

Camp Security

The terrorist threat was high, the compound was exposed, and the Marines were menaced by unknown enemies.⁸⁸ Every Marine was well aware of the infamous Beirut bombing in 1983 and all vowed such an incident would not be repeated in northern Iraq.⁸⁹

Needless to say, northern Iraq was a perfect place for such an attack, so the 24th MEU (SOC) had to be particularly alert. Colonel Jones wisely placed headquarters compound security in the able hands of Master Gunnery Sergeant John B. MacDonald.

Master Gunnery Sergeant MacDonald, a Vietnam veteran, placed listening posts along the wall, ran constant patrols, and scattered broken vehicles in the road leading to the MEU compound.

Marine Reinforcements

Several combat support units were attached to the 24th MEU (SOC) while it operated in support of Operation Provide Comfort. The need for tactical deep penetration aerial reconnaissance required the presence of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) detachment. The U.S. Army and foreign units required air and naval gunfire liaison teams.



A LAV-25 patrols the streets of Zakho. These lightweight, helicopter-transportable LAVs were the only armored vehicles available in northern Iraq.

A shortage of national intelligence assets in northern Iraq and the lack of organic tactical reconnaissance aircraft led Colonel Jones to request further intelligence gathering capabilities. His request was granted. On 2 May, an experimental unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) unit that used "off the shelf" technology was ordered to Turkey. Captain Wayne O. Ouzts, the S-3 Alpha for the 2d Surveillance Reconnaissance and Intelligence Group was designated the officer in charge of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Detachment, 2d Remotely Piloted Vehicle Company, from Camp Lejeune. The detachment mustered six personnel and had 15 unmanned aerial vehicles. Members of the detachment had just finished six grueling months in the desert during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Most Marines had been back in the United States for about three weeks, but Captain Ouzts had been home only three days before being ordered to Turkey. The detachment arrived in Turkey on 7 May, but it took eight days to clear customs. From Incirlik the UAVs and their ancillary equipment took three days to get to Silopi and another day to get to the forward operating base at Muqbal. The UAV Detachment used an abandoned Iraqi artillery position.

The unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) selected for use was the Exdrone, a disposable unmanned aircraft with a fixed camera. About the size of a large model airplane, its delta shape made it look like a miniature Stealth bomber. It was hoped these Exdrones could fill the gap between ground reconnaissance and high altitude photographs. The UAVs gave Colonel Jones and Major Raftery timely video coverage of choke points and areas of interest. They provided a cost-efficient, long-range, unmanned aerial vehicle intelligence gathering platform, and flew approximately 40 kilometers south of Dohuk to photograph Iraqi rear echelon areas and assembly positions.

The UAV Detachment prepared its equipment the previous night. The UAVs launched around 0930, flew to Dohuk, then traced the main supply route south into the heart of Iraq. When the drones overflew choke points or Iraqi positions, they swooped low to reveal a video panorama of the target area.

The UAVs made 22 flights in 12 days, often flying two missions per day. Air space coordination was difficult because there were so many different aircraft in the area. Pilots were apprehensive about flying with unmanned aerial vehicles in the air because they were hard to see in the crowded sky. A compromise was made. The UAVs were sent aloft only at specified times during daylight hours. There were three crashes during experimental operations and three crashes during flight operations. The detachment departed Zakho on 28 May 1991 and returned to Camp Lejeune on 1 June. During Operation Provide Comfort the UAVs ". . . probably saved two years on the developmental process . . ."90

Marine air and naval gunfire liaison companies (ANGLICO) provide air and naval gunfire support to non-Marine U.S. and allied forces. The Marines of an ANGLICO firepower control team (FCT) are specially trained to observe, direct, and coordinate supporting arms. Marine units possess organic capabilities to control supporting arms, so ANGLICO firepower control teams are tasked to provide such services for attached or allied units working with the Marines.



Painting by Col Peter M. "Mike" Gish, USMCR
Marines of 2d ANGLICO rappel from a hovering helicopter demonstrating what is known as a "fast rope" insertion. Six firepower control teams from 2d ANGLICO supported U.S. Army and allied units serving in northern Iraq.

The 24th MEU (SOC) Command Element included a detachment from 2d ANGLICO, but the demands of Operation Provide Comfort required additional ANGLICO support. On 7 May 1991, 2d ANGLICO at Camp Lejeune was ordered to send four firepower control teams (FCT) to Turkey. These teams departed Cherry Point and arrived at Incirlik on 12 May. They were in the field with Joint Task Force Bravo on 15 May 1991.⁹¹ Six firepower control teams were used in northern Iraq: FCT-1 was attached to the British 40th Commando, Royal Marines; FCT-2 was with the French 8th Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment; FCT-3 worked with the Italian Folgore Parachute Brigade; FCT-4 was with the British 45th Commando; FCT-5 was with the Dutch 1st Amphibious Combat Group; and FCT-6 joined the U.S. Army's 3-325th Airborne Combat Team.⁹² These ANGLICO Marines participated in combined tactical exercises, made parachute jumps, and conducted fire support demonstrations. Unfortunately, several ANGLICO Marines were injured during a training accident on 4 July and had to be hospitalized. Luckily, no one was killed when the "Slide for Life" rope parted and the Marines crashed onto the rocky ground below.⁹³

In a very short time, all was going well in northern Iraq. The Marines had settled in, were assisting refugees as they arrived, had cleared the Iraqis out of Zakho, and were working smoothly with allied forces. However, there was one gigantic hitch. Many Kurds refused to return to northern Iraq unless the city of Dohuk was liberated, the security zone expanded, and political issues resolved. In early May, the decision to expand the security zone, coupled with a concerted effort to move the Kurds out of Turkey, was announced and named "Gallant Provider."

Launching Gallant Provider: Expanding the Security Zone

The next phase of Operation Provide Comfort was Gallant Provider. Despite its initial success, Provide Comfort had not achieved its ultimate goal. Most of the Kurds still refused to come down from the mountains. News about the liberation of Zakho reached the mountains and some Kurds began moving back into Iraq, but many continued to cling to the dubious shelter of their mountain hideouts. This was a troubling prospect for General Shalikashvili because the warm weather was about to dry up the mountain streams and make life there even more difficult.

To try to encourage more Kurds to leave the mountains General Shalikashvili decided to expand the security area in northern Iraq. New orders were passed to Generals Potter and Garner. Joint Task Force Alpha was to close down the mountain camps, open a series of way stations on the route out of Turkey, and begin an intense campaign to convince the Kurds to return to Iraq. Joint Task Force Bravo was ordered to expand its area of operations east and south.

On 29 April, Colonel Jones relinquished tactical control of the 45th Commando, the 29th Commando Regiment, and the 1st ACG when these units



Aerial view of a resettlement camp (bajeer) near Zakho. Roads divided this bajeer into 60-person zanon (hamlets). Zanon were grouped into gunds (villages) of about 1,000 people. Joint medical, administrative, and food distribution centers, and water distribution points, were centrally located. This camp served more than 21,000 people.

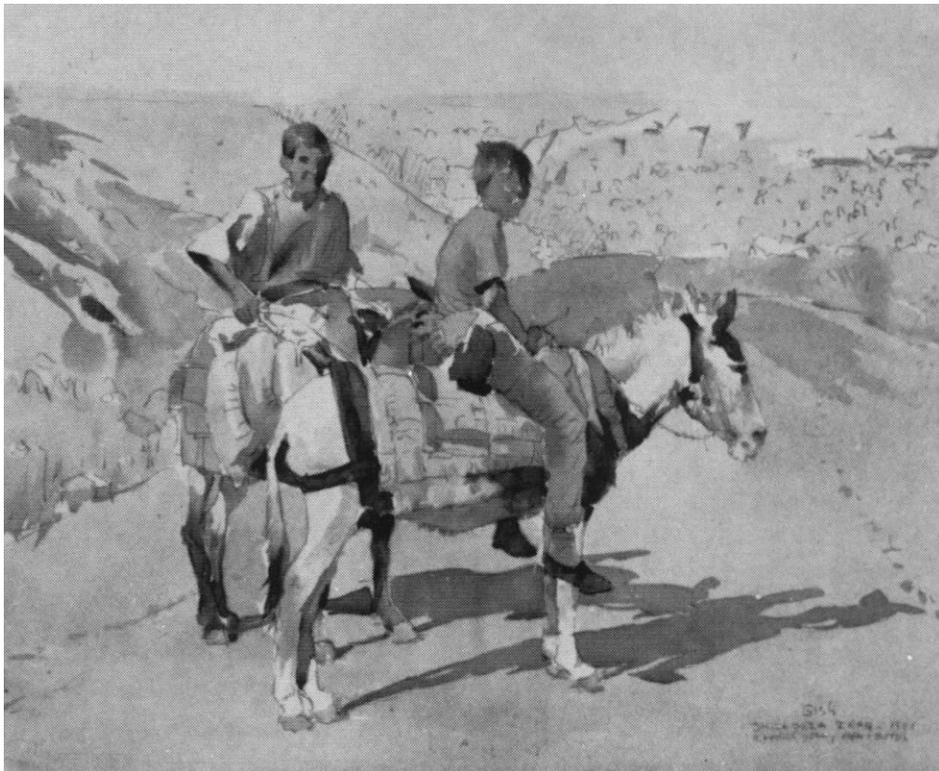
were turned over to their parent unit, the 3d Commando Brigade, Royal Marines. The 3d Commando Brigade was reinforced by firepower control teams from 2d ANGLICO: the 105mm artillery platoon, Battery H, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines; and an LAV section--two LAV-25s, an LAV-AT (mounting a TOW II antitank missile launcher), and an LAV-L (logistics vehicle).

When General Garner received the warning order to extend Joint Task Force Bravo's tactical area to the east, he tasked the 24th MEU (SOC) to assist the reconnaissance effort. The Marines deployed force reconnaissance teams approximately 120 kilometers from Zakho. After the British secured Al Amadiyah and the French moved into Suri, Joint Task Force Bravo began looking toward Dohuk. To assist this effort, reconnaissance teams relayed information about Iraqi positions and movements south of Zakho. Colonel Jones used these reports to monitor the Iraqi movements. Reconnaissance teams also located and marked many minefields. There were 52 ground reconnaissance missions during Provide Comfort.

On 1 May 1991, the United Nations raised its flag over Zakho before a crowd of about 1,000 Kurds.⁹⁴ By 4 May, about 3,000 Kurds were living at Zakho. Bulk food (rice, flour, lentils, sugar, and salt) stored there could feed an estimated 9,000 refugees two meals per day for about 30 days. The Zakho Civil Affairs Team met with the mayor, the police chief, and the leader of the Baath Party. They worked out a compromise and agreed only 50 unarmed police would remain in town. The major civic problems were electric power and sanitation because all electric generators were out of order and Saddam stubbornly refused to switch on external power sources. Despite these handicaps, Zakho's markets and shops were open, currency was plentiful, and one of the banks was operating. The streets of Zakho soon teemed with people hurrying to market.

BLT 2/8 Moves South

On 4 May, Battalion Landing Team 2/8 moved south of Zakho along the road leading through Summayl to Dohuk. A platoon from Company E relieved a similar unit from Company F. Company F then formed a combined arms



Painting by Col Peter M. "Mike" Gish, USMCR
Young Kurds on burros in Shiladeza, Iraq



Photograph courtesy of MajGen Jay M. Garner, USA
The commanders assigned to JTF Bravo at Zakho are an international contingent, including American, British, Dutch, and French Marines. MajGen Jay M. Garner, USA (CG, JTF Bravo), is seated center front row. The American Marine commander, Col James L. Jones, Jr. (CO, 24th MEU), is seated second from the right. LtCol Tony L. Corwin (CO, BLT 2/8) stands behind him.

mechanized task force. The rifle company was mounted in assault amphibian vehicles reinforced by one LAV section and two combined antiarmor teams. Battery H and the BLT's 81mm mortars were in direct support. Sea Cobras from HMM-264 buzzed angrily overhead and additional air was available if needed. The Iraqis grudgingly moved from one post after another as the Marines advanced. Company F eventually moved about five kilometers south of Summayl Village before stopping. Company G was immediately inserted by the Sea Knights of HMM-264 and reinforced Company F. The BLT command element, Company H, and Battery H established a fire support base at Muqbal on 9 May.⁹⁵

Allied Forces

The British forces assigned to Operation Haven, as the British called Provide Comfort, were commanded by Major General Robin J. Ross, Royal Marines. The command element was Joint Force Headquarters, drawn mostly from Headquarters, Commando Forces. The ground combat element was 3d Commando Brigade, with three commando battalions, an artillery regiment, and an engineer squadron. The British 40th Commando, Royal Marines, was temporarily under the tactical control of Task Force Alpha. The British 45th Commando, Royal Marines, held Sirsenk and Al Amadiyah. The Dutch 1st Amphibious Combat Group was located at Batufa. The 29th Commando

Regiment, Royal Artillery, had a headquarters battery and three firing batteries armed with 105mm lightweight towed howitzers. The 59th Independent Commando Squadron, Royal Engineers, was collocated with 3d Commando Brigade Headquarters. The British deployed three helicopter squadrons. The Chinook Force (Royal Air Force) and 846th Naval Air Squadron (Royal Navy) operated from Silopi. The 3d Brigade Air Squadron flew out of Sirsenk. The Commando Logistics Regiment (Royal Marines) operated from Silopi, where it worked closely with the Combined Support Command.⁹⁶ The Dutch sent about 1,000 troops to support Provide Comfort. About 400 were Marines and the rest were aviation, service support, or medical personnel.

The French contingent was the "Cougar Force" comprised of a light infantry brigade, a field hospital, and part of a helicopter regiment. The ground combat force was drawn from the French Rapid Action Force's 11th Airborne Brigade. This task force included headquarters, an infantry regiment, an Alpine company, a medical detachment, and support personnel. The main ground force was the 8th Marine Parachute Regiment.⁹⁷ French terminology differed from American usage, and French Marine units were not "soldiers of the sea" as were the American, British, and Dutch Marines, rather, they were expeditionary units made up of professional soldiers formerly called "colonial infantry."⁹⁸ The French were assigned the far eastern sector of the security zone.

Italy sent elements of the famous Folgore Parachute Brigade, an Alpine special forces company, a helicopter detachment, and a field medical unit. The Folgore Brigade had previously served beside the American Marines as part of the Multinational Force in Beirut from 1982-84. The Italians were given the east-central sector.

The Spanish Expeditionary Force was the first large military unit deployed outside of Spain since 1898. Its ground combat element was three rifle companies from the 1st Airborne Brigade, "Roger De Flor." The Spanish also sent engineer, medical, and helicopter detachments. The Spanish guarded Habur crossing and Zakho's western lines of communication. Germany, Canada, Denmark, Australia, and Luxembourg also sent small military units, usually medical detachments, which were attached to larger allied forces.⁹⁹

By mid-May, the allied security zone spread from the Turkish border about three-quarters of the way across Iraq toward the Iranian border. The 3d Commando Brigade pushed west and nudged the *Iraqi 36th Infantry Division* out of Batufa. From there the brigade moved on to Sirsenk where it occupied a vital airstrip that was capable of landing C-130 transport airplanes, but had been damaged during Desert Storm. Six days of around-the-clock repairs put it back into action. The airstrip was reopened on 14 May and was operated by an Arriving/Departing Air Control Group from Contingency MAGTF 1-91. Sirsenk soon became a major humanitarian service support base replacing Yuksekova in Turkey.

The 526-man Spanish airborne battalion was assigned route security from Habur to Zakho. The French "Cougar Force" moved east toward Suri. Battalion Landing Team 2/8 continued local patrolling, manned three checkpoints,



Photograph courtesy of MajGen Jay M. Garner, USA
MajGen Jay M. Garner, CG, JTF Bravo, center, and Col James L. Jones, Jr., CO, 24th MEU (SOC), meet with Kurdish leaders Jalal Talabani, second from left, and Moussad Barzani, third from right, in Zakho. Talabani was leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Barzani headed the Kurdish Democratic Party. These long-time political rivals joined forces as the Kurdistan United Front during Operation Provide Comfort.

consolidated defensive positions, and worked on civic action projects. The U.S. Army's 284th Military Police Company patrolled Zakho, and the 18th Engineer Brigade built refugee camps, manned fuel and water points, and participated in numerous civic action projects. In Joint Task Force Bravo's area all was well and the allies awaited the return of the refugees.

The Kurds

The major stumbling block to a successful campaign was Dohuk. Most Kurds still in the mountains were from Dohuk Province and wouldn't budge until it was liberated and secured. More than 1,500 Kurds demonstrated in Zakho, asking the allies to retake Dohuk on 12 May. Discussions with the Kurds revealed they would not return unless the allies opened the city of Dohuk, worked out a political settlement for an autonomous Kurdistan, and agreed to protect them from Saddam's wrath. General Garner relayed this information to General Shalikashvili, and patiently waited for further guidance.

The Kurds have never been noted for political unity. Kurdish politics was a confusing labyrinth not easily explored by the uninitiated. There were six major political parties: the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), the Party of United Kurdistan (PUK), the Kurdistan Socialist Party (KSP), the Socialist Party for

Kurdish People (SPKP), the Kurdistan Peoples Democratic Party (KPDP), and the Workers Party (WP). The Kurds also were deeply divided by tribal rivalry.

The oldest, best known, and most powerful political organization was the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). From 1946 until 1975, Mustapha Barzani's KDP was the single most important conduit for Kurdish nationalism in Iraq. In 1975, Jalal Talibani started the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The KDP and the PUK have vied for Kurdish leadership ever since. Charismatic Massoud Barzani inherited the mantle of KDP leadership after his father's death in 1979.

In late April, Jalal Talibani met with Saddam Hussein, after which he announced a return to the principles of Kurdish autonomy. He also urged the Kurds to cease fighting and begin returning home. However, the skeptical Kurds remained unconvinced because they had heard Saddam's lies too many times before. In 1970 he promised them autonomy, but by 1975 had renewed a campaign of repression which included using chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians in 1988. The brutality of the recent reoccupation of Kurdistan was also still fresh in their minds. Talabani's pronouncements were ignored by the Peshmerga who continued fighting Iraqi forces.



Painting by Col Peter M. "Mike" Gish, USMCR
Tents at Zakho I, Iraq

Iraqi representatives met with Kurdish elders and political leaders at Kanimasi on 13 May 1991. The Kurds were pleasantly surprised to discover they were being invited to return to Dohuk. However, they made their return dependant on two requests. First, an agreement had to be worked out with Baghdad to guarantee a return to democratic principles, institution of civil rights, and Kurdish autonomy. Second, they wanted allied security forces to protect them. Without both guarantees, the Kurds would not return. In the words of one Kurd, "We would rather live like dogs than be slaughtered like pigs."¹⁰⁰

The continued Iraqi occupation of Dohuk remained the main stumbling block to successfully concluding Operation Provide Comfort, and became a very sticky point when the Iraqis refused to leave. General Nashwan told Colonel Naab "If you enter . . . Dohuk, we will . . . take [military] action . . ."¹⁰¹ The Iraqi army responded by moving a mechanized battalion nearer to Dohuk. Unsure of allied resolve, Saddam instigated several provocative acts to test the waters. An American EA-6B Prowler was fired on twice during a routine reconnaissance flight. On 5 May, two Iraqi civilian helicopters spraying pesticides "slimed" Company F while flying over the Marine lines. Although the Iraqi pilots claimed innocence, this incident appeared to be a deliberate provocation. The helicopters were quickly intercepted and forced down. A search of the aircraft revealed a camera and some film, but it was never determined if this was Iraqi intelligence equipment or the innocent tools of an Iraqi "shutterbug." The chemicals were tested but contained only normal pesticide toxins and the incident was closed.

There was a major shooting incident on 13 May between Saddam's palace guards at Sirsenk and the British Marines. No allied troops were hit during the firefight. The Iraqis reported two wounded, but burial parties the next day indicated this report was in error. About a week later, members of the Joint Historical Team were sent running for cover when Iraqi 82mm mortar rounds were fired near allied positions.

Several firefights, a few food riots, and continual scuffles broke out between the Kurds and the Iraqis. In Zakho, General Garner became increasingly anxious about the safety of General Nashwan after his car was vandalized by angry Kurds on two different occasions, so the Americans found themselves in the awkward position of defending the Iraqis from the Kurds rather than vice versa.¹⁰²

Opening Dohuk

Fed up with Iraqi harassment, General Shalikashvili decided to use some more "aggressive restraint" and ordered an American response. American air activity increased and Joint Task Force Bravo turned its attention south. Colonel Jones anticipated three possible solutions to the Dohuk crisis: 1) forcible entry of Dohuk, 2) peaceful entry into Dohuk, and 3) neutralization of Dohuk with neither Iraqis nor coalition forces inside the city. Lieutenant Colonel Linn and the S-3 section prepared plans for all three courses of action.¹⁰³

The plan to capture Dohuk using military force impacted the 24th MEU (SOC) the most. The 24th MEU (SOC) was given considerable additional combat

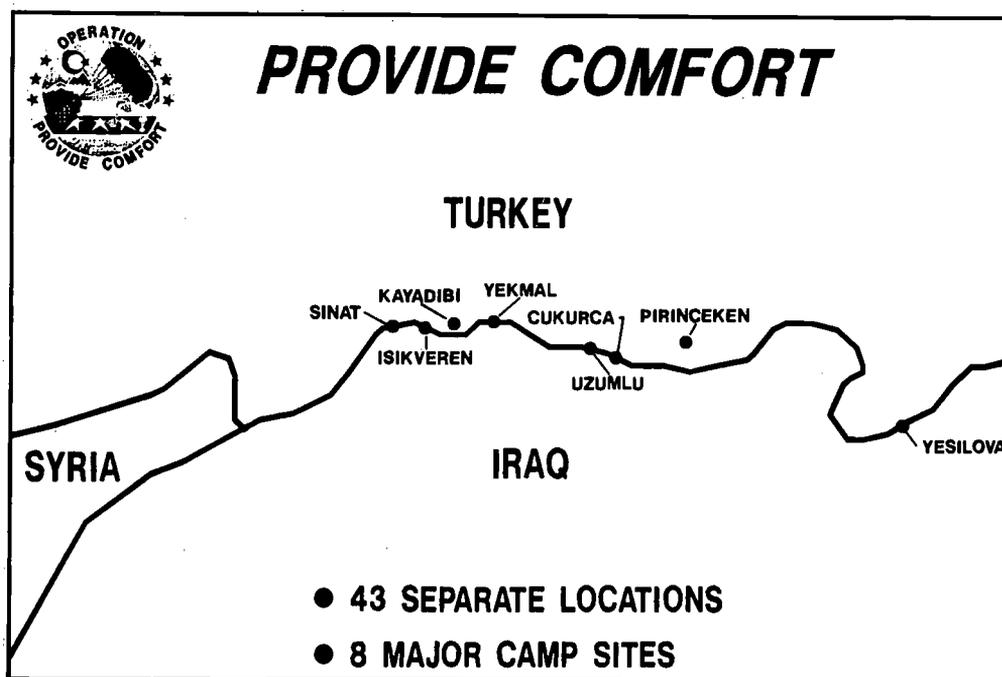
power to achieve this task. The 3-325 Airborne Combat Team was placed under Colonel Jones' tactical control. The British 29th Commando Regiment's 18 105mm howitzers reinforced the guns of Battery H. Marine Sea Cobras were reinforced by two Army attack helicopter companies from the 4th (Aviation) Battalion, 3d Infantry Division, at Zakho. Air Force A-10s and F-16s from Incirlik and Navy F-14s, F-18s, and A-6s from the *Roosevelt* were "on call."

Colonel Jones opted to use a pincer movement. The 3-325th Airborne Combat Team would isolate Dohuk from the northeast moving down MSR "Banzai." Battalion Landing Team 2/8 would approach the city from the northwest along MSR "Ninja." Combined command post exercises, fire support coordination exercises, and a sandtable exercise were used to prepare the attack. Luckily, however, this plan never had to be executed.

Three events loosened the logjam in the mountains and eased tensions at Dohuk: 1) Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani, meeting with Saddam Hussein, arrived at a tentative agreement about Kurdish autonomy; 2) a new allied-Iraqi agreement was reached; and 3) the Turks agreed to the establishment of a multinational residual force to be stationed on Turkish soil. The first two events opened the floodgates and Kurdish refugees began streaming south; the other one settled questions about the allied commitment to stay and protect the Kurds.

On 18 May, Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the most influential spokesman for the Kurdish United Front, announced an agreement in principle between the Kurdish rebels and the Iraqi government. It called for restoration of democracy in Iraq and granted autonomy to the Kurds. A Kurdish Autonomous Zone (KAZ) would be established in northern Iraq, but it would remain part of Iraq. Kurdish would be the official language and the Kurds would be responsible for legal and political matters inside the zone, but would retain close economic ties with Baghdad. The Iraqi government would continue to handle international diplomacy.¹⁰⁴ This announcement was linked to further negotiations between the allied command and the Iraqi military. On 19 May, General Shalikashvili met with Iraqi Lieutenant General Abu Firas Saber to discuss opening Dohuk. A agreement was reached whereby the city of Dohuk was declared an "open" city. This agreement allowed limited humanitarian, civil affairs, and logistics teams to enter Dohuk along with United Nations and non-government relief agencies. Allied forces held positions north of Dohuk while the Iraqis pulled back to positions about 15 kilometers southeast of the city. A small convoy of coalition vehicles entered Dohuk carrying a strictly limited exploration and observation team on 20 May. This team established its command post in an empty hotel in the heart of the city and began to restore city services. This seemed to appease the Kurds and by 25 May most were on their way back to Dohuk.

Several hundred thousand Kurds left their mountain sanctuaries. They moved on foot, on horseback, and by mule cart, tractor, car, truck, and bus. Brightly colored civilian trucks, overflowed with happy Kurds as they returned home. A gigantic serpent-like procession snaked its way south stopping at way stations at Batufa, Kanimasi, Kanibalav, Daudiyah, Sarsing, Qadish, Deralok, and



Goregavan. Food and fuel were available at Nazdur, Baloka, Al Amadiyah, Barmini, Mangesh, and Giripit. Suddenly the border camps became ghost towns. Isikveren dropped from 80,000 to less than 1,000; all 4,500 people at Sinat left; Kayadiyah went from 8,000 to less than 500; Yekmal dropped from 74,000 to 5,000; Umzumlu went from 45,000 to 10,000; and Cukurca from 118,00 to 8,900. The last camp closed on 7 June 1991. The end of Operation Provide Comfort was in sight.

Provide Comfort Winds Down

Northern Iraq

The massive movement out of the mountains signaled the end of Combined Task Force Provide Comfort's mission. After Dohuk was declared an "open city" on 24 May. The Marines had accomplished their mission and were about to head home. Old hands at expeditionary operations, the Marines got an early start. Captain Ouzts and the unmanned aerial vehicle detachment departed Turkey for Camp Lejeune in late May. The parachute riggers were detached from Contingency MAGTF 1-91 and returned to Camp Pendleton and Okinawa in early June. Once the final wave of refugees passed through the way stations, CMAGTF 1-91 had accomplished its mission and packed up for home as well.

Once the Kurds began returning to northern Iraq, the main tasks left for Combined Task Force Provide Comfort were to turn the camps over to civilian control, surrender the security mission to the United Nations, pull up stakes, and return home. On 30 May, General Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, inspected Joint Task Force Bravo's area of operations. During his tour he stopped at several checkpoints, talked with some enlisted Marines, and thanked them for a job well done. Following his visit, General Powell reported to Washington that all was going well and Operation Provide Comfort should be terminated soon as the diplomatic situation allowed.¹⁰⁵

Battalion Landing Team 2/8 remained at the Muqbal fire support base, named Camp Denton to honor a Marine accidentally killed during Provide Comfort, from 9 May until 15 June. During this time Colonel Jones insisted on maximum cross training with other allied forces. Live-fire exercises, combined combat patrols, parachute jumps, and military schooling were constantly taking place. Lieutenant Colonel Corwin developed a rotation system whereby BLT 2/8 units manned forward checkpoints for six days, then rotated to Camp Denton for six days where they participated in live-fire demonstrations, ran squad-sized tactical exercises, and held organized athletic events. This last activity featured spirited competition and was a welcome relief from the military routine. The Marines won the "Northern Iraq International Soccer Championship" after defeating British, French, Italian, Spanish, and Dutch teams.

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 264 worked at a hectic pace. Each morning several Sea Knights and Super Stallions were used for routine supply runs. One CH-46 was stationed at the Zakho landing pad, reserved for emergency medical evacuation. One or more of the UH-1N's were devoted to daily aerial reconnaissance, liaison, or transportation missions. Any helicopters not scheduled underwent a maintenance stand-down. These stand-downs were necessary because of the hard use and difficult operational environment. The busy landing zone at Silopi was often crowded and was always dusty. The squadron headquarters and air control elements operated from tents set up along the edge of the landing zone. The squadron was billeted in nearby tents.

When the withdrawal plan was announced, Lieutenant Colonel Byrtus realized night operations were imminent. He, therefore, ordered the squadron to become proficient at low-light flying and night takeoffs and landings. Low-light operations were part of the 18 SOC-related missions, but correct use of night vision goggles required constant practice. Night vision goggles captured visible light too dim to be used by the human eye, then electronically displayed a brightened green image not unlike that of a video camera viewfinder. These devices allowed Marine pilots to fly after dark, but they also imposed some limitations. Depth perception and peripheral vision were severely hampered, so these problems had to be overcome by intense training and frequent repetition. The result was that by late May, the night sky over Silopi was filled with the constant drone of helicopter engines as the pilots of HMM-264 honed their night flying skills.



Painting by Col Peter M. Gish, USMCR

BLT 2/8 withdrawal from Zakho, Iraq

The major topic in MSSG-24's future was the 24th MEU (SOC)'s departure and reembarkation on board the ships of Phibron 8. This did not promise to be an easy task. More than 2,200 Marines had to be moved from northern Iraq to Silopi and then to Iskenderun. At the same time, MSSG-24 had to continue normal supply and maintenance operations in the forward area. The accomplishment of these multiple tasks required detailed planning, careful use of resources, and use of outside materials.

During its deployment to Turkey and northern Iraq, MSSG-24 had notable achievements. Foremost, the efforts of MSSG-24 Marines helped to save the lives of nearly three-quarters of a million refugees. In the process, its trucks drove 42,426 miles, hauled 998.2 tons of cargo, delivered 297 pallets of food, transported 8,628 passengers, and spent 8,109 hours on the road. Its engineers produced more than 150,000 gallons of purified water, dispensed almost 3.5 million gallons of water to displaced civilians at Zakho, set up more than 1,000 tents, and destroyed approximately 45,000 ordnance items. Tragically, one MSSG-24 Marine was killed in a motor vehicle accident.

Despite being designed to support the tactical employment of a single Marine expeditionary unit for 15 days, MSSG-24 provided the lion's share of service support to an almost division-size joint task force for almost a month. MEU

Service Support Group 24 operated further inland than any previous MSSG and was a critical element in the longest, most complex, and largest Marine humanitarian effort in history.¹⁰⁶

The Retrograde

It had been obvious from the start that Combined Task Force Provide Comfort's main mission was to work itself out of a job by moving the Kurds back into their homeland. General Colin L. Powell's visit confirmed that this had been done, so the Combined Support Command issued a warning order for the pull-back of allied forces in late May. In military jargon, an unpressured withdrawal is called a "retrograde." At the first retrograde planning session, General Burch repeated the diplomatic sensitivity of the issue, then identified the French as the first contingent to fall back. His goal was to reduce occupied areas quickly, so he ordered that the last increments be flown out no later than 15 June.

These orders came as no surprise to the Marines. The 24th MEU (SOC) had been planning for this since mid-May and put its plans into effect in early June. Colonel Jones' intent was use a phased withdrawal. Because of Iskenderun's limited facilities, it was to be an 18-day evolution. The first 15 days were devoted to the movement of MEU, HMM, and BLT personnel with no tactical mission. Most of the combat service support element, all bulk supplies and equipment not necessary to support combat operations, and most vehicles were scheduled to move back as soon as possible.

All vehicles and equipment had to be disassembled and thoroughly cleansed of dirt and micro-organisms before being loaded on board ship. Normally, a departing MEU accomplished this "washdown" at Rota, Spain, during the MARG "turnover," however, this was not possible because the "turnover" was going to take place in Turkey. The presence of dangerous micro-organisms in the dirt required the Marines to strip down and carefully wash each vehicle and piece of equipment. To do this properly, specially constructed wash racks and high pressure steam hoses were needed. Lieutenant Colonel Kohl had to make arrangements to have these shipped from Haifa, Israel, to Iskenderun. Each vehicle required about 24 man-hours of labor to strip, wash, and reassemble. After the washdown, a medical team conducted a rigorous inspection making sure there was no dirt or dust before clearing each item for embarkation. One rifle company was to be sent to Iskenderun to act as a security force and to assist the washdown.

The final three days would see one-third of the remaining Marines returned to Silopi each day. To cover the pull-back and keep the Iraqis guessing, all movement was scheduled during the hours of darkness. Colonel Jones wanted a strong urban presence. All checkpoints would be manned until the very end. Silopi was designated the 24th MEU (SOC) transfer point and Sirsenk was the 3-325th Airborne Combat Team's transfer point. The Combined Support

Command's 14th Transportation Battalion was responsible to coordinate overland movement from Silopi to Incirlik and Iskenderun.¹⁰⁷

Colonel Jones worried about several issues. There were no firm plans as to where the respective command posts were going to be located or how they were going to be configured as Joint Task Force Bravo moved back to Turkey. Jones hoped they could be collocated somewhere near the border. He also had questions about the overall force structure. Jones recommended that only combat echelons, what he called "trigger pullers," stay until the last day. Finally, it was necessary to carefully synchronize plans with the other allied forces, Joint Task Force Bravo, and the 3-325th Airborne Combat Team.

Lieutenant Colonel Kohl (MSSG-24) was most concerned about Turkish customs and the agricultural inspection. The Turks had been very cooperative of late, but had recently returned to stringent customs inspections. They intended to strictly limit cross-border traffic at Habur and initiated detailed inspections to ensure no weapons were being smuggled inside Turkey to arm PKK terrorists. The washdown and follow-up agricultural inspection were difficult jobs. The first elements pulled back were the Bravo Command Group, Company H, and advance parties from MSSG-24 and HMM-264. They moved to Iskenderun on 1 June.

General Shalikashvili declared 8 June "R-Day," the official beginning of the retrograde. The first CTF unit out was Joint Task Force Alpha. The 24th MEU (SOC) was scheduled to begin pulling out once JTF-A left. Within two weeks, most of the 24th MEU (SOC) rear echelon personnel, equipment, and vehicles were either at Silopi or Iskenderun. On 12 June, the 4th Civil Affairs Group departed Zakho for Camp Lejeune. Colonel Corwin closed Camp Denton on 15 June. Battalion Landing Team 2/8's Command Element and Company F moved to Silopi after turning over the security zone to the Italians. Operational control of Company G was transferred to the French at Shaladiza, and Company E was attached to the British 40th Commando.

On 16 June, Colonel Jones closed Camp Sommers and the 24th MEU (SOC) Command Element moved to a new command post which it shared with Joint Task Force Bravo. The new command post was located about four miles from the Turkish border along Route 6. Major Boyd, the 24th MEU (SOC) S-4, used a phased redeployment to move cargo, equipment, and personnel back to Iskenderun by echelon. His plan worked well and the MEU had returned 97 percent of its cargo, 85 percent of its equipment, and 50 percent of its personnel to the ships by the end of June.¹⁰⁸

Contingency MAGTF 1-91 ceased operations and recalled its teams in the end of June. Lieutenant Colonel Bailey noted a sense of accomplishment. During a visit by Lieutenant General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., Commanding General, FMF Atlantic/FMF Europe, Brigadier General Burch (CG, CSC) told the Marine commander that he was very pleased with the performance of CMAGTF 1-91 and intended to pass favorable comments to Major General Stackpole on Okinawa and to the Marine Commandant in Washington, D.C. The Marines of CMAGTF 1-91 had efficiently accomplished every mission given them.

Marine emphasis on rapid planning paid off when the CMAGTF staff published two entirely different operation orders and an additional fragmentary order within two weeks. Marine flexibility was shown when staff non-commissioned officers were unexpectedly called upon to fill key staff billets in the command center because the officers were needed to be team leaders in the field. The CMAGTF also demonstrated its ability to work in a joint and combined service environment. The Marines of CMAGTF 1-91 worked with U.S. Special Forces, British Royal Marines, Dutch Marines, and French soldiers. Professional relationships and feelings of mutual respect were established all around. Lieutenant Colonel Bailey noted that morale was high throughout Operation Provide Comfort. The CMAGTF suffered no fatalities because safety and common sense prevailed under the most difficult conditions. Contingency MAGTF 1-91 returned to Okinawa on 3 July 1991.¹⁰⁹

Although the Marine movement went smoothly, General Shalikashvili encountered some unanticipated problems. After learning of plans to pull out, the



Painting by Col Peter M. "Mike" Gish, USMCR
American and Western European forces built a series of temporary refugee relocation camps throughout northern Iraq in April to encourage the Kurds to come down from their mountain hideouts in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

Kurds held demonstrations protesting the allied departure. At Dohuk, the Iraqis and the Kurds engaged in a two-hour gun battle during which at least 17 people died. The British and the Peshmerga got into a firefight near Al Amadiyah. There were scattered incidents between the Kurds and the Turks along the border. These actions forced General Shalikashvili to postpone the allied egress until 15 July.

To try to settle things down, General Shalikashvili decided to have a meeting with Kurdish leaders. Colonel Jones, combat artist Colonel Gish, and Sergeant Major Hatcher flew to the 3d Commando Brigade Headquarters. There, they met with General Shalikashvili and the British commander to discuss future options and to anticipate the Kurdish response. From Sirsenk, the group moved to the heavily guarded French compound at Shaladiza where the Kurdish mullahs had gathered for this important meeting.

General Shalikashvili met with the Kurdish elders, each one dressed in distinctive ceremonial robes and fancy turban. The Kurds talked of their dreams for a free Kurdistan and told the general they wanted the allied forces to expand the security zone to include Mosul and Kirkuk. After their passionate presentations, General Shalikashvili rose and addressed them. He told them that what he was going to say was sure to be a disappointment to them, but that he had to be honest with them. He said the security zone was not going to be expanded and that the allied security forces were going to leave Iraq. He reassured the Kurds that the United Nations would keep the peace and urged them to settle their differences with Baghdad through negotiations. This did not satisfy the Kurds, who pressed for a continued allied presence.¹¹⁰ Shalikashvili pointed out that Saddam was well aware that any intrusion into the security zone would bring a strong allied response, then closed the meeting by saying that he would convey their concerns about the future to his superiors, but that he could make no promises.

The Final Days

On 6 July, the Turkish government agreed to allow an international reaction force, called Combined Task Force Poised Hammer, to remain at Silopi. Poised Hammer was comprised of a headquarters, an international infantry battalion, an aviation component, and a service support component. General Jamerson was designated commanding general and General Zinni was made deputy commander. The U.S. Army's 6th Battalion, 6th Cavalry, and 6th Battalion, 502d Infantry, were the major American combat units assigned to Poised Hammer. The 6th Battalion of the 502d was actually a provisional rifle battalion that included rifle companies from the United States (Company A, 6th Battalion, 502d Infantry), United Kingdom, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, and Turkey. The 6th Cavalry's 6th Battalion included scout, utility, attack, and transport helicopters. Fixed-wing air support was provided by the U.S. Air Force at Incirlik. The only Marine units assigned to Task Force Poised Hammer were the firepower control teams from 2d ANGLICO.



Marines paddle down the Khabur River during a Fourth of July field day that featured international military and athletic contests.

Mediterranean Amphibious Ready Group 2-91, with a MEU embarked, and a Navy carrier battle group were designated standby forces, and would conduct normal operations unless needed in northern Iraq. Amphibious Squadron 4 replaced Amphibious Squadron 8 as the Mediterranean amphibious ready group

on 11 July. Colonel Jones and his staff briefed the incoming MEU command element at Iskenderun, then the 24th MEU (SOC) turned over its duties as Landing Force Sixth Fleet to the 26th MEU (SOC). The aircraft carrier *Roosevelt* had already been relieved on station by the *Forrestal* (CV 59).¹¹¹

Combined Task Force Provide Comfort had successfully accomplished its mission. Before the allies departed northern Iraq, however, Saddam Hussein was given some final terms: No Iraqi aircraft could operate above the 36th parallel. A coalition force would be located at Silopi, ready to intervene if necessary. Allied aircraft would continue to patrol the skies of northern Iraq without interference. The Military Coordination Center would continue to monitor the security zone and report Iraqi compliance with the stated terms. It was made clear that only Iraqi acceptance of this understanding would pave the way for the end of Operation Provide Comfort.

On 12 July 1991, the Bush administration publicly announced its decision to pull American forces out of northern Iraq. The next day, thousands of Kurds lined the road near Habur and blocked an allied convoy for about three hours. More than 3,000 people carried banners that thanked the allies, but also warned that "the job is only half done." They were grateful for the help rendered, but fearful of what would happen after the allies left. General Garner, the senior American officer on the spot, tried to calm their fears by reminding them that Iraqi military forces were prohibited from entering the 3,600-square-mile exclusion zone established in April, and that a multinational rapid reaction force would remain at Silopi to repel any Iraqi advances. General Garner stated, "We have told [Saddam] not to come back in here." Fadhil Merani, a top official of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, accompanied Garner when he went to talk to the Kurds. Merani's words, "Shame on you, these people came here to help us, and look at the way you treat them," appeased the crowd which silently pulled back and allowed the movement to continue.¹¹²

At 1600 on 15 July 1991, a bugler sounded "Colors," and the American flag was hauled down for the last time in northern Iraq. The convoy carrying the last Marines and soldiers to Silopi was stopped at the Habur Bridge. A peaceful crowd of about 500 people gathered to thank them for all they had done. General Garner accepted emotional well-wishes and reaffirmed coalition support for the Kurds. As the sky darkened behind the towering mountain peaks in the east, Colonel Jones and General Garner crossed the border into Turkey. The last elements of the 24th MEU (SOC) were in Silopi by 15 July. As it turned out, debarkation was not a problem and the MEU loaded the last of its equipment in less than 96 hours. The 24th MEU (SOC) sailed for home on 19 July 1991.¹¹³

Provide Comfort, the largest humanitarian relief operation in Marine history to that time, was over. In early April, everyone had been skeptical about launching a such an operation. Politicians didn't want to get involved, host nations refused to help, and a ruthless dictator banked on world-wide apathy to achieve his goals. After the refugees fled to the mountains, U.N. relief experts surveyed the situation and said it was hopeless. They predicted it would take at least seven months for recovery and stated that the Kurds would never return to

Iraq. But within seven weeks, more than 750,000 starving people were being fed, the sick were being nursed back to health, and once fearful expatriates had returned to their homeland filled with hope.

When they arrived, the Marines were greeted by the horrifying sight of starving, freezing refugees in the mountain camps and the haunting images of the deserted towns of Kurdistan. By mid-July, however, the mournful wails of mothers with dying children had given way to the joyous laughter of the children themselves, and the once empty streets of Zakho and Dohuk teemed with people. It became business as usual when shepherds drove their flocks to the open-air markets and the cafes were filled with arguing men. Children who once quaked with fear when soldiers appeared now stopped playing and yelled "Meester, Meester, wave at me!" as Marines passed by.

In the spring of 1991, the Marines proudly called themselves "Devil Dogs," but to the appreciative Kurds they were known by a different name, the "Food Soldiers." Returning veterans of Desert Storm were cheered by the American people because of their stunning performance as warriors; the unheralded Marines of Provide Comfort proved no less adept at their craft while acting as Samaritans in northern Iraq. Humanitarian Relief Operations (HROs) are referred to as "Heroes" in military shorthand, for the Marines of Operation Provide Comfort it was a fitting accolade.

NOTES

Unless otherwise noted the material in this monograph was derived from the following: LtCol Robert L. Bailey intvw, 2Jun91, hereafter Bailey intvw; LtCol Joseph A. Byrtus intvw, 25May91, hereafter Byrtus intvw; Capt Charles E. Headen intvw, 27May91, hereafter Headen intvw; MajGen James L. Jamerson, USAF, intvw, 16May91, hereafter Jamerson intvw; Col James L. Jones, Jr. intvw, 31May91, hereafter Jones intvw; Capt Dewey G. Jordan intvw, 29May91, hereafter Jordan intvw; LtCol Richard L. Kohl intvw, 11May91, hereafter Kohl intvw; Capt Timothy J. Ott intvw, 28May91, hereafter Ott intvw; BGen Richard W. Potter, USA, intvw, 17May91, hereafter Potter intvw; Commo Dean Turner intvw, 1Jun91; BGen Anthony C. Zinni intvw, 10Jun91, hereafter Zinni intvw; SMSgt Thomas L. Robb and SSgt Thomas A. Traynor, CTF-PC Chronology, 7Apr-8Jun91, hereafter PC Chron; FMFEur ComdC, Jan-Jun91; 24th MEU(SOC) ComdC, Jan-Jun 91; HMM-264 ComdC, Jan-Jun91; MSSG-24 ComdC, Jan-Jun91; Maj Charles V. Mugno presentation to CTF-PC, 9May91, hereafter Mugno Brief: CMC SitReps, Mar-Apr91; Col Peter M. Gish, Provide Comfort Journal, hereafter Gish Jnl; LtCol Ronald J. Brown, Provide Comfort Journal, hereafter Brown Jnl; Dept of Army, Area Handbook for Iraq (Washington, GPO, 1969); John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, No Friends but the Mountains (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Middle East Watch, Human Rights in Iraq (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Sheri Laizer, Into Kurdistan (London: Zed Books, 1991); Trevor Mostyn, The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Middle East and North Africa (Cambridge: University Press, 1988); Peter Douglas, "Bloody, Beautiful Kurdistan" Soldier of Fortune Magazine, Nov91, pp. 52-57; Col James L. Jones, Jr., "Operation Provide Comfort: Humanitarian and Security Assistance in Northern Iraq," Marine Corps Gazette, Nov91, pp. 99-107, hereafter Jones, "Provide Comfort."

1. Provide Comfort later was eclipsed by Operation Restore Hope in Somalia.
2. USCinCEur/ECJ3/CAT msg dtd 6Apr91.
3. JTF-PC SitBrief, 7Apr91.
4. This designation was later changed to Joint Task Force Alpha.
5. These aircraft were actually four C-130 Hercules and two MC-130 Talons.
6. JTFPC SitRep #1, 7Apr91.
7. CTF-PC Chron; some of the Kurds ate the MREs dry, then drank water, causing the dehydrated food to swell and resulting in severe gastro-intestinal problems.
8. CG, JTF-PC "Bravo Zulu" msg to 1st LSB dtd 271325Z Jun91.
9. CTF-PC Chron.

10. Jones intvw.
11. CTF-PC "Concept of Operations."
12. FMFEur ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
13. Mediterranean phibrons were known as the Mediterranean Amphibious Ready Group (MARG); embarked Marine forces were designated Landing Force Sixth Fleet (LF6F); in this case, PhibRon 8 was MARG 1-91 and the 24th MEU(SOC) was LF6F.
14. SSgt Lee J. Tibbetts, "24th MEU Hits Sardinian Beach," Marines, Jun91, p. 20.
15. In 1991 most special-purpose forces were designated contingency forces (CMAGTF or CM); currently these forces are designated special purpose MAGTFs (SPMAGTF).
16. Senior Marine leaders felt the term "expeditionary" implied a mission, while "amphibious" was simply a transportation method.
17. When an ARG used an LPH, a landing ship dock (LSD)--capable of launching surface landing craft--was normally included.
18. The necessary inclusion of the Charleston degraded the 24th MEU's amphibious capabilities; although an amphibious cargo ship, the Charleston could neither conduct an underway launch nor offload directly onto the beach.
19. Surge quartering was the use of all available space to house embarked personnel: non-berthing space, temporary cots, hospital bunks, and "hot racking," whereby several men shared the same sleeping area, are all used for surge quartering.
20. His father commanded the daring amphibious reconnaissance units in the Pacific--the antecedent of modern Force Recon--before returning to civilian life as vice president of International Harvester; his uncle was Lieutenant General William K. Jones, known to readers of the Marine Corps Gazette as "Baseplate McGurk."
21. One legislator jokingly cited Col Jones as the perfect commander for Provide Comfort because he had dealt with so many poor helpless wretches during his time as Senate Liaison Officer.
22. The amtracs were 11 AAV7P, 1 AAV7C, and 1 AAV7R; the armor was 6 LAV-25s, 1 LAV-LOG, and 2 LAV-TOWs.
23. After one flight, the author jokingly claimed he probably rode that particular helicopter into combat in 1969; a check of its record of service by a curious crew member proved this was well within the realm of possibility.

24. It was hoped the Bell-Boeing MV-22 Osprey rotating twin-turboprop, S/VTOL airplane would replace both the CH-46 and CH-53 helicopters as Marine shipborne assault aircraft by the mid-1990s, but budget problems have delayed its development.
25. Mugno was described by another Marine as "being able to spot a gnat on a zebra's behind at twice the engagement range."
26. In 1992-93 MajGen Zinni saw extensive service during Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, eventually being appointed special assistant to the U.N. Ambassador.
27. Mugno Brief.
28. CTF-PC Chron.
29. Iskenderun was the site of a famous battle where Alexander the Great defeated Persian King Darius III.
30. Jones intvw.
31. Jones, "Provide Comfort," p. 101; Brytus intvw.
32. Byrtus intvw; CTF-PC Chron.
33. Cpl E. H. Hughes, "Refuelers Keep Birds Flying," Marines, Jun91, p. 4.
34. Brown Jnl; Byrtus intvw; Jones, "Provide Comfort," p. 100.
35. The exclusion zone was all Iraqi territory north of the 36th Parallel.
36. "Relief Supplies Distribution," Mugno brief.
37. FMFEur ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
38. FMFEur ComdC, Jan-Jun91; Mugno intvw.
39. The activities of this historical team are covered in "Historian Documents Marine Assistance To Refugees," Fortitudine, Summer 1991, pp. 12-13.
40. CTF-PC Chron.
41. These were Air Force expeditionary packages designed to supply materials, engineer assets, and specially trained personnel to operate forward bases; Prime Beef teams were support engineers who provided construction and maintenance, and Prime Rib teams were support personnel who administered the camp.
42. CTF-PC Chron.

43. A humorous incident occurred when an excited messenger burst into the MSSG-24 tent and told the author that an Italian brigadier general wanted to see him. The "general" turned out to be a private (Italian enlisted men wear star emblems on their collars).
44. Ron Jensen, "Base Camp Arises From a Wheatfield," The Stars and Stripes, 13May91, p. 3.
45. This was true capitalism in action. Iraqi 25 Dinar bills had an international exchange value of about \$5.00, but vendors sold them for as much as \$20.00.
46. Bailey intvw.
47. CMAGTF OpO 1-91.
48. CO, CMAGTF 1-91, sitrep #1.
49. CMAGTF OpO 2-91.
50. Bailey intvw.
51. MSSG-24 ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
52. Kohl intvw.
53. MSSG-24 ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
54. Brown Jnl.
55. MSSG-24 ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
56. Brown Jnl.
57. Kohl intvw.
58. MSSG-24 ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
59. MSSG-24 ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
60. The KAZ had been notoriously gerrymandered to keep the Kurds from controlling Iraq's oilfields.
61. The number is estimated to be as high as 3,900 villages.
62. CG, CTF-PC, "Concept of Operations."
63. Col John O. Easton intvw 15Apr92.
64. CTF-PC CA Brief.

65. This was necessary to offset Baathist propaganda that the U.N. had no right to interfere in Iraqi affairs.
66. Jones, "Provide Comfort," p. 102.
67. CTF-PC Chron.
68. SEAL is an acronym for Sea, Air, Land; both U.S. Navy SEALs and Force Reconnaissance Marines are trained for deep penetration and clandestine operations in enemy territory.
69. Raftery intvw.
70. Brown Jnl.
71. CG, CTF-PC SitRep, 19Arp91, p. 7.
72. General Shalikashvili's warnings were taken seriously because two Iraqi jets had been shot down in March after the Iraqis ignored warnings by General Schwarzkopf.
73. Mugno brief.
74. Kohl intvw.
75. 24th MEU (SOC) ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
76. Brown Jnl; CTF-PC Chron.
77. MajGen Robin J. Ross, RM, "Operation Haven," Globe and Laurel, Nov-Dec91, p. 208-09.
78. Kohl intvw.
79. The Kurds did not complain about the taste or monotony of a MRE diet, but pointed out most MREs contained pork, violating Islamic dietary laws; the Marines began saying MRE meant "Meals Rejected by Everyone."
80. Supply officers were baffled when the Kurds requested a shipment of potatoes, food most Kurds considered unpalatable; the mystery was solved when the MCC reported Iraqi police were being pelted by potatoes as they walked the streets.
81. These latrines required close supervision because Kurdish families used these comfortable, roofed, and screened enclosures as homes.
82. See LtCol Gordon W. Rudd, USA, "The 24th MEU (SOC) and Operation Provide Comfort: A Second Look," Marine Corps Gazette, Feb93, pp. 20-22.
83. Jordan intvw.

84. The Viking was an antisubmarine warfare aircraft whose capabilities were used in an imaginative way in northern Iraq.
85. Raftery intvw.
86. Headen intvw.
87. Ott intvw.
88. These threats included Iraqi and Palestinian terrorists, disgruntled Kurds, and Turkish leftist groups.
89. The 24th MAU, the lineal antecedent of 24th MEU, was the command element of the Marines in Beirut when the bombing occurred.
90. Ouzts intvw.
91. FMFEur ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
92. Brown Jnl.
93. Gish intvw, 21Dec91.
94. CTF-PC Chron.
95. Brown Jnl.
96. MajGen Robin J. Ross, "Operation Haven," Globe and Laurel, Jul-Aug91, pp. 208-09.
97. French regiments were about the size of American battalions mustering about 800 men each.
98. French law prohibited draftees from serving outside France; French Marines are professional soldiers who can be sent anywhere in the world.
99. Brown Jnl.
100. Brown Jnl.
101. CTF-PC Chron.
102. Brown Jnl.
103. Linn intvw.
104. "Kurd Leader Says Saddam OKs Accord," Stars and Stripes, 19May91, pp. 1, 10.
105. CTF-PC Chron.

106. MSSG-24 ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
107. MSSG-24 retrograde meeting, 3Jun91.
108. 24th MEU ComdC, Jan-Jun91.
109. CMC brief 15Jul91.
110. One Kurd tearfully told Col Gish a single platoon of Marines would do more to guarantee peace than 200 U.N. policemen.
111. CMC Brief, 30Jun91.
112. AP, Washington Post, 14Jul91, p. A20.
113. Boyd intvw.

Appendix A

Chronology

1991

April

- 6 Joint Task Force Provide Comfort formed.
- 7 Joint Task Force Provide Comfort deployed to Incirlik Air Base, Adana, Turkey.
- 9 MARG 1-91 received warning order to deploy to Iskenderun, Turkey.
- 10 Backload completed, MARG 1-91 with 24th MEU (SOC) embarked, sails for eastern Mediterranean; 24th MEU (SOC) receives Provide Comfort Operation Order 1.
- 11 24th MEU (SOC) Forward Command Element arrives at Incirlik.
- 13 24th MEU (SOC) FCE flies first relief mission.
- 14 24th MEU (SOC) under operational control of CTF Provide Comfort.
- 15 24th MEU Forward moves to Silopi; HMM-264 flies first Marine relief mission; offload of Phibron 8 begins.
- 16 24th MEU Forward operates from Silopi.
- 17 Task Force Bravo established; Operation Encourage Hope announced.
- 19 24th MEU (SOC) CE, GCE, ACE, and CSSE at Silopi; General Shalikashvili meets Iraqis.
- 20 24th MEU (SOC) secures area around Zakho.
- 21 First Marine convoy enters northern Iraq; CTF-PC Navy-Marine Liaison Team 10 opened at Incirlik.
- 22 45th Commando, Royal Marines, attached to 24th MEU (SOC).
- 23 Dutch 1st ACG attached to 24th MEU (SOC).
- 26 American, British, and Dutch Marines clear Zakho.
- 27 CMAGTF 1-91 formed on Okinawa.
- 29 British and Dutch Marines transfer to 3d Commando Brigade.

May

- 5 24th MEU (SOC) HQ named Camp D. W. Sommers; CMAGTF 1-91 arrives at Incirlik.
- 8 UAV Det, 2d RPV Company, 2d SRIG deploys.
- 9 BLT 2/8 opens fire support base at Muqbal.
- 12 2d ANGLICO FCTs arrive from Camp Lejeune.
- 17 29th Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery, attached to 24th MEU (SOC).
- 19 29th Commando returned to 3d Commando Brigade.
- 20 Marine civil affairs personnel enter Dohuk as part of international relief team.
- 21 Negotiations succeed; Dohuk proclaimed "open city."
- 28 UAV Det, 2d RPV Company, 2d SRIG detached.
- 30 General Powell, Chairman, JCS, visits 24th MEU (SOC).

June

- 1 24th MEU (SOC) initial contingent returns to Iskenderun.
- 5 Rigger dets leave Incirlik for home bases.
- 8 CTF-PC Retrograde order issued to 24th MEU (SOC).
- 15 BLT 2/8 moves to Silopi.
- 16 Camp Sommers closed, 24th MEU (SOC) CE moves to JTF-B HQ.
- 18 Retrograde halted.

July

- 11 24th MEU (SOC) turns over LF6F duties to 26th MEU.
- 15 24th MEU departs northern Iraq.
- 19 Operation Provide Comfort, Phase II begins; 24th MEU sails for home.

Appendix B

Command and Staff List

Combined Task Force Provide Comfort

CG.....MajGen James L. Jamerson, USAF
LtGen John M. Shalikashvili, USA

Deputy CG.....BGen Anthony C. Zinni, USMC
MajGen James L. Jamerson

Chief of Staff.....BGen Anthony C. Zinni

A/CS, Plans.....Col Daniel M. Pender, USMC

Air Force Force

CG.....BGen James L. Hobson Jr., USAF

Civil Affairs

CG.....BGen Donald L. Campbell, USA
4th CAG, USMCR.....Col John O. Easton, USMCR

Joint Task Force Alpha

CG.....BGen Richard W. Potter, USA

Joint Task Force Bravo

CG.....MajGen Jay M. Garner, USA

Chief of Staff.....Col John O. Easton, USMCR

24th Marine Expeditionary Unit

CO.....Col James L. Jones, Jr.

ExO.....LtCol Ralph C. Morse

S-1.....Capt Dewey G. Jordan

S-2.....Maj Richard J. Raftery

S-3.....LtCol Thomas C. Linn

S-4.....Maj Michael D. Boyd

BLT 2/8.....LtCol Tony L. Corwin

HMM-264.....LtCol Joseph A. Byrtus, Jr.

MSSG-24.....LtCol Richard T. Kohl

Contingency MAGTF 1-91

CO.....LtCol Robert L. Bailey

UAV Detachment, 2d RPV Company

OIC.....Capt Wayne O. Ouzts

Navy-Marine Liaison Team 10

OIC.....Col Robert M. Hansen

4th Civil Affairs Group Detachment

CO.....Col John O. Easton, USMCR

Appendix C

Combined Task Force Provide Comfort

Task Organization

Headquarters, Combined Task Force Provide Comfort

Air Force Forces

- Headquarters
- 7440th Composite Wing (Provisional)
- Composite Aviation Logistics Force
- Composite Helicopter Squadron-Provider
- Composite Helicopter Squadron-JTF Bravo

Joint Task Force Alpha

- 10th Special Forces Group (USA)
 - 1-10 SFG
 - 2-10 SFG
 - 3-10 SFG
- 40th Commando, Royal Marines (UK)
- 112th Signal Battalion
- 4th Field Ambulance (Canada)
- 432d Civil Affairs Company (-)
- Detachment, 6th Psychological Operations Group
- 39th Special Operations Wing (Reinforced)
 - 7th Special Operations Squadron
 - 21st Special Operations Squadron
 - 67th Special Operations Squadron
 - 667th Special Operations Maintenance Squadron
- Detachment, 52d Signal Battalion

Joint Task Force Bravo

- HQ, JTF-B
 - 18th Military Police Brigade
 - 18th Engineer Brigade
 - NMCB 133
- 24th MEU (SOC) (USMC)
 - BLT 2/8
 - HMM-264
 - MSSG 24
 - 3-325th ABCT (USA)
 - Italian Special Forces Group

4th Aviation Brigade, 3d Infantry Division (USA)
6th Battalion, 6th Cavalry
Task Force 23

3d Commando Brigade (UK)
45th Commando, Royal Marines
1st Amphibious Combat Group (NL)
USMC ANGLICO FCTs

French "Cougar" Force
Parachute Brigade (Fr)
Security Platoon (Sp)
Italian Special Forces Group
USMC ANGLICO FCT

Spanish Expeditionary Force
Parachute Brigade
USMC ANGLICO FCT

Italian Force
Parachute Brigade
USMC ANGLICO FCT

Combined Support Command
21st Theater Army Area Command (-)
29th Aviation Support Group (-)
CTF Surgeon (-)
Contingency MAGTF 1-91
Task Force Provider

Civil Affairs
CMOC
354th Civil Affairs Brigade (-)
96th Civil Affairs Battalion
432d Civil Affairs Company (-)
418th Civil Affairs Company
USMC 4th Civil Affairs Group Detachment

Navy Task Force 60
Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71)
Carrier Air Wing 8
Belknap (CG 26)
Richmond K. Turner (CG 20)
Leyte Gulf (CG 55)
Virginia (CGN 38)

William V. Pratt (DDG 44)

Caron (DD 970)

Vreeland (FF 1068)

Hawes (FFG 53)

Preble (DDG 46)

Appendix D

Combined Task Force Provide Comfort

Major Allied Forces

British Forces, Operation Haven

(Major General Robin J. Ross, Royal Marines)

Headquarters, Commando Forces, Royal Marines

3d Commando Brigade

(Brigadier A. M. Keeling)

Headquarters

40th Commando, Royal Marines

45th Commando, Royal Marines

29th Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery

59th Independent Commando Squadron, Royal Engineers

Commando Logistics Regiment, Royal Marines

3d Commando Brigade Air Squadron

Mountain and Arctic Warfare Cadre

Chinook Helicopter Force, Royal Air Force

846 Naval Air Squadron, Royal Navy

Netherlands Expeditionary Force

1st Amphibious Combat Group, Royal Netherlands Marine Corps

(Lieutenant Colonel Cees Van Egmond)

Composite Helicopter Squadron, Royal Netherlands Air Force

Mobile Field Hospital Unit

French Cougar Force

(Brigadier General Paul Marie LePage)

1st Brigade, 11th Airborne Division

(Brigadier General Xavier Prevost)

Headquarters

8th Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment

Alpine (Special Forces) Group, 27th Mountain Division

17th Parachute Engineer Battalion Detachment

5th Helicopter Regiment Detachment

Field Hospital Group

Italian Expeditionary Force

(Brigadier General Mario Buscemi)

Headquarters
Folgore Airborne Brigade
1st Carabinieri Company
9th Alpine (Special Forces) Group
26th Composite Helicopter Squadron
Field Hospital Detachment

Canadian 4th Field Ambulance Battalion

(Lieutenant Colonel Mike Murphy)

Headquarters
4th Field Transport Detachment
4th Field Hospital Company
 Zakho Field Medical Detachment
 Yekmal Field Medical Detachment
 Kanimasi Field Medical Detachment

German Composite Helicopter Force

(Brigadier General Frederick W. Ehmann)

Headquarters
Heavy Helicopter Squadron
Utility Helicopter Squadron

Spanish Expeditionary Force

(Colonel Juan Narro)

Independent Parachute Brigade
 (Colonel Javier Ledesma)

1st Airborne Battalion "Roger De Flor"
 Engineer-Signals Detachment
 Mobile Antitank Detachment
Expeditionary Combat Engineer Force
Expeditionary Field Medical Unit
FAMET Helicopter Force
 1st Transport Helicopter Battalion
 5th Combat Helicopter Battalion Detachment

Other National Military Detachments:

Australia
Belgium
Luxembourg
Portugal

Appendix E

Contributing Nations

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Canada
Czechoslovakia
Denmark
Finland

France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy

Japan
Jordan
Luxembourg
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Pakistan
Portugal

Romania
Saudi Arabia
Spain
Sweden
United Kingdom
United States

Appendix F

International Relief Agencies

Action Nord-SVD	Italian Red Cross
Adventist Development and Relief Agency	Japan <u>Sotoshu</u> Relief Committee
American Friends Service Committee	Maltese <u>Hilfs Dienst</u>
American Red Cross	Medical Volunteers International
American Refugee Committee	Mideast Council of Churches
AMHURT	Operation Mercy
Catholic Relief Service	OXFAM
Christian Outreach	Red Cross and Red Crescent
CONCERN	Red Cross of Malta
Danish Church Aid	Samaritans Pulse
Doctors Without Borders	Save the Children
Doctors of the World	Swedish National Rescue Board
Equilibre	Swedish Rescue Service
German Bergwacht	Swiss Charity Team
German Red Cross	Swiss Mission
Global Partners	Swiss Project of Emergency Help
HELO Mission	TEAR Fund (United Kingdom)
<u>Hul Aan Kuterdan</u>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
International Action Against Hunger	World Council of Churches
International Committee of the Red Cross	World Food Program
International Medical Corps	World Relief International
International Refugee Year Trust	World Vision Relief and Development
International Rescue Committee	World Vision, Australia

Appendix G

The Kurds

An ancient myth tells us that in olden times King Solomon the Wise was troubled by the antics of a group of wild spirits called the Jinn, so he had them imprisoned in a bottle. When the bottle was accidentally opened, the Jinn escaped. While in Europe, they abducted some beautiful women, then fled to the most isolated area in the world, the rugged mountains of Kurdistan. There, safe from retribution, the Jinn happily ignored a curse that their descendants would have to endure endless sorrow to make up for the wanton acts of the Jinn. Modern Kurds call themselves "the children of Jinn," and stoically accept the misery of their lives. This myth is often used to explain the presence of fiercely independent, light-skinned people living in the Middle East.

The Kurds are separated from their Arab neighbors by race, language, religion, and culture. There are about 20 million Kurds, most living in the Taurus Mountains of eastern Anatolia or in the Zagros Mountains of southwestern Iran. Most are hospitable to strangers but are suspicious of their neighbors. The Kurdish language, probably an archaic form of Farsi, is the glue that binds the diverse Kurds together.

The Kurds accepted Islam in the 7th century, and today many are devout Sunni Muslims. Most Kurds, however, reject the Arab culture associated with Islam. For the most part, rural Kurds are a close-knit, tribal society. The major Kurdish tribes are the Barzani, the Dizai, the Hamawandi, the Herkki, the Jaff, the Sorchi, and the Zibari.

Kurdish history has been a repetitive story of rebellion and disunity. Ancestors of the modern Kurds were first mentioned in history when Greek General Xenophon's Ten Thousand battled local warriors near the modern town of Zakho (Iraq) during the 5th century B.C. The actual name "Kurds" was first applied by Muslim conquerors around 750 A.D. The most famous Kurd was Saladin the Great. Traditional enmity between the Kurds and their rulers resulted in a tenacious struggle for Kurdish survival. The Persians, Mongols, and Ottoman Turks have conquered Kurdistan, but never successfully subdued its rebellious inhabitants. Relations between the Iraqi Kurds and Saddam Hussein have been acrimonious. Although promising peace and autonomy in the March Manifesto (1970), Saddam is suspected of initiating a policy of genocide. He used duplicity, lies, exile, assassination, and military force (including chemical weapons) to subdue the Kurds.

Appendix H

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

A-6--Grumman Intruder; a shipborne, twin-seat, twin-jet attack aircraft capable of striking point targets masked by inclement weather or darkness.

AAA--Antiaircraft artillery; Iraqi AAA included 12.7mm, 23mm, 37mm, and 57mm guns and surface-to-air (SAM) missiles.

AAR--After action report.

AAV--Assault amphibious vehicle; AAV7A1 amphibian manned by a crew of three, capable of transporting 25 Marines through water or cross-country; officially designated "AAVs" they were sometimes called "Hogs" by the Marines and "Tracks" or "APCs" by allied soldiers.

AB--Air base.

ABCT--Airborne battalion combat team; the U.S. Army's 3d Battalion, 325th Infantry (Airborne) and its combat support and combat service support units stationed at Vincenza, Italy.

ACG--Dutch Korps Mariner 1st Amphibious Combat Group, a battalion-size unit attached to the 3d Commando Brigade, Royal Marines.

AdminO--Administrative officer; military shorthand refers to AdminOs as S-1 (bn), G-1 (div), or J-1 (joint).

AH-1T--Bell Sea Cobra; a twin-seat, single-rotor, twin-jet, attack helicopter; also known as a "snake."

AirO--Air officer.

AK--Kalishnikov-designed, gas-operated, air-cooled, 7.62mm assault rifle with an effective range of about 400 meters; made in numerous Communist Block countries, the AKM was the standard rifle of the Iraqi Army, but was often mistakenly identified as an "AK-47."

ALMAR--A CMC bulletin directed to all Marines, usually dealing with a sweeping change of previous orders or the practical application of new policies.

ALO--Air liaison officer; a naval aviator/flight officer attached to a ground unit who was primary advisor to the ground commander; in the 24th MEU the ALO was a member of the operations section (G-3).

AO--Area of operations.

APC--Armored personnel carrier.

ARG--Amphibious ready group.

Arty--Artillery; Marine artillery included M198 155mm towed howitzers and M101A1 105mm towed howitzers; the British 29th Commando was armed with lightweight 105mm towed howitzers.

Bde--U.S. Army designation for brigade.

BLT--Battalion landing team; a task-organized combat team including a rifle battalion and combat support units (engineers, AAVs, LAVs, artillery, communications, medical, etc.).

Bn--Battalion; an American organization of about 1,000 personnel, the British equivalent was called a Commando.

C-130--Lockheed Hercules four-turboprop, medium-lift transport airplane.

CAS--Close air support.

Cdo--Commando; in this monograph it refers to British units of battalion size, not specific soldiers.

CH-46E--Sea Knight medium-lift transport helicopter; a tandem rotor, twin-engine, two-pilot craft capable of carrying 25 troops or 4.5 tons over a 50-mile radius; known to Marines as a "Frog."

CH-53E--Super Sea Stallion heavy-lift cargo helicopter; a single main rotor, triple engine, two-pilot craft capable of lifting 55 troops or 16 tons and has aerial refueling capability; also called an "Echo."

CH-47--Boeing Vertol Chinook; a heavy-lift helicopter used by the U.S. Army and allied forces; it was commonly called a "Hook."

CMAGTF--Contingency Marine air-ground task force.

ComdC--Command chronology.

CSC--Combined support command.

CSSD--Combat service support detachment.

CTF--Joint: Combined task force; Naval: task force commander.

CTF HO--Combined Task Force History Office.

CTF PC--Combined Task Force Provide Comfort.

CTF 61--Commander Task Force 61.

CTF 62--Commander Task Force 62.

DCMC--Displaced civilian movement center.

DCST--Displaced civilian support team.

Det--Detachment.

Dragon--Medium antitank/assault weapon, consisting of man-packed, tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided missile with range of approximately 1,000 meters.

HC--US Navy combat service helicopter squadron (HC-4).

HMM--Marine medium helicopter squadron (HMM-264).

HSSB--Humanitarian service support base.

HSSD--Humanitarian service support detachment.

Intvw--Interview.

Jnl--Journal.

JTF--Joint task force.

KDP--Kurdish Democratic Party, headed by Moussad Barzani.

KUF--United Kurdistan Front.

LKA--Attack cargo ship.

Ln--Liaison.

LPD--Amphibious dock transport.

LPH--Amphibious assault ship.

LSB--Landing support battalion.

Ltr--Letter.

MAGTF--Marine air ground task force.

MARG--Mediterranean amphibious ready group.

MEU--Marine expeditionary unit; about 2,800 Marines.

MSSG--MEU service support group.

Phibron--Amphibious squadron.

PPK--Turkish Kurdish Separatist Movement, a terrorist organization opposed to Operation Provide Comfort.

PUK--Kurdistan Patriotic Union; headed by Jalal Talabani.

RFA--Royal field artillery.

ROWPU--Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit.

RM--Royal Marines.

SF--Special forces.

SFG--Special forces group.

SOC--Special operations capable.

SRIG--Surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence group.

UAV--Unmanned aerial vehicle.

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The device reproduced on the back cover is the oldest military insignia in continuous use in the United States. It first appeared, as shown here, on Marine Corps buttons adopted in 1804. With the stars changed to five points this device has continued on Marine Corps buttons to the present day.

