wadi al-Qura as being a separate campaign from Khaybar… End quote.

Muhammad ibn Is-haq said: The total number of the campaigns on which the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went out is twenty-six campaigns. The first campaign in which he went out himself was Waddan, which was the campaign of al-Abwa'; then the campaign of Buwat in the direction of Radwa; then the campaign of al-`Ushayrah from the valley of Yanbu`; then the first campaign of Badr in pursuit of Karaz ibn Jabir; then the campaign of Badr in which the leaders of Quraysh were killed (the Battle of Badr); then the campaign of Banu Sulaym as far as al-Kadr, which is a watering place belonging to Banu Sulaym; then a campaign in pursuit of Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, until he reached Qarqar al-Kadr; then the campaign of Ghatafan as

far as Najd, which was the campaign of Dhu Amr; then the campaign of Najran, an area in Hijaz beyond al-Fara`; then the battle of Uhud; then the campaign of Hamra' al-Asad; then the campaign against Banun-Nadir, whom he expelled to Khaybar; then the campaign of Dhat ar-Riqa` in Najran; then the final campaign of Badr, to meet Abu Sufyan as agreed, which is also known as the campaign of *as-sawiq*; then the campaign to Dumat al-Jandal; then the battle of al-Khandaq (the trench); then the campaign against Banu Qurayzah; then the campaign against Banu Lihyan of Hudhayl; then the campaign of Dhu Qarad in pursuit of `Uyaynah ibn Hisn; then the campaign against Banul-Mustaliq of Khuza`ah; then the campaign of al-Hudaybiyyah, in which he did not seek to fight, but the polytheists barred his way [and prevented him from reaching Makkah for `umrah]; then the campaign to Khaybar; then he did `umrah to make up for the `umrah that he had been prevented from doing; then the conquest of Makkah; then the battle of Hunayn; then the battle of at-Ta'if; then the campaign of Tabuk.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) fought in nine of these campaigns: the battle of Badr, the battle of Uhud, the battle of al-Khandaq (the trench); the campaign against Banu Qurayzah, the campaign against Banul-Mustaliq; the battle of Khaybar, the conquest of Makkah, the battle of Hunayn and the battle of at-Ta'if.(*Mustakhraj Abi `Awanah*, 4/361).

Ibn Sa`d stated that the number of the Prophet's campaigns was twenty-seven, and the number of expeditions that he sent out was forty-seven.

He said in *At-Tabaqat* (2/5): The number of campaigns on which the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went out himself was twenty-seven, and the number of expeditions that he sent out was forty-seven. The campaigns in which he fought were nine: the Badr campaign in which there was fighting, Uhud, al-Muraysi`, al-Khandaq, Qurayzah, Khaybar, the conquest of Makkah, Hunayn, and at-Ta'if. This is our view. End quote.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar stated that the number of campaigns that he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sent out was nearly seventy.

He said in *Fat-h al-Bari*, 8/154: With regard to his expeditions, they were nearly seventy, and Muhammad ibn Sa`d listed them all in *At-Tabaqat*.

I have read in the manuscript of Mughaltay that the total number of campaigns and expeditions is one hundred, and it is as he said. And Allah knows best. End quote.

To sum up, the number of campaigns and expeditions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is approximately one hundred or more. As for the campaigns in which he himself fought, there were nine campaigns.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 142577 and 7461.

And Allah knows best.