

and strategic objectives from U.S. forces. In addition, the IDF historically—for example, in Jerusalem in 1967, Beirut in 1982, and Jenin in 2002—has proved willing to take high casualties in urban warfare.

Dating from the siege of Beirut in 1982, Israel has practiced a complex and limited form of urban warfare. In Beirut, this involved a cordon around the city, accompanied by limited attacks with artillery, ground, and air forces to put pressure on the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Syrian forces inside. The IDF did not launch a general assault on the city; it awaited a political solution that resulted in evacuation of enemy forces under the auspices of outside powers. Despite the IDF's restraint, it was depicted as little short of barbaric by much of the international media. The PLO's evacuation was treated as a victory parade, rather than the retreat it was, and the PLO lived to fight another day. The battle was a tactical victory for Israel, but a strategic defeat.

The Beirut experience and ongoing domestic and international pressures color Israeli doctrine. Throughout the current struggle, the IDF generally has not occupied Palestinian cities, a notable exception being seizure of the Jenin refugee camp. (The Jenin operation is the exception that proves the rule: the IDF was castigated for its assault on Jenin and falsely accused of perpetrating a massacre.) IDF urban warfare doctrine effectively bans the use of fixed-wing aircraft and artillery in support of ground operations. Troops rely on attack helicopters and direct fire weapons—usually only small arms and machine guns. Israeli units cordon Palestinian cities and towns, seize a few key buildings or areas, and launch raids against suspected terrorists. Although these operations tend to be quite effective tactically, they result in strategic stalemate because Palestinian forces are left in place after the IDF withdraws.

Tactically and operationally, fighting Israeli style in an urban setting requires a heavy commitment of ground troops to make up for reduced fire support, and to intimidate rather than confront enemy forces. This allows Israeli units to achieve limited objectives. In June 2004, the IDF's tunnel raids in Rafah, a small city in Gaza, required deployment of almost a division of Israel troops. (Israeli divisions are somewhat smaller than their U.S. counterparts, and the force in Rafah would have operated without artillery and other supporting elements). Rafah has about half the popula-

tion of Fallujah (167,000) and it is tiny in comparison: 5-6 square kilometers.

In Valiant Resolve, U.S. tactics and highly restrictive rules of engagement closely mirrored Israeli techniques. Owing to these restrictions and too small a force, the operation was aborted, with arguably disastrous results for U.S. policy in Iraq. Many mistakes were corrected during al-Fajr. Heavy armor was employed, and air and artillery strikes were more liberally authorized. Even so, dropping four 500-pound bombs on the first day of a major assault remains an extremely selective application of firepower. Despite predictable claims that Fallujah was devastated, photos reveal superficial damage to most buildings and an occasional structure demolished. Television coverage of Marines engaged in harrowing room-to-room combat belie hysterical stories that entire city blocks were leveled.

What would have happened had we met a tougher, more professional opponent in Fallujah? The insurgents were formidable because many were willing to fight to the death—but in the main, they were an indifferently armed rabble who could inflict casualties because of the nature of urban warfare and U.S. sensibilities. What if U.S. forces find themselves facing Syrian commandos or well-trained Hezbollah guerrillas?

Conclusions

Large ground forces are necessary when U.S. units adopt Israeli-style urban warfare tactics—which, to a large extent, the Marines appear to have done in Fallujah. To accomplish their mission in Valiant Resolve, they needed a considerably larger force to operate in the absence of heavy air and artillery support. Further, Israeli urban tactics are designed primarily for isolating selected areas, not seizing and holding terrain and buildings. If U.S. forces intend to take and clear an urban area block by block, as they did during al-Fajr, they are going to pay a heavier price. The result in Valiant Resolve was similar to what Israeli forces have achieved against the Palestinians: indecisive outcomes that keep the enemy in business. Operation al-Fajr weakened the Iraqi insurgency, but it came too late and too temperately to have broken the insurgency's back, despite the claims of some U.S. officers. The men who killed the U.S. contractors—

the act that precipitated the battle—have not been found, much less prosecuted. Many insurgents escaped Fallujah during the buildup after Valiant Resolve, and al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi remains at large.

Was the battle of Fallujah a victory or a defeat? The Marine Corps' military operations in urban terrain doctrine recognizes that tactical success does not necessarily translate to strategic victory. It notes the Israeli's tactical victory in Beirut was a strategic defeat—and observes the same about the battle of Hue in the Vietnam War, when Marines defeated an enemy that sought to put up a good fight but never expected to win. Much the same can be said of Fallujah's defenders. In spite of the beating they took in November, they will continue to assert they repelled the initial attack and fought well thereafter.

The potential problem for the Marine Corps and U.S. deterrence in general is more than just local. During a visit to Israel in the early 1980s, an Israeli acquaintance described his military service to me as "an Israeli Marine." Israel does not have Marines; he meant he had been in the paratroops, which were the best and toughest soldiers in the IDF. He assumed that an American would understand a comparison with U.S. Marines—and I did.

At that time, the IDF could deploy paratroops to disturbances in the West Bank or Gaza who, by simply showing up in their red berets, could settle things down. Much has changed in 20 years. Today, no Israeli paratrooper would be so foolish as to wear his beret in Nablus or Ramallah. Israeli paratroopers continue to fight well. Nonetheless, a couple of decades of persistent and inconclusive combat in Lebanon and urban combat in the territories have done much to erode their regional, if not international, reputation.

The handwriting is on the wall. The battle of Fallujah was not a defeat—but we cannot afford many more victories like it.

Notes

U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, January 2005, 57-61. Reprinted by permission. Copyright © 2005 by U.S. Naval Institute (www.usni.org).

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2. Pamela Constable, "Troops Gaining Grip on sections of Fallujah" *Washington Post*, 7 April 2004.

3. GySgt Mark Oliva, "Marines Suspend Fallujah Offensive, Push Humanitarian Aid," *Marine Corps News* (www.usmc.mil), 13 April 2004.

4. Brendan Miniter, "The Fallujah Brigade," *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 June 2004.

5. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "We Won: Fallujah Rejoices in Withdrawal," *Washington Post*, 2 May 2004.

6. "Marines Suspend Fallujah Offensive," *Marine Corps News*, 13 April 2004.

7. *Military Operations on Urban Terrain*, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-35.3 (Quantico, VA: April 1998), 1-16.

8. MCWP 3-35.3, 1-16, 1-17.

9. Kaplan, "Five Days in Fallujah," 126.

10. MCWP 3-35.3, 1-17, 2-7.

11. Christian Lowe, "U.S. Israeli Armed Forces Trade Urban-Warfare Tips," *Marine Corps Times*, 31 May 2002. It should be noted that Israeli battalions tend to be smaller than comparable Marine units, and most of the Israeli troops involved in the Jenin battle were reservists.

12. See www.globalsecurity.org.

13. Jackie Spinner and Karl Vick, "U.S. Forces Meet Fierce Resistance in Fallujah," *Washington Post*, 13 November 2004.

14. Jackie Spinner, "Artillerymen Clear Path for the Infantry," *Washington Post*, 11 November 2004; Associated Press, 8 November 2004.

15. Sameer N. Yacoub, "Foreign Fighters Arrested in Southern Iraq," *Associated Press*, 25 November 2004; Dexter Filkins, "In Taking Falluja Mosque, Victory by the Inch," *New York Times*, 10 November 2004.

16. Jackie Spinner and Karl Vick, "Troops Battle for Last Parts of Fallujah," *Washington Post*, 14 November 2004.

17. E.g., Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Two, Three, Many Fallujahs," *Weekly Standard*, 6 December 2004; Jack Kelly, "U.S. Tactic, Training Kept Casualties Down in Fallujah" (citing author and retired Army LtCol Ralph Peters), *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 21 November 2004.

18. It is also nearly 50 percent of total U.S. casualties suffered in the initial campaign (OIF) between 19 March and 30 April 2003: according to DoD, 109 killed and 426 wounded and not returned to duty.

19. About 45 percent of U.S. forces wounded in Iraq are returned to duty and not evacuated. Karl Vick, "August: 1,100 Troops Wounded," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 2004; Spinner and Vick, "U.S. Forces Meet Fierce Resistance in Fallujah."

About the Author

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II Marine Expeditionary Force Summary of Action

by Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Central Command

Unit: II Marine Expeditionary Force

Recommended Award: Presidential Unit Citation

Period of Award: 1 March 2005 to 28 February 2006

Status: Secretary of the Navy

Originator: Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command

Citation:

For extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against enemy forces in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-06 from 27 March 2005 to 28 February 2006. II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) executed a campaign plan utilizing kinetic and non-kinetic methods to establish a secure environment enabling Iraqi self-governance and self-reliance. Under the constructs of Operations Patriot Shield, Liberty Express, and Sayaid II, hundreds of aggressive counterinsurgency operations, ranging from information operations and reconstruction programs to high intensity offensive combat, were carried out. These operations, conducted in every major population center in the area of operations, resulted in over 1,700 enemy killed in action, over 10,500 detentions, and over 210 tons of explosives captured and destroyed. Anti-Iraq Forces in al-Anbar Province were effectively neutralized, setting the conditions for a 2,700 percent increase in voter participation in the constitutional referendum and the parliamentary election. Iraqi security forces were transformed from an unorganized body numbering less than 1,600 into a structured force with over 21,000 volunteers serving in army, police, and border

enforcement units. By their outstanding courage, resourcefulness, and aggressive fighting spirit in combat against the enemy, the officers and enlisted personnel of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) reflected great credit upon themselves and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service. . . .

Operation Patriot Shield

This operation was designed to maintain Coalition force momentum and to disrupt anti-Iraqi force elements throughout al-Anbar Province and to train and integrate Iraqi security force units for combined counterinsurgency operations.

Ground Combat Element

During April and May, 2d Marine Division units simultaneously conducted over 30 major counterinsurgency operations and trained, integrated, and operated with newly formed and arriving Iraqi security force units in order to maintain tempo and disrupt Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF). During Operation Patriot Shield, the focus of effort was neutralization of insurgent forces in the city of Ramadi, the provincial capital. Regimental Combat Team 2 (RCT-2) continued interdiction operations along the Hit and Haditha corridor, while Regimental Combat Team 8 (RCT-8) conducted operations to establish control of Fallujah, Zaydon, and Amiriyah. The subordinate operations Matador and New Market were especially noteworthy during this period, as they were conducted in the insurgent hotspots of al-Qaim and the Hadithah triad. This region was used as a staging area for foreign fighters who crossed the Syrian border illegally along traditional smuggling routes. In these areas, foreign fighters received weapons and equipment in order to conduct attacks in the more populated key cities, i.e. Baghdad, Ramadi, Fallujah, and Mosul. These operations resulted in a significant disruption of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) operations along the western Euphrates River valley and served as the starting point for what would become a series of operations designed to maintain Coalition forces' momentum and neutraliza-

tion of AQI as a threat by denying them sanctuary and restricting their movement and ability to plan large-scale operations.

The combined success of those operations resulted in almost 350 enemy killed in action and the detainment of over 2,000 insurgents. A number of high value individuals were among the captured or killed, dealing a blow to the leadership of AQI. The 2d Marine Division units also discovered almost 200 weapons caches which included approximately 8,000 mortar and rocket rounds, almost 20 SA-7s, and SA-13 surface-to-air-missiles, two complete mortar systems and eight 500-pound bombs.

Air Combat Element

During Operation Patriot Shield, the air combat element flew approximately 4,723 sorties and 7,609 flight hours. The missions flown by 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) (2d MAW [Fwd]) in support of Patriot Shield included assault support, close air support, aerial reconnaissance, offensive air support, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Marine Wing Support Group 27 (MWSG-27) during this and other operations provided forward arming and refueling point support and other aviation ground support functions, and one tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel mission. 2d MAW (Fwd) executed 90 casualty evacuation missions, transporting 254 wounded Marines to higher level medical care facilities.

Combat Service Support Element

2d Marine Logistics Group (Forward) (2d MLG [Fwd]) mounted a complex logistic support plan through the distribution of Classes I, III, IV and IX supplies. A coordinated air and ground movement plan expedited the delivery of these supplies and made efficient use of all available transportation assets. Challenging the flexibility and capabilities of all involved, it demonstrated 2d MLG (Fwd)'s ability to provide a quick response and consistent logistical support.

During Operation Matador, Combat Logistics Battalion 2 (CLB-2), with support from 2d MLG (Fwd), provided critical combat logistical support contributing to another successful phase in com-

bat operations. Logistical support included: Explosive Ordnance Demolition teams, female search teams, fiscal support, mortuary affairs, medical aid as well as a consistent stream of supplies (classes I, II, III, V, VIII, and IX). This consistent and ready effort ensured a healthy and superior combat force.

Operation Guardian Sword

This operation commenced on 6 June and lasted through the month of July, focusing on neutralizing insurgents and strengthening the Iraqi security forces.

Ground Combat Element

On 6 June, 2d Marine Division began a series of counterinsurgency operations in support of Operation Guardian Sword. This division operation focused on shaping conditions to support the upcoming Iraqi constitutional referendum and national elections by preventing anti-Iraqi forces from intimidating the Iraqi populace. Most importantly this Operation effectively prevented AQI disruption of the relief in place of OIF 04-06-1 and 04-06-2 forces. Throughout Operations Khanjar and Scimitar (RCT-8) and Spear, Scimitar, and Saber (RCT-2); and 2d Brigade Combat Team's (2 BCT) small unit counterinsurgency operations in Ramadi, the division killed over 250 insurgents while detaining over 2,000. In addition, units discovered over 150 weapons caches containing 2,500 mortar and rocket rounds and 23,500 pounds of bombs. One of the most significant caches was discovered during an RCT-8 operation in Karmah. Coalition forces discovered a subterranean insurgent complex, consisting of a series of underground bunkers in an old rock quarry approximately 170 meters wide by 275 meters long. Within various rooms, Coalition forces discovered four fully furnished living spaces, a kitchen with fresh food, two shower facilities and a working air conditioner. Other rooms were filled with numerous weapons and ammunition to include various types of machine guns, ordnance, to include mortars, rockets and artillery rounds, black uniforms, ski masks, night vision goggles, and com-

munications equipment. The net effect of these operations were a series of efficient transfers of authority between 35 maneuver units. Incoming units assumed their responsibilities and battlespace with no loss in continuity of operations.

Air Combat Element

During this operation, 2d MAW (Fwd) flew approximately 8,134 sorties and 13,974 flight hours. 2d MAW (Fwd)'s direct support of combat sustainment included strip alert assets constantly maintained at the ready to provide casualty evacuation / medical evacuation, of which there were 49 casualty evacuation missions for 598 casualties, tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel/quick reaction force (QRF), and both rotary-wing and fixed-wing close air support in response to troops in contact and the needs of II MEF (Fwd).

Combat Service Support Element

2d MLG (Fwd), Combat Logistics Battalion 2 (CLB-2), and Combat Logistics Battalion 8 (CLB-8) provided a variety of combat support to include the recovery of vehicles with their maintenance detachments, repair of vital alternate supply routes and main supply routes to deny the insurgents improvised explosive device emplacement opportunities. Alternate supply routes and main supply route maintenance was critical in keeping Multi National Force-West (MNF-W) stocked with combat supplies (classes I, II, III, V, VIII, and IX).

During Operation Spear, from 15-19 June 2005 in the al-Qaim region, CLB-2 provided a variety of combat support to include the recovery of vehicles with their maintenance detachment and a personnel recovery mission by Mortuary Affairs Marines. This service was critical in keeping 2d Marine Division mobile and strong.

During Operation Dagger, CLB-8 assisted greatly with combat logistic resupply of Classes I, II, III, V, VIII and IX. Due to the unique weather patterns of the Shamal, or sandstorm, season which occurred during the timeframe of this operation, exceptional logistic support measures had to be taken. Because of the potential that airfield operations would be shut down and aircraft

grounded, CLB-8 forward deployed a forward resuscitative surgical section, in order to provide a level II surgical capability for the units participating in Operation Dagger. CLB-8 also assisted RCT-8 in securing the main supply routes in the area of operations during this timeframe by creating Team Truck, a task organized force of both motor transport and military police vehicles and personnel that assisted in patrolling the main supply routes and alternate supply routes.

During Operation Sword, conducted in the Hit and Haditha region, CLB-2 provided combat resupply and maintenance support. The 2d MLG (Fwd) developed and enacted a survivability plan that supplied protective barriers to reinforce the camps from indirect fire, as well as vehicular threats, along with multiple resupply missions to maintain a superior force. This effort continued throughout the month of June.

Triad Region

Ground Combat Element

Operation River Gate was conducted from 3-19 October in the cities of Hadithah, Haqlaniyah and Barwanah. Iraqi security forces; 3d Battalion, 1st Marines; 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion; and the 3d Battalion, 504th Infantry Regiment (U.S. Army), conducted counterinsurgency operations to continue the disruption of insurgents and secure the triad region. Coalition forces encountered numerous small arms fire attacks and 13 improvised explosive device attacks during the operation. Over 172 insurgents were detained, 12 enemy killed in action, 32 caches were discovered along with 95 improvised explosive devices and mines. At the completion of the operation a permanent firm base was established to provide continued security.

Air Combat Element

The air combat element once again found themselves participating in several combat operations. The major operation throughout the month was Operation River Gate. The operation was the first thrust of a planned string of operations to clear the Euphrates corridor of insurgent activity. The operation lasted over three weeks,

with MAG-26 assets successfully launching heli-borne assaults with ground elements of the 82d Airborne, 1st Recon, 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Division of the Iraqi Army and 2d Marine Division with the units surrounding the town of Haditha.

Combat Service Support Element

During Operation River Gate, CLB-2 provided combat logistics support to RCT-2 throughout the operation. From the onset of the operation, CLB-2 pushed forces from al-Asad and established a repair and replenishment point, as well as a refueling point south of the Euphrates River between Hadithah and Haqlaniyah. CLB-2 put a provisional rifle platoon, a transportation and material handling detachment, recovery vehicles, engineers, heavy equipment, maintenance detachments and classes I, III (bulk fuel), IV, and V supplies at the repair and replenishment point. CLB-2 would eventually place over 300 Marines and sailors at this location while offensive counterinsurgency operations were conducted less than 1.5 miles away in Hadithah and Haqlaniyah. To free up combat power, CLB-2 assisted the regimental combat team in manning the defensive positions at the repair and replenishment point allowing the ground combat element forces to focus more combat power on the operation. . . .

Western Border Control

Securing Iraq's border with Syria became a critical necessity to achieving Coalition force strategic objectives. Anti-Iraqi forces using historical smuggling routes through the porous border, were fueling the insurgency by introducing a steady flow of arms, foreign fighters, and cash into the province. Under the construct of Operation Sayaid, a series of subordinate operations were planned and executed. These high-intensity, kinetic efforts: Iron Fist, River Gate, Steel Curtain, and Iron Hammer effectively disrupted and neutralized insurgent activities throughout the western Euphrates River valley, and more importantly set the conditions for the introduction of Iraqi security forces in the region. This permanent presence of Iraqi security forces has been a critical factor in preventing

insurgent groups from reestablishing themselves following Coalition force kinetic operations. The aforementioned operations culminated in a 30 November Iraqi border control ceremony held in Husaybah to symbolize the securing of the borders through cooperation of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of the Interior, and Multi National Corps-Iraq.

Ground Combat Element

While Operation Liberty Express was still in progress, the division adjusted its main effort from the 2d Brigade Combat Team (2 BCT) to RCT-2 for Operation Sayaid. RCT-2 was assigned operational and tactical control of three additional Army maneuver battalions to provide additional maneuver capability for Operations Iron Fist, River Gate, and Steel Curtain. Operation Steel Curtain, the largest of the three, was a major counterinsurgency operation in the cities of Husaybah, Karabilah, Ubaydi, and Ramana in support of the Multi National Corps-Iraq Operation Sayaid. Operation Steel Curtain focused on disrupting and denying AQI safe havens and freedom of movement in western al-Anbar Province, establishing a persistent presence in this region, restoring Iraqi control of the border with Syria, and setting the conditions for the constitutional referendum and national election.

In order to effectively restrict and channel insurgents, RCT-2's area of operations was expanded north of the Euphrates River. Tasked to establish Iraqi control of the Iraq-Syrian border, RCT-2 began attacks from the Syrian border west into Husaybah with three reinforced battalions preceded by a mechanized feint into the Ubaydi peninsula. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, along with the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines and supporting Iraqi Army units, successfully attacked and cleared Husaybah, Karabilah, and New Ubaydi. Operation Steel Curtain was instrumental in causing a significant disruption to the AQI organization that has had lasting effects across al-Anbar Province. In addition to destroying much of the AQI leadership and command-and-control functions, this operation significantly improved atmospherics among the local population of western al-Anbar. Insurgent organizations in western al-

Anbar had subjected the local populace to an intense murder and intimidation campaign that was successful in preventing locals from assisting Coalition forces. Al-Qaeda freedom of movement and sanctuary were denied. The AQI infrastructure and terror campaign was neutralized. A permanent Iraqi security force presence is now established across much of the western Euphrates River valley, consequently eliminating AQI influence and restoring a sense of security among the local populace, who are now more willing to cooperate and assist Coalition and Iraqi Army forces.

Essential to the effort of securing the border has been the integration of the Iraqi border police into Coalition force activities. The 2d Marine Division in concert with Iraqi Defense Border Enforcement has helped to stem the flow of terrorists, weapons and money from Syria by continuing with the construction of a series of border forts along the entire length of the Iraqi-Syrian border. A brigade of Iraqi Border Defense Police has also been trained and equipped with assistance from the division. These border guards are now conducting patrols, detaining smugglers and infiltrators, and maintaining an active presence on this critical border.

Air Combat Element

2d MAW (Fwd) executed special planning and coordination for Operation Sayaid Phase II Bravo and Steel Curtain. At the completion of Steel Curtain fixed-wing and rotary-wing reconnaissance and on-call missions in the Husaybah area enhanced the security and logistical support for the 30 November Multi National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) Boarder Control Ceremony by facilitating the coordination and scheduling of assault support and F/W aircraft for combat air patrol. Extensive coordination between MNF-W, MNC-I, Marine Aircraft Group 26 (MAG-26) and various squadrons was also conducted to facilitate the successful movement of Iraqi Ministry of Defense personnel and their freshly recruited and or trained Iraq personnel in support of the Desert Protector program variant 2 and 3.

Combat Service Support Element

Cumulatively, support for these Operations

was provided by the 2d MLG (Fwd)'s CLB-2, with augmentation by Combat Logistics Regiment (CLR-25) and 8th Engineer Support Battalion (ESB). Logistical support included: explosive ordnance demolition teams, construction of 13 firm bases or battle positions and a steady stream of supplies (classes I, II, III, V, VIII, and IX) as well as medical aid from forward located repair and replenishment points established by CLB-2. The logistics forces established repair and replenishment points within contested areas of the operation in order to provide expeditious support to the ground combat element. This consistent and ready effort ensured the success of this series of intense, dynamic and wide ranging operations across the entire western al-Anbar Province.

During Operation Steel Curtain, CLB-2 established a forward command cell in foreign operating base al-Qaim. This command cell was originally intended to support Contingency Operating Location South construction. Knowing that they would have to surge forces to the al-Qaim region, CLB-2 planned accordingly by building an infrastructure to support up to 400 of its Marines and sailors in forward operating base al-Qaim. From this operating base the Marines pushed supplies and equipment in support of Operation Steel Curtain. Once again, materials, equipment, Marines and sailors could not be staged early in order to ensure Coalition forces kept the element of surprise. CLB-2 forces, supplies and equipment were surged to forward operating base al-Qaim just before the operation commenced and continued to push supplies forward from al-Asad throughout it. As the assault moved from west to east, CLB-2 established a repair and replenishment point at Camp Gannon and provided a provisional rifle platoon for security, vehicle recovery support, maintenance support, and Classes I, III, IV, and V supplies for the assault on Husaybah and Karbala. As these towns were secured, engineers moved in from forward operating base al-Qaim to build firm bases. The firm base fortifications provided force protection for units occupying these firm bases and provided a large physical presence in the towns. Speed was essential to provide force protection when the Coalition forces were most vulnerable (immediately after

taking objectives) and to show townspeople that Coalition forces were there to stay. After securing towns, Iraqis woke up to heavy vehicles delivering hundreds of Texas (10,000 pounds each) and Jersey barriers as well as heavy equipment to fortify firm bases with HESCO barriers, guard towers, and bunkers. They built two firm bases in the town of Husaybah and a third firm base in Karabilah. CLB-2 also built a detainee holding facility and assisted in constructing and supply of a humanitarian camp for Iraqis fleeing the fighting during this phase of the operation.

To take advantage of the forces available and to exploit its momentum, RCT-2 extended Operation Steel Curtain into the towns of New Ubaydi and Old Ubaydi and the Ramana area, north of the Euphrates River across from Ubaydi. CLB-2 continued to provide logistics similar to what was provided for the assault on Husaybah and Karabilah but from forward operating base al-Qaim. This involved building several more firm bases and moving forces across the river. Also, CLB-2 supported another humanitarian camp near New and Old Ubaydi.

Iraq Security Forces

In order to help Iraq secure its sovereign borders, II MEF (Fwd) successfully engaged the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior and the Multi National Security Transition Command-Iraq organization to obtain the support and resources to produce more border police and to build the necessary border fort infrastructure to defend over 1,000 kilometers of border area with Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Additionally, II MEF (Fwd) and its seven border transition teams played a vital role in the organization, training, and equipping of a virtually ineffective border force. The Iraqi border forces grew from approximately 2,300 personnel spread over three brigades to 3,600. II MEF (Fwd) coordinated the construction of 30 permanent and expeditionary border forts. These border defense forces employed at the forts continue to grow in operational capabilities due to the employment of Border Transition Teams that are focused on deterring AIF activities along the Syrian border.

The G-5/civil-military operations cell purchased critically needed humanitarian assistance

supplies that were delivered and stored at Camp Fallujah. They were then shipped from Camp Fallujah to support Operation Sayaid II in the western Euphrates River valley. The humanitarian assistance supplies were used to support Internally Displaced Persons camps and other humanitarian requirements. In addition, supplies were used to support the humanitarian mission throughout the MNF-W area of operations including initiatives in area of operations Biloxi helping the Army civil affairs companies successfully complete their missions.

Referendum/Elections (Operation Liberty Express)

Operation Liberty Express, conducted September through December, focused on expanding Coalition forces and the Ministry of Defense/Ministry of Interior control throughout al-Anbar Province, while providing support to the Independent Electoral Commission in Iraq for the constitutional referendum and national elections. These two historic events were benchmark achievements in the story of II MEF (Fwd)'s involvement in Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-06.

Ground Combat Element

2d Marine Division units conducted over 30 major battalion/regimental operations designed to improve the security situation across the area of operations and create an environment conducive to safe and secure elections. Counterinsurgency operations were conducted in nearly every city across al-Anbar, including Fallujah, Amiriyah, Zaydon, Karmah, Saqliwiyah, Ramadi, Khalidiyah, Hit, the Haditha triad, Ubaydi, Karabilah, and Husaybah to capitalize on the progress made thus far in disrupting and defeating the insurgency while preparing the province for the upcoming elections. In addition to killing almost 1,000 insurgents and detaining almost 4,000 others, over 500 weapons caches were discovered. Some of the more significant weapons cache contents included well over 10,000 mortar, artillery, and rocket rounds, 5 surface-to-air missile systems, and 70 250-pound bombs.

The numerous operations conducted by 2d

Marine Division in al-Anbar Province helped disrupt and limit the ability of al-Qaeda in Iraq to murder and intimidate the local populace, thereby ensuring the safety and maximum participation of Iraqi citizens in the constitutional referendum and national elections. The Iraqi security force (ISF), demonstrating significant progress, was responsible for providing security inside polling sites and the area immediately around the outside of polling locations. The presence of the Iraqi security force proved significant as it provided the voting populace with a sense of security and greatly enhanced voter turnout. The 2d Marine Division provided a wide range of support to bolster the efforts of the Independent Electoral Commission's Election Support Teams.

During the October constitutional referendum, 2d Marine Division provided security and logistics support for over 140 polling centers throughout the province. While tons of materials were moved to support the force protection requirements around many of the centers, another key activity was the movement of Iraqi poll workers from Baghdad International Airport to the two special poll worker camps in al-Anbar, and from there to the forward operating bases where they would stage prior to final movement to their actual polling centers. Over 1,300 Iraqi poll workers were safely transported and provided meals and quarters at the forward operating bases before and after Election Day. Additionally, 2d Marine Division personnel moved all ballots cast to the appropriate recovery locations. Overall, approximately 260,000 Iraqis voted in al-Anbar Province without incident. This total represented a 1,775 percent increase in voter turnout compared to the January 2005 election, and was a significant milestone on Iraq's road to democracy.

Two months later, 2d Marine Division replicated the security and logistics support for the national elections. With robust planning and smooth execution, the division provided extensive "long-haul" logistics support to 30 polling centers across the western al-Anbar Province and coordinated the movement and care of over 800 poll workers flown in from Baghdad. In the Ramadi and Fallujah areas, an additional 135 Independent Electoral Commission operated

polling centers were established to support the election in east al-Anbar. The expansion of this security model, limited to Fallujah during the constitutional referendum, was a testament to the rapidly improving capabilities of the Iraqi Security forces, as they again provided internal and point security at polling sites in a larger geographic area of responsibility.

The coordination of the support for the Independent Electoral Commission polling centers in Ramadi and Fallujah was especially complex since it involved synchronization with various commission officials, Iraqi police, and Iraqi poll workers. However, the movement of hundreds of thousands of ballots and related materials to three distribution points for Iraqi acceptance was executed with minimal difficulty. Furthermore, all ballots and poll workers in the western al-Anbar Province were retrograded as planned.

There were no significant insurgent attacks during the election period which recorded unprecedented Sunni voter turnout. Over 1,617,000 voters participated in the national elections in the MNF-W area of operations. According to official results from the Independent Electoral Commission, al-Anbar Province voter participation continued to increase, with nearly 374,000 voters casting ballots, accounting for a 2,690 percent increase in voter participation from the January to the December elections. Improved security conditions brought about by members of the 2d Marine Division provided hundreds of thousands of citizens in al-Anbar Province the opportunity to vote.

The national election was the first time Iraqi security force had an opportunity to vote in a national election. With extensive division support in opening 15 polling centers manned by Independent Electoral Commission poll workers around the province, about 12,000 Iraqi soldiers were able to safely vote on the 12th of December for the political party of their choice. The security operations and logistic support provided during the elections assured the smooth execution of both electoral events. Operation Liberty Express culminated in the successful 15 December 2005 election of a representative government for the country of Iraq.

Air Combat Element

MAG-26 helicopter assets provided aerial lift for over 1,000 Iraqi voting committee members to various polling stations throughout the al-Anbar Province for the October Referendum. Additionally, Marines and sailors from units of the air combat element provided security and search procedures at the polling stations. The success of the referendum was a direct result of Operation River Bridge and the aerial assets, which supported both events.

2d MAW (Fwd) also provided the flights required for Operation Liberty Express in support of the 15 December Iraq national elections. This included the coordination and scheduling of assault support and MNF-W and Combined Forces Air Component Commander/F/W aircraft for combat air patrol and aerial refueling. Extensive coordination between MNF-W, MNC-I, MAG-26, and various squadrons was also conducted to facilitate the successful movement of Iraqi Ministry of Defense personnel and their freshly recruited and or trained Iraq personnel in support of the Desert Protector program variant 4 and 5.

Throughout the months of September through December, the air combat element flew approximately 11,172 sorties and 22,012 flight hours in support of Sayaid, Liberty Express, and River Gate. Again, they flew over 1,000 Iraqi voting committee members to various polling stations throughout the al-Anbar Province.

Combat Service Support Element

Operation Liberty Express was a resounding success as the 2d Marine Logistics Group (Fwd) assisted the Independent Electoral Commission in al-Anbar Province in the planning and execution of the delivery and recovery of balloting materials and polling center equipment at more than 140 polling sites during the 15 October referendum, the 12 December election voting by the Iraqi security force and the 15 December general parliamentary election. CLR-25 was instrumental in the sorting, packaging, and delivering of all balloting materials throughout the al-Anbar Province as well as the eventual recovery and storage of reusable items following the elections.

Additionally, 2d MLG (Fwd) provided life support to and throughput of over 700 Independent Electoral Commission poll workers. To support the poll workers at Camp Taqaddum, a fully functioning temporary workers' camp was constructed, capable of housing up to 1,600 workers. The camp included biometric automated tracking and scanning of personnel upon arrival. The camp was constructed with numerous force protection barriers, and had security, command and billeting tents with environmental control units, sanitation facilities and a kitchen tent. In addition to general support for the entire area of operations, 2d MLG (Fwd) was directly involved in the detailed planning for the security for two polling sites within 2d MLG (Fwd)'s battlespace in towns near Camp Taqaddum.

During both the October referendum and the December national elections in the western part of the area of operations, CLB-2 assisted RCT-2 and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) with the delivery of balloting materials and polling station kits in cities throughout the entire western portion of al-Anbar Province. CLB-2 also delivered and emplaced force protection barriers surrounding voting locations in Hit, Haditha, al-Qaim, and the Korean Village area, providing the ability to have polling stations protected from the threat of vehicle borne improvised explosive devices and indirect fire. In addition to delivering force protection materials, CLB-2 Marines assisted in the set up of polling centers across their area of operations. Once voting had been completed during the October referendum and December Iraqi security force/national elections, CLB-2 Marines were instrumental in securing and transferring ballots and ballot materials back to MNF-W forward operating bases for initial tallying and onward movement back to Baghdad for Independent Electoral Commission election validation.

In the eastern part of the area of operations during the October referendum, CLB-8 continued to provide direct support to RCT-8 in order to enhance the security throughout the area of operations, as well as ensure that the Independent Electoral Commission was prepared to conduct the election with all materials necessary. This

included three barrier-emplacements, task organized around motor transport and engineer platoons, placing over 80 barriers that blocked off streets, allowing traffic to be more easily controlled in the city of Fallujah. For the Iraqi national election in December, CLB-8 was again emplacing barriers to support the RCT-8 security plan. This involved four task-organized barrier emplacement teams moving over 120 barriers. Two teams operated in the city of Fallujah, one in the city of Kharmah, and one operated in both Amiriyah and Ferris in the southern portion of the area of operations. As in the October referendum, CLB-8 ensured that the Independent Electoral Commission received all materials necessary for the election, and retrieved all material after the election. In both the October referendum and the December national election, CLB-8 established a Bravo command group at the Fallujah civil-military operations center, as well as establishing two maintenance/recovery quick reaction forces, and one clean-up/consequence management quick reaction force to rapidly respond to any developing situation.

II MEF Headquarters Group

In October of 2005 and again in December of 2005, the Marines and sailors of II MEF Headquarters Group established a camp at the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). This camp was established to process Iraqi civilians who would then board aircraft for movement forward to Polling Centers throughout the western half of Iraq. Working closely with USAF flight crews, the Independent Electoral Commission, the U.S. Army's 3d Infantry Division and many others, II MHG moved 1,300 personnel to western Iraq in October, and nearly 400 personnel in December. Demonstrating exceptional diplomacy, skill and energy, these Marines worked through logistical, political, and security-related challenges to ensure that poll workers were present to support both events. . . .

Iraq Security Forces

At the time II MEF (Fwd) assumed responsibility for the MNF-W area of operations there were

two under strength brigades and no police in the al-Anbar region. As of 28 February 2006, there are over 21,000 Iraqi security force operating and functioning in the area. The growth and development of the Iraqi Army in al-Anbar has been particularly significant, growing from a force of about 1,600 to over 16,000 soldiers. These forces now consist of two full divisions, seven brigades, and 21 battalions.

Recognizing the need to establish conditions to enable the rule of law and an effective operating government, II MEF (Fwd) developed a comprehensive and integrated strategy to build and employ the requisite number of Iraqi army, police and special border police forces in the MNF-W area of operations. This strategy was wholly consistent with the theater commander's priorities and the U.S. national strategy to achieve victory in Iraq.

Iraqi Army Development

As II MEF (Fwd) set out to execute this integrated strategy, one of first priorities to build a capable Iraqi security force was focused on the disestablishment of the ineffective 60th Iraqi National Guard (eight battalions) stationed in the al-Anbar Province. These sectarian forces proved to be unreliable and susceptible to local insurgent threats and intimidation. Therefore, in March 2005, II MEF (Fwd) began to methodically and carefully disband the force by recovering all weapons and equipment and then offering the opportunity to integrate those that were interested into the regular army. By June 2005, six battalions were stood down and nearly 2,000 former Iraqi National Guard soldiers were assimilated into the regular Iraqi Army.

Once this effort was complete, II MEF (Fwd) realized that another Iraqi Army division was needed in the al-Anbar Province to neutralize the insurgency and create the conditions to develop local control and domestic security. To that end, II MEF (Fwd) immediately began the difficult task of standing up the 7th Iraqi Army Division headquarters and three brigades. This was a huge undertaking, but II MEF (Fwd) successfully stood up all headquarters; planned and coordinated all equipping and training; and deployed these forces to

intermediate and final locations. This was a superb achievement that greatly improved the security situation in al-Anbar. Additionally, II MEF (Fwd) built and managed a temporary camp for 7th Iraqi Army division headquarters within the confines of Camp Fallujah; provided a military transition team out-of-hide for that headquarters; supported training of headquarters personnel; and successfully executed a move of the division headquarters to its permanent location in Ramadi (Camp Blue Diamond).

Another significant accomplishment was the employment and integration of the 1st Division Iraqi Army Headquarters and its subordinate forces. II MEF (Fwd) partnered and worked diligently to prepare and deploy the 1st Iraqi Army division headquarters into al-Anbar Province from its initial location in Tadj. In addition to preparing the facilities and infrastructure at Habbaniyah, II MEF (Fwd) coordinated and managed the successful and incident-free movement of 1,700 division headquarters personnel from Tadj to their new location in Habbaniyah during November and December 2005.

As II MEF (Fwd) continued to operationalize the Iraqi Army, one problem encountered was maintaining sufficient unit manning levels. Due to the harsh operating environment and violence associated with the insurgency, the 1st and 7th Divisions forces experienced high attrition. Since the national force regeneration system was not able to provide sufficient replacements, II MEF (Fwd) responded by utilizing the East Fallujah Iraqi Camp to conduct local boot camp training in order to produce trained combat replacements. As a secure training environment the East Fallujah Camp proved to be quite useful and helped train and produce more than 1,100 soldiers during OIF 04-06. II MEF (Fwd) continued to maximize the utility of the East Fallujah Camp and expanded its use for other Iraqi security force purposes, such as Iraqi police screening, and training Iraqi traffic police and public order forces. In this capacity II MEF (Fwd) used the East Fallujah Iraqi Camp to screen over 1,700 police candidates which contributed directly to building the Fallujah police force.

One of the key components of II MEF (Fwd)'s

strategy to develop the Iraqi Army were the embedded transition teams. These teams were critical to the Iraqi security force's continued improvement, assessment, and tactical employment. These 45, 10-man teams, a third of them formed internally from II MEF (Fwd) structure, lived with their Iraqi security force unit to facilitate their partnership and mentorship. The contributions of these teams were diverse and far-reaching. They provided critical links to training opportunities, access to Coalition effects, administrative tasks, a host of logistical support, and essential feedback on the current state of Iraq security force readiness. Coupled with effective partnering from MNF-W Coalition force units, the transition teams mentored and trained battalion and above headquarters and were instrumental in assisting their respective Iraqi Army units improve their capabilities to the point where most units can perform platoon, company and some battalion level operations. By January 2006, four of the Iraqi Army brigades and 10 battalions were either controlling their own battlespace or preparing to assume it. The Iraqi Army demonstrated their resolve and increasing capabilities during Operation Sayaid in the western Euphrates River valley and in other subordinate named operations. Additionally, these forces performed extremely well during security operations in support of the constitutional referendum and national election.

Iraqi Border Police and Iraqi Police Service Development

Concurrent with integrating soldiers into Coalition forces-led counterinsurgency operations, II MEF (Fwd) expanded and improved a regional department of border enforcement and police academy in order to meet MNF-W training needs. This academy was one of the first in the country to provide advanced, follow-on group tactical skills training for policemen who had recently completed their entry-level national training. It also provided basic training to Department of Border Enforcement forces. In just a six-month period, 24 II MEF (Fwd) Marines trained a combined total of 1,000 Iraqi police service and Iraqi border police personnel.

With Iraqi security forces established at cities

along the Euphrates River valley, and along the border, the conditions existed to introduce Iraqi police. To date, II MEF (Fwd) has enabled the training of 3,100 new Iraqi policemen for service in the al-Anbar Province. These efforts were spearheaded by out-of-hide police partnership program teams operating at the provincial and police district level. These teams conducted screening, training, advising, and follow-on assessment. MNF-W equipped over 10,000 policemen in four provinces with weapons, individual equipment, communications equipment, and vehicles. Starting in March 2005, II MEF (Fwd) built a 1,700-man police department in the city of Fallujah from the ground up, restoring law enforcement services to an area of 240,000 people that had been without since prior to the Battle for Fallujah in November 2004. MNF-W also began the first meaningful police force reconstruction in other areas of the al-Anbar Province in over a year. These actions are set to be repeated in the districts along the Euphrates River valley. In December, II MEF (Fwd) initiated an aggressive police assessment plan in the cities of al-Qaim. By mid-February, II MEF (Fwd) assisted the Provincial Governor in shipping 1,400 candidates to the Baghdad police academy. Through this aggressive plan II MEF (Fwd) has set the conditions for the rapid growth of police and improved security throughout the western Euphrates River valley, as well as being able to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the theater commander's "2006 year of the police" campaign plan.

Iraqi Security Force Logistical Support

In order to successfully equip, sustain and support the Iraqi security force during OIF 04-06, II MEF (Fwd) developed and executed a comprehensive logistical support and infrastructure development strategy. II MEF (Fwd) worked tactical and strategic logistical issues through Multi National Corps-Iraq, Multi National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) and Multi National Security Transition Command-Iraq; which included procurement, military construction, developing Iraqi security force logistic policy, sustainment, life support, health services, maintenance, Iraqi camp management and distribution in direct support of training and

equipping an effective Iraqi security force. The magnitude of these efforts cannot be understated. To field, train and equip the Iraqi security force, 325 contracting actions valued at 27 million dollars were executed for life support, equipment, maintenance, services, sanitation and sustainment to the Iraqi security force operating in the MNF-W area of operations. Additionally, to support the material needs of the Iraqi Army, police and border forces, II MEF (Fwd) coordinated the transportation, security and delivery of 1,250 vehicles, 10,000 small arms weapons, 11 million rounds of ammunition, 1,400 pieces of communications equipment, 2,500 sets of individual police equipment, 8,400 sets of initial issue for Iraqi Army soldiers, 10,000 sets of cold weather gear, and 100 short tons of sustainment cargo. These monumental efforts ensured that the ever increasing numbers of Iraqi security force in the area of operations were adequately provisioned to focus on the maturation of their basic skills.

Many of the initial Iraqi security force needs related to facilities and life support. The Iraqi security force had few organic capabilities to support them, so close coordination was vital to ensuring Iraqi security force forces could sustain operations. One element of life support was a wide-ranging array of camps and bases in the area of operations to support Iraqi security force employment. II MEF (Fwd) coordinated construction of 17 Iraqi Army bases totaling \$183 million, nine Iraqi police stations costing \$10.9 million, and six border forts valued at \$1.9 million. These bases and camps enabled an additional Iraqi Army division to be located in western al-Anbar Province. Beyond these fixed facilities, II MEF (Fwd) developed and executed an up-armor program for Iraqi security force vehicles valued at \$760,900, providing better protection for 383 vehicles of the Iraqi Army and police from small arms and improvised explosive devices. To sustain the operational readiness of these vehicles and other equipment, II MEF (Fwd) coordinated and established over \$300,000 in maintenance contracts.

Ground Combat Element

During the past year the Iraqi police forces have gone from being nonexistent to contributing

to the security of Fallujah and other surrounding areas. The Iraqi highway patrol is patrolling the roads around Fallujah and Ramadi. The traffic police are directing traffic and performing other functions. The Iraqi police in Fallujah are patrolling the streets and arresting insurgents. In Fallujah, over 90 percent of the police force have attended formal training and are fully equipped to perform law enforcement duties. During the national elections in December, the Iraqi police provided security for the polling sites and poll workers. Their efforts combined with the Iraqi Army and 2d Marine Division resulted in the largest voter turnout to date in the province.

The division partnered Iraqi Army units with the division's RCTs and BCTs. Despite considerable logistical and life support challenges, the division was able to put in place all necessary resources in addition to force protection measures in time to receive Iraqi security forces. Within a short period of time the division established and equipped 16 Iraqi security force camps throughout the area of operations, in addition to more than a dozen firm bases. Division units demonstrated versatility and resourcefulness in their implementation of creative training programs for partnered Iraqi security force units. Their efforts considerably enhanced each unit's training and combat effectiveness in an accelerated time frame. The division's efforts, in concert with improved provincial relations resulted in a continually increasing Iraqi Army that grew from a platoon of 34 reconnaissance soldiers to two full divisions of 18,000 plus soldiers, a Border Defense Force of over 2,000 that patrols the Syrian and Jordanian borders and an Iraqi police force of over 11,000. During this period, the Marines, sailors, and commanders of 2d Marine Division worked tirelessly to train and fully integrate Iraqi security forces into unit operations, while overcoming the challenges of language and cultural barriers. After only six months, the Iraqi security forces are now involved in 100 percent of the division's unit operations. The success of their training and their unilateral involvement has been essential to the division's success during the electoral process and the growing progress toward positive opinions of the Multi National Forces by the Iraqi people. To

date, three Iraqi Army brigades and eight Iraqi battalions conduct independent operations and control their own battlespace.

Iraqi Security Force and Coalition Force Basing

30th Naval Construction Regiment: The 30th Naval Construction Regiment (30th NCR) planned and executed over 173 projects totaling over 240,000 man-days of engineering support while placing \$49 million worth of materials and conducting over 1,100 convoy security missions (56,000 miles) in support of the continued development of the Iraqi security force and enabling Iraqi self reliance and self governance.

The 30th NCR provided engineering designs, bills of materials, CL IV material acquisition and delivery, construction of three combat outposts and seven Iraqi security force battalion base camps throughout the area of operations. This effort was timed to provide direct support to Operation Sayaid in the western Euphrates River valley and completing camps in time to field Iraqi security force forces prior to the December national election.

Critical supporting projects constructed and/or designed by 30th NCR include the following:

- Command Outpost South was designed and constructed to house and sustain 750 troops near the Syrian border south of al-Qaim. This project needed 8,000 man-days at a cost of \$2.4 million in construction materials.
- Command Outpost North was designed to house and sustain 1,950 troops near the Syrian border just north of al-Qaim. The 30th NCR provided the designs and bill of materials for the construction of this \$34 million contractor-constructed project and responded with an emergency camp maintenance detachment when a contractor solution proved unsuccessful.
- The Iraqi security force Battalion and Brigade Headquarters in al-Qaim was designed to house and sustain 1,100 troops and senior leadership of the Iraqi security force which provides the command and

control of Syrian border operations. The project required 9,200 man-days to construct at a cost of \$3.5 million.

- Command Outpost Rawah was designed to house and sustain 1,500 troops at a cost of \$4.3 million and 14,000 man-days. This project was completed in similar fashion as the other command outposts.

The 30th NCR extended this capability to house and sustain over 5,000 thousand Iraqi security force and associated Coalition force battalion and unit personnel throughout the area of operations by designing, and constructing nine forward operating bases (FOBs). Each FOB provided berthing, dining and cooking facilities, force protection, maintenance yards, administrative facilities, armory, ammunition storage, fuel farms, and hygiene facilities for the troops.

Projects by location and cost of construction performed by 30th NCR include:

- Iraqi security force. Base Camp Hadithah \$596K
- Iraqi security force Hadithah Battalion \$1.8M
- Iraqi security force al-Qaim Battalion and Brigade \$2.1M
- Iraqi security force Hit Battalion \$2.3M
- Iraqi security force Tiger Battalion and Brigade \$1.2M
- Iraqi security force Ranger/Law College Battalions \$309K
- Iraqi security force Commando Battalion \$317K

Health Service Support: A key supporter to the II MEF (Fwd) Iraqi security force directorate, health service support facilitated both Coalition forces and Iraqi Ministry of Health medical support to Iraqi Army training and combat operations. The application of timely and persuasive influence on Multi National Security Training Command-Iraq assisted in formation of a medic training school and Iraqi Army Medical clinic at Habbaniyah Base. This action also resulted in establishment of the first Iraqi base support unit in al-Anbar Province. Additionally, a battlefield

distribution system using MNF-W medical logistics assets to deliver start up equipment sets and resupply items for all Iraqi Battalions with medical personnel was set up to assist Iraqi logistics development.

Health service support coordinated medical support plans with the Iraqi security force directorate to provide medical support to 20,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and 30 U.S. transition teams. The establishment of level one and level two medical care for the Iraqi Army was critical to the survival of innumerable wounded Iraqi soldiers. Health service support communicated with multiple organizations to facilitate the movement of medical supplies to Iraqi Ministry of Health facilities in al-Anbar Province in support of civil affairs actions.

Reconstruction

The security and support of the provincial and local governments were critical to the success of Coalition forces throughout al-Anbar Province. Prior to February 2005, the provincial government of al-Anbar and the city councils of most major cities in the province were completely ineffective. Those governing bodies that did exist were intimidated and infiltrated by insurgents. Fallujah was the only major city in which the insurgents had been driven out and the citizens were attempting to begin self-governance. During the past year the 2d Marine Division has driven the insurgents out of all the major cities; Ramadi, Habbaniyah, al-Qaim, and Rutbah. In the process several smaller towns have also been made safe for the citizens of Iraq. Immediately after each city or town was cleared of insurgents the 2d Marine Division began to work with the leadership of the city. The 2d Marine Division commanders maintained a continuous dialogue with local officials in order to address their needs and determine priorities for projects to improve the quality of life for Iraqi citizens. The division has also greatly assisted the provincial government. When the newly elected governor was kidnapped and later killed during a gun battle with insurgents, the division helped the provincial government work through the transition of authority in accordance with the estab-

lished Iraqi rules applicable to the situation.

Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division installed a communications network at the provincial civil-military operations center to support Coalition efforts to bolster capabilities of the Iraqi transitional government. This service helped facilitate a more expeditious flow of information to research and staff reconstruction projects on behalf of the Iraqi people. RCT-8's civil affairs detachment rehabilitated the Fallujah mayor's building. The facility was later used to relocate Fallujah governance and create a backdrop of governmental autonomy and self-sufficiency.

2d Marine Division integrated several civil-military operations center staffed with civil affairs personnel and translators located within close proximity of the provincial government facilities in order to provide around-the-clock support and immediate access to key personnel. These efforts resulted in progressive movement within the Iraqi political process, a favorable shift in the overall opinion of Coalition forces and coordinated planning efforts for projects that met the cultural and civic needs of the Iraqi people.

Division units, Iraqi forces, and civil affairs group (CAG) personnel worked diligently throughout every operation to build positive relationships and secure the trust of Iraqi citizens and influential local officials. This process began with moving and distributing over 150 billion Iraqi dinars as financial compensation for damages and loss caused as a result of anti-Iraqi forces insurgent activities. The Iraqi provincial reconstruction development committee was established to build provincial government capacity and legitimacy to help identify how chief of mission Coalition projects are planned and executed. Two water treatment facilities were restored in addition to the construction of five water treatment facilities for villages in al-Anbar Province that will provide fresh water for over 100,000 people. The division's relationship with electrical representatives resulted in improvements to three substations and the installation of additional electrical transformers increasing electrical output to over 500,000 residents of al-Anbar Province. The division assisted in refurbishing over 25 schools for use by more than 10,000 students. Several areas received

much needed medical supplies, incubators and funding for new medical clinics. The CAG provided food, water, shelter, clothing, blankets, and medical assistance to 4,000 displaced persons in Ubaydi. In the Hit area 1,200 hygiene kits, 2,000 water buckets, 1,600 kerosene heaters, 1,700 sweaters and 10,000 blankets and several thousand pounds of food items were provided. Additionally, CAG personnel delivered 39 primary care health care kits enabling the Iraqi Ministry of Health to provide service to 1.5 million citizens of al-Anbar Province. The division's reconstructive efforts have resulted in the completion of 483 projects worth \$18.3 million and 183 projects valued at \$13.3 million still in progress. The division's reconstructive efforts have done a great deal to influence the support of the local government and Iraqi people.

155th Brigade Combat Team (Army National Guard) (155 BCT): The 155th BCT was an energetic force and a catalyst in transitioning local and provincial responsibilities to the Iraqi people. The 155 BCT built Police Partnership Programs in three provinces. Two of these provinces converted to provincial security control, the first provinces in MNF-W to attain such status. Through their diligent efforts, they have been instrumental in converting the remaining province to local control.

The 155th BCT was also responsible for the non-kinetic efforts which included over 100 million dollars in projects that secured and improved critical infrastructure through establishing local confidence in Coalition forces and strengthening local and provincial Iraqi governments. The 155th BCT, working with local Iraqi contractors, built schools, improved roads, and provided water irrigation. They were instrumental in helping the Iraqi police build police stations to provide centralization of local city police and a visible sign of a force dedicated to service and peace.

MNF-W had almost \$15 million in Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds to spend before the end of the fiscal year. Projects organized by 5th/6th CAG had to be quickly identified, quotes and legal requirements completed. The G-5/civil-military opera-

tions cell of II MEF (Fwd) was able to spend more than \$15 million in CERP purchasing HA items, generators, pumps, farm equipment and a telecommunication project for Fallujah along with coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to pay for five water treatment plants in Ramadi.

The G-5/Civil Military Operations Cell (CMOC) found there was no function plan for economic development. Utilizing key individuals, a plan was developed to engage MNC-I, MNF-I along with the U.S. embassy to determine programs for economic development and what funding was available to move an economic plan forward. From this, an engagement plan was developed to begin pursuing an economic development plan in Fallujah. Fallujah was chosen based on the security situation. Execution began with a simple meeting with Iraqi businessmen, and quickly grew in size to include more businessmen, key leaders, representatives from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Members of the CMO cell were able to develop relationships to fund a micro financing program, development of a business center to promote economic growth, training and better business practices. The plan will inject more than \$5 million in the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office funds for micro-financing into al-Anbar. USAID will complete training for the Iraqis who will manage the loans. The overarching part of the plan was to establish a mechanism to initiate large-scale reconstruction projects anywhere in the province. From its beginning in Fallujah, the same plan was moved to Ramadi where 6th CAG began developing a business center and micro-financing.

The planning process continued with the attempt to develop an overall economic plan for al-Anbar attempting to tie together the MNC-I plan, the division Strategic Reconstruction plan along with the Fallujah based economic plan.

The G-5/civil-military operations cell also established an agriculture development plan addressing irrigation as the primary means to

improve crop production. Utilizing primarily USAID Office of Transitional Initiative Funds, canals were cleared of debris.

The G-5/civil military operations cell supported the provincial reconstruction team (PRT) concept development and fielding in Babil Province. The G-5/civil-military operations cell supported the provincial reconstruction team (PRT) program helping shape its development through interactions with the MNC-I and MNF-I Staffs. The civil military operations cell coordinated with the regional embassy in Hillah to ensure the initial move of soldiers there would be expected and supported. This was followed up by a site visit to ensure the soldiers were being taken care of and completing an assessment of the current situation. This assessment along with assessments of the Najaf and Karbala government support teams allowed MNF-W to develop a position and direction for the PRT engagement for Ramadi.

Equally significant, MNF-W's engineers provided detailed planning input and subject matter expertise to develop a vulnerability assessment of critical infrastructure throughout the battlespace. The most significant efforts in this critical activity were centered on the Hadithah hydroelectric dam. This critical infrastructure provides electrical services to over 500,000 citizens in eastern al-Anbar Province. With a strong Marine presence to provide security, MNF-W engineers keenly identified the requirement to safeguard the facility from the effects maintenance neglect. The Marine air-ground task force tenaciously communicated this critical vulnerability to the operational commander and affected the deployment and employment of personnel with the highly specialized and technical subject matter expertise required preserve this strategic infrastructure and ensure the continued efficient operation of the dam in support of Iraqi citizens.

MNF-W's explosive ordnance demolition technicians also led and mentored the Iraqi National Mine action authority representatives in their effort to work with civil military affairs in MNF-W. The extensive coordination required to accept an action authority de-mining contractor, synchronize the efforts with the U.S. State

Department representatives, 5th CAG, public affairs staff, information operations staff, and the 2d Marine Division Operations Section enabled the clearing of minefields and unexploded ordnance that set the conditions for significant reconstruction operations to commence within the city of Fallujah.

The conditions of the main supply routes and alternate supply routes are critical to the execution of ground operations and the safety of the troops conducting the missions. It is imperative that these routes remain operative and in good condition. The 30th NCR has maintained these routes in the best possible condition supporting thousands of missions each month. Delivering \$960,000 in repair materials to complete projects consisting of crater repairs, new route construction and repairing existing roads, bridges and highways, 30th NCR ensured these critical lines of communications remained open and serviceable.

The 30th NCR also provided the subject matter experts who conducted route reconnaissance and provided the designs of a new supply route which will serve as the primary sustainment route for command outpost North and other facilities north of the Euphrates River. The command provided the logistical and construction support of this project through the procurement of 50,000 cubic meters of gravel required for this project. The 30th NCR executed this project with a company augment from the 947th Combat Support Equipment Battalion, and was further directed to extend the scope of work to include repairing an 18-kilometer road to augment sustainment options north of the Euphrates River.

Regional Reconstruction Operation Center (RROC)

The RROC provided support to MNF-W, the Iraqi government, chief of mission, and all organizations involved in the reconstruction of Iraq in the area of operations by coordinating reconstruction efforts, information, logistics, and security between the contracting community, military, and Iraqi government in order to better enable all responsible for the reconstruction effort.

Acting as the central point of contact for

reconstruction projects in MNF-W, the RROC accomplished three mission areas: reconstruction program management oversight, support to the PRDC, and facilitating contractor convoy movements.

Reconstruction Program Management Oversight. Advocated, monitored, and reported on the MNF-W reconstruction program driven by a team of agencies under the chief of mission and executed by the Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division. The reconstruction program included 531 projects for MNF-W, valued at \$440 million with 92 percent contracted and 45 percent work-in-place. The reconstruction projects provided restoration of essential services in several infrastructure sectors including: electrical, water, wastewater, health, education, security, justice, transportation, and communication.

Iraqi Government Provincial Reconstruction Development Council Support (PRDC). Engineering support to the PRDC; advising and assisting in planning, prioritizing, contracting, and implementing the commander's emergency response program (CERP) funded projects. PRDC/CERP projects within the four MNF-W provinces (al-Anbar, an-Najaf, Karbala, and North Babil) have totaled 79 successfully completed

projects totaling almost \$6.5 million. In addition, the RROC is working with the PRDC on an additional 182 projects with an estimated value of \$51.5 million. These efforts increase the governance capacity of the provincial governments and legitimize the governments by helping them provide essential services.

Contractor Support and Movement Coordination. Facilitated civilian contractor support and movement within the MNF-W area of operation through Aegis Defense Services. Disseminated threat warnings and unclassified intelligence to relevant reconstruction agencies, contractors, and vendors; providing over-watch for civilian personnel and equipment movements; and, by providing security escort teams (SETs) and reconstruction liaison teams (RLTs). Provided over 390 intelligence reports, and the RROC provided over-watch for over 1,700 civilian convoy movements. Over-watch includes calling in military quick reaction forces or casualty evacuation when needed.

Notes

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Efforts to Counter the IED Threat

by Colonel Eric T. Litaker

Marine Corps Gazette, January 2005

As Coalition forces involved in both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) continue to come under attack from improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense (DoD) have taken decisive action to counter this threat.

Working Group

In late 2003, Lieutenant General Edward Hanlon Jr., then-Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and the Commanding General (CG), Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), directed the formation of an IED countermeasures working group (IED WG) to:

... raise IED situational awareness, reduce redundant efforts, capitalize on Joint/other Service initiatives, leverage science and technology, and evaluate initiatives across the DOTMLPF [doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, and facilities] spectrum.¹

Initially the IED WG consisted of a single engineer officer from the Expeditionary Force Development Center (EFDC) and several part-time members. As the WG expanded, organizational control transitioned to the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL). Today, MCWL has the lead in a robust organization consisting of eight full-time and more than 20 part-time members from the spectrum of Marine Corps, DoD, and other federal organizations. The group meets weekly to review threat trends and to develop opportunities to counter the threat, either through the use of technology or through the use of modifications to tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP).

The mission of the IED WG is to identify, evalu-

ate, and facilitate the delivery of materiel and non-materiel counter-IED solutions to ensure that operating forces have unencumbered freedom of maneuver. Its functions include evaluating and prioritizing Marine Corps counter-IED requirements and solutions and providing a focal point for Marine IED/counter-IED situational awareness through the use of intelligence information, technology, TTP, and training. The IED WG's approach is to reduce redundancy, capitalize on joint/other Service initiatives, and leverage the science and technology community.

The group is divided into teams focusing on intelligence, technology evaluation and integration, communications, training and TTP, technical support, and programmatic support. This provides a central focus to Marine Corps efforts to defeat the IED threat and to facilitate the development and implementation of joint and Marine Corps-specific solutions.

Although not organizationally a part of the EFDC, the MCWL-led effort requires a close working relationship with EFDC, Marine Corps Systems Command (MarCorSysCom), and Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC). Together, the IED WG team works with deployed operating forces to determine in-theater requirements and how best to provide these capabilities to the operating forces.

In addition to working closely with continental United States-based organizations, the IED WG also maintains close contact with I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) forces in theater and at Camp Pendleton through the I MEF G-9 and the MCWL liaison officers (LNOs). The free flow of communications between these organizations has been the key to their ability to maintain close contact and coordination on a wide variety of IED-related issues.

Contributions

The IED WG has been able to contribute to counter-IED efforts by combining information from I MEF sources on the specific nature of the threat,

and their thoughts on how to counter it, with information on technologies either already available or currently in development. Some of these efforts have been made directly by using MCWL or Marine Corps resources, while others have been made indirectly by facilitating access to external resources.

Given the emerging nature of the IED threat, there are limitations on what existing programs of record can accomplish to counter the threat. As a result, a portion of the work done by the IED WG is to coordinate the resources available through associated Marine Corps programs of record with those available through other channels. Additionally, the expeditionary force development process, including the use of urgent universal needs statements, has been used with great success to support deployed operating forces.

Nevertheless, there are also limitations on the extent to which existing funds can be reprogrammed for an effort that, because of its emerging nature, has not yet been incorporated into the normal budget process. One of the challenges facing the IED WG is to find and leverage resources that can be used for these purposes. The formation of the Joint IED Defeat Integrated Process Team (IPT) within DoD has given the IED WG a forum in which to pursue resources to support Marine forces.

In early June 2004, General John Abizaid, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CentCom), sent a memo to the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) stating, "IEDs are my number one threat in Iraq. I want a full court press on IEDs."² In particular, General Abizaid noted that IEDs continued to be the primary cause of casualties in Iraq, and questioned whether there was the equivalent of a Manhattan Project working to counter the IED threat. He further indicated that the enemy quickly adjusts to new methods and that the conflict in Iraq provides the opportunity to experiment with efforts to defeat IEDs. One of the conclusions to be drawn from the memo is that there is no need to wait for a perfect solution; providing partial solutions on an experimental basis will save lives in the near term and will doubtless lead to increasingly better solutions in the longer term.

In part because of General Abizaid's memo, in July 2004 Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz approved the establishment of a Joint IED

Defeat IPT (JIDI). The purpose of this IPT is to "focus all counter IED efforts within the Department of Defense" and to identify, prioritize, and resource materiel and non-materiel solutions.³ The CG MCWL is the Marine Corps participant in the JIDI. The JIDI has become one of the principal external organizations with which the IED WG coordinates in order to support deployed Marine forces.

The JIDI's approach to countering the IED threat is to consider an IED defeat continuum, consisting of what must be done to predict where IEDs might be used, detect their emplacement, prevent their detonation, neutralize them before they can be used in attacks, or to mitigate the effects of these attacks. In recent months the IED WG has been successful in leveraging resources, either through the JIDI or through other channels, to contribute to the process of helping to meet the needs of I MEF in countering the IED threat.

These efforts include arranging funding for the purchase of existing technologies, working toward the development and testing of new technologies, coordinating the delivery of training, and participating in the development of new TTP. The goal continues to be to facilitate the rapid deployment of suitably mature technologies or the development of nonmateriel solutions.

Adaptation and improvement of current capabilities to counter the IED threat is a continuous process. As the only Marine Corps organization that looks specifically at defeating the IED threat, the IED WG understands the stakes involved and is dedicated to doing whatever is necessary to help deployed Marines. To date, the IED WG, in partnership with the organizations represented by its part-time members, such as MarCorSysCom; MCCDC; HQMC Plans, Policies, and Operations; and Programs and Resources, has been involved in the delivery of a number of types of technologies and equipment involved in OEF and OIF. These include detection technology, robots, electronic countermeasures equipment, and protective devices, such as ballistic shields and body armor.

Work Continues

For as long as this threat exists, there will be concerted efforts to seek out the people who make the

IEDs, to detect when and where they are emplaced, to find ways to neutralize their components, and to protect our Marines from the effects of IEDs.

The IED WG seeks to facilitate an ability to anticipate, as well as to learn from past experiences, as part of its effort to find solutions to the IED threat. Lessons learned include:

- While technology is both useful and important, the most effective counter-IED weapon is a well-trained, vigilant, and offensive-minded Marine.
- The IED fight is now largely an intelligence battle. Units at all levels must be able to process information quickly so that it becomes actionable. Our Marines have an outstanding ability to kill the enemy; we need to be efficient, adaptive, and effective in intelligence gathering and staff planning in order to ensure that they have the opportunity to do so.
- IEDs are not a new threat, but they are an evolving one. We need to provide our Marines with the ability to seize the initiative in the effort to defeat IEDs. Whoever moves faster wins.
- There is no “silver bullet” in sight. For the foreseeable future, the key to defeating the

IED threat will almost certainly be a combination of technology, TTP, and an offensive mindset.

For as long as Marines are deployed in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, countering the IED threat will continue to be a priority, and the IED WG will continue its efforts to focus and coordinate the activities of all relevant organizations to defeat the threat.

Notes

Marine Corps Gazette, January 2005, 29-31. Reprinted by permission. Copyright *Marine Corps Gazette*.

1. LtGen Edward Hanlon Jr., CG, MCCDC, e-mail to fellow general officers, 22 December 2003.
2. CentCom memorandum to CJCS, dated 4 June 2004.
3. JIDI information paper of 10 September 2004.

About the Author

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Rules of Engagement

by *William Langewiesche*
Vanity Fair, November 2006

I: One Morning in November

The Euphrates is a peaceful river. It meanders silently through the desert province of Anbar like a ribbon of life, flanked by the greenery that grows along its banks, sustaining palm groves and farms, and a string of well-watered cities and towns. Fallujah, Ramadi, Hit, and Haditha. These are among the places made famous by battle—conservative, once quiet communities where American power has been checked, and where despite all the narrow measures of military success the Sunni insurgency continues to grow. On that short list, Haditha is the smallest and farthest upstream. It extends

along the Euphrates' western bank with a population of about 50,000, in a disarray of dusty streets and individual houses, many with walled gardens in which private jungles grow. It has a market, mosques, schools, and a hospital with a morgue. Snipers permitting, you can walk it top to bottom in less than an hour, allowing time enough to stone the dogs. Before the American invasion, it was known as an idyllic spot, where families came from as far away as Baghdad to while away their summers splashing in the river and sipping tea in the shade of trees. No longer, of course. Now, all through Anbar, and indeed the Middle East, Haditha is known as a city of death, or more simply as a name, a war cry against the United States.

November 19, 2005, is the date people remember. Near the center of Haditha the U.S. Marines had established a forward operating

Editor's Note

At the time of the republication of this article, the events that began in Haditha on 19 November 2005 are still awaiting resolution. In December 2006, eight Marines were charged for crimes committed during that incident. Four were charged with multiple counts of premeditated murder: Staff Sergeant Frank D. Wuterich, Lance Corporal Justin L. Sharratt, Sergeant Sanick P. Dela Cruz, and Lance Corporal Stephen B. Tatum. Another four were charged with dereliction of duty: 3d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey R. Chessani, the battalion's staff judge advocate Captain Randy W. Stone, Company K commander Captain Lucas M. McConnell, and intelligence officer Lieutenant Andrew A. Grayson.¹

As of this writing, only one of those charged remains to be tried. The charges

against six of the eight indicted (Lance Corporals Sharrett and Tatum, Sergeant Dela Cruz, Captains Stone and McConnell, and Lieutenant Colonel Chessani) were dropped between 2007 and 2008. Lieutenant Grayson was acquitted of all charges in June 2008. The trial date for Staff Sergeant Wuterich is pending.²

Since legal proceedings involving Haditha are still in progress, there is very little official, published documentary material about the event. The following article is included to encourage discussion about the significance of this incident and present analysis of how journalists write about events of this nature. It is not the definitive interpretation or conclusion about these events. A letter written in response to this article by then-Brigadier General Robert E. Milstead Jr. is also reprinted.

base they called Sparta. It was manned by the roughly 200 Marines of Kilo Company of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marine Division, out of Camp Pendleton, California. This was Kilo Company's third tour in Iraq. It had participated in the invasion, in the spring of 2003, and again in the hard-fought battle for Fallujah in the fall of 2004. Because of normal rotations, however, only about two-thirds of its current members had been to Iraq before. The average age was 21. The company commander was a captain, an Annapolis graduate named Lucas McConnell, who was 32 and, like all but one of his lieutenants, was on his first tour at war. McConnell was a can-do guy, more of a believer than a thinker, disciplined, moderately religious, somewhat moralistic, and deeply invested in his beloved Marine Corps.

Winter was coming. At dawn Haditha was cool and clear. McConnell dispatched a convoy of four armored Humvees on a routine mission to deliver hot breakfasts and a radio-coding card to an observation post, a fortified checkpoint about three miles away, on River Road south of town. Some of the Humvees were equipped with top-mounted machine guns; two were "high-back" vehicles with open rear beds like those of pickup trucks, designed to carry troops and supplies, and wrapped in high protective siding. Between them the four Humvees held a squad of 12 heavily armed Marines, which was considered to be the minimum desirable force even for such a milk run as this. The men carried grenades, 9mm pistols, and variations of the basic assault rifle, the M16. They were led by a sergeant named Frank Wuterich, aged 25, who of all the sergeants of Kilo Company was known to be the most unassuming and considerate, the slowest to anger. He was another first-timer at war.

They rolled south toward the outpost, rattling through sleeping neighborhoods in single file, spaced well apart. Any insurgents watching them from the houses—and there likely were some—would have perceived the men behind the top-mounted guns as robotic figures swaddled in protective armor and cloth, and would barely have glimpsed the others through the small panes of thick, dusty, bulletproof glass, or above

the armored high-back sides. Over the years on the streets of Iraq, living outside the American protective bubbles, I have often imagined that killing Americans is easier for their anonymity, because it allows insurgents to take on the machines or the uniforms without dwelling on the individuals inside. This was the experience of resistance fighters when slaughtering hapless German conscripts during World War II in France, and presumably also of the mujahedeen when killing Russians in Afghanistan. But the men on the receiving end of an attack have a different view of the effects. They know one another as individuals and friends. Even the newcomers to Kilo Company, for instance, had spent at least six months together already, and had grown so close that they could identify one another on sight, from behind, when all geared up and walking on patrols at night.

It was a 15-minute drive from Sparta Base to the outpost south of town. Sergeant Wuterich's squad unloaded the hot breakfasts and other supplies, and picked up several Iraqi soldiers from the apprentice Iraqi Army—trainees attached to the company, who lived in their own compound adjoining that of the Marines. The Iraqis were armed with the ubiquitous Iraqi weapon, the banana-clip, Russian-designed AK-47. After a brief delay the squad headed up River Road for Sparta Base. It is possible to judge the mood. Because the conflict in Iraq is a guerrilla war without progressive front lines, and American combat troops operate from immobile forts with fixed zones of responsibility, most patrols consist of predictable out-and-returns. The pattern is well known to the insurgents. Routes can be varied, but the choices typically are limited, especially if the patrols must stick to the roads and the distances are short. As a result, one of the basic facts of life for those troops who are actually in the fight is that the return to base is the most dangerous trip in Iraq: if the mujahedeen are going to hit you at all, the chances are they'll hit you then. Nonetheless, for individual soldiers even in places as threatening as Haditha, most days are quiet, and weeks can go by with little sign of the enemy. There is no reason to believe that Wuterich's men were pumped

up for the drive home. Were they alert? Sure, why not, but another fact of life is that you cannot see much out of an armored Humvee, and even if you could, you have no chance of identifying the enemy until first you come under attack. You've got all these weapons, and you've been told that you're a mighty warrior, a Spartan, but what are you going to shoot—the dogs? You're a Marine without a beach. So you sit zipped into a filthy Humvee, trusting the guys up on the guns to watch the rooftops and the traffic on the road, trusting your driver to keep his eyes on the ground ahead, holding your M16 muzzle-up between your knees, calmly enduring the ride. The radio crackles. Your head bobs with the bumps. You don't talk much. There's not much to say. If you're dumb you trust your luck. If you're smart you're fatalistic. Either way it usually works out fine.

They turned west off River Road, onto a street known to them as Route Chestnut—a wide thoroughfare running through a district of clustered houses. It was 7:15 in the morning. Up ahead and unbeknownst to them, insurgents had planted a land mine, probably weeks before. In the bureaucratized language of this war, such mines are known as improvised explosive devices, or IED's. The ordinary ones are made from small artillery rounds, and rigged to detonate upon reception of an electronic signal from a short-range line-of-sight transmitter—a cordless telephone, a garage-door opener, a toy-car remote control. The insurgents of Haditha produced plenty of them; Kilo Company had discovered dozens in the previous weeks, and in the following weeks would discover many more. Most had been laid hastily and were poorly tucked into soft dirt or trash beside the roads, sometimes with wires showing. But the land mine this morning was different. It was a sizable propane tank stuffed with high explosives. More important, it had been buried directly in the road, and so lovingly paved over that apparently no surface disturbance was visible. The first Humvee rolled across it without incident. On board were three Marines, named Salinas, Rodriguez, and Sharratt. The second Humvee crossed, carrying Mendoza, De La Cruz, and Tatum. The third

Humvee was the command vehicle. It crossed, with Wuterich, Graviss, and a medic named Whitt. Somewhere in these vehicles sat the Iraqi soldiers as well.

The fourth Humvee carried the final three Marines. It was a high-back model. At the steering wheel was a veteran of the Fallujah fight, a plump 20-year-old named Miguel Terrazas, from El Paso, Texas, who was one of the most popular soldiers in Kilo Company, known for certain kills he had made, and yet also for his irrepressible good humor. Sitting to his right was another Fallujah veteran, James Crossan, aged 20, from North Bend, Washington. Crossan was frustrated with the mission in Haditha, which he saw as an attempt to play policeman in the midst of an active war. In the open back was Salvador Guzman, aged 19, a first-timer to Iraq, who was known as a typically easygoing Marine. Guzman was from Crystal Lake, Illinois. He faced rearward in the Humvee pointing his weapon over the protective siding, watching the street behind.

As this trio passed unsuspectingly over the buried land mine, a spotter watching from nearby, probably in one of the houses, pushed a button. With a boom that shook the surrounding neighborhood, the device detonated directly under Terrazas in a fireball of violently expanding gases. The blast simultaneously lifted the Humvee and split it in two, separating the top half from the bottom. Guzman was blown clear and landed in the dirt behind the wreckage. He lay there bruised and stunned, with a broken foot but no serious injury. Crossan, in the right front seat, was not so fortunate. He was blown through the right door and then had part of the Humvee fall on him. He lay pinned under the heavy steel, suffering from multiple bone fractures and internal injuries. Others from the squad came running up. He heard someone shouting, "Get some morphine!" and he passed out.

The morphine can only have been meant for Crossan, because Guzman was not so badly hurt, and Terrazas was already beyond such needs. It is a requirement of understanding the events in Haditha—and the circumstances of this war—not to shy away from the physical realities here, or to soften the scene in the interest of politics or

taste. Terrazas was torn in half. His bottom half remained under the steering wheel. His top half was blown into the road, where he landed spilling his entrails and organs. He probably did not suffer, at least. He must have lost consciousness instantly and have died soon after hitting the ground. He had a hole in his chin. His eyes were rolled back. He did not look peaceful at all. He looked bloody and grotesque.

Get morphine? No, not for Terrazas. For Wuterich and the nine intact members of the squad, Terrazas's fate was extremely disturbing. They were all of them professional soldiers who had willingly assumed the risk. But just a minute ago Terrazas had been driving home, relaxed and good-humored as usual, and now in a flash he was irretrievably gone. Such is the nature of death in Iraq: you are alive, and the streets seem calm and normal, until suddenly, inevitably, with no warning, you are dead or maimed for the rest of time. With no distant thunder to approach, the loss seems worse for the lack of any ability to prepare.

The wreckage smoked black. The air smelled of cordite, dust, and burned rubber. Wuterich called for backup, and for medical helicopters to evacuate the casualties. He did what a squad leader is supposed to do. A few Marines struggled to free Crossan. After a period of confusion the others crouched with weapons to their shoulders, scanning the nearby rooftops, walls, and windows in the hope of spotting the spotter, and alert to the possibility of further attack. They ordered the Iraqi soldiers to do the same. The Iraqis complied, but somewhat reluctantly, as if perhaps they thought this was not really their fight. In any case, though much remains confused about the immediate aftermath of the attack, and indeed about the hours that followed, what is nearly certain is that at first the squad took no fire. When reinforcements arrived from Sparta Base, after about 10 minutes, one of them was able to kneel gently over Terrazas's remains. He said, "You are my brother by another mother. I love you, man." He covered Terrazas with a poncho, closing him off from sight.

By that time the killing of Iraqis had already begun, though here again uncertainty reigns.

From transcripts, conversations, documents, press reports, and above all a sense for the plausible in Iraq, it is possible to reconstruct a lot. Nonetheless, given the complexities of guerrilla war, and the confusion that exists in the minds of those closest to battle, only the barest facts are indisputable. After the land-mine explosion, Wuterich's Marines remained in the immediate vicinity throughout the morning and beyond. Over the next few hours, until maybe around lunchtime, they killed 24 Iraqis. To accomplish the job, they used a few grenades, and maybe a pistol, but primarily their assault rifles. They suffered not a single casualty during this time. Five of the dead were young men who had approached in a car. The remaining 19 were people from the neighborhood, found and killed in the rooms or yards of four family houses, two on the south side of the road, and two on the north. They included nine men, four women, and six children. Many had been sleeping, and were woken by the land-mine blast. Some were shot down in their pajamas. The oldest man was 76. He was blind and decrepit, and sat in a wheelchair. His elderly wife was killed, too. The dead children ranged in age from 15 to 3. They included boys and girls. The Marines later delivered the corpses to the morgue, where they were catalogued by the local coroner. Photographs and videos were taken independently by Americans and Iraqis in the neighborhood and at the morgue. The images showed blood-splattered rooms, as well as victims. The dead did not look peaceful. They looked bloody and grotesque. You are my brother by another mother, you are my daughter by my wife. The dead were buried by angry, grieving crowds.

On the second day, a Marine Corps press officer at the big base downriver in Ramadi issued a wildly misleading statement attributing the civilian deaths to the enemy's IED, as if the families had crowded around the device before it exploded. That statement was later held out to be a deliberate lie, a cover-up, but in fairness it resulted from the isolation of the base, and was more self-delusional than underhanded. The press statement was not seen by Captain McConnell or his men, who had no chance therefore to correct

it. Once it was issued, it became an official truth that the Marine Corps, even today, has rigidly refused to retract, despite the fact that within the Corps a more plausible official truth existed almost from the start: the day after the press statement was issued, McConnell visited the battalion headquarters at a dam five miles north of Haditha, where he gave his commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Chessani, a PowerPoint briefing on the action, explaining that some number of civilians had been killed by Wuterich's squad while they suppressed a "complex ambush" that had started with the explosion of the land mine and had continued with an attack by hidden gunmen. Most of the briefing concerned other small firefights that had erupted in Haditha the same day. Chessani authorized the maximum compensation payments of \$2,500 to the families for each of the dead who could be certified not to have been insurgents. A Marine major was assigned to do at least that much of an investigation. McConnell's version was passed up the chain of command. McConnell returned to his fight for Haditha.

But one month later a reporter at *Time* magazine's Baghdad bureau, Tim McGirk, viewed a gruesome video of the aftermath, which suggested that people had been shot and killed inside the houses. Such is the nature of this war, with its routine collateral horrors, that had McGirk been privy to McConnell's report the video might not have surprised him. But with only the press statement about a land mine to go by, it was obvious that something about the official description was very wrong. McGirk's initial queries to the Marine Corps were rebuffed with an e-mail accusing him of buying into insurgent propaganda, and, implicitly, of aiding and abetting the enemy in a time of war. Whoever wrote the e-mail was out of his league. Negative publicity does indeed help the insurgency, but it's the killing of bystanders that really does the trick. Iraq is a small country with large family ties. After three years of war, the locals hardly needed *Time* to tell them the score. Rather, it was the Americans back home who needed help—any little insight into why the war kept getting worse. McGirk and others in the Baghdad bureau con-

tinued with their inquiry, focusing increasingly on the possibility that a massacre and cover-up had occurred. They did not draw conclusions, but laid out what was known and, in mid-March 2006, published the first of several carefully considered accounts.

Knowing that the articles were coming, the Marine Corps had been forced to accept two independent military investigations, one led by an Army general, concentrating on the responsibilities of command, and the other by the criminal investigative branch of the Navy, which focused on reconstructing events on the ground. News from the investigations occasionally emerged, and did not look good for the Marines.

Pennsylvania congressman John Murtha, a former Marine and a powerful friend of the Pentagon, stated bluntly that his sources were telling him that a massacre had indeed occurred; he said that there had been no firefight, and that Wuterich's squad had simply gone berserk. Murtha's larger point was that impossible pressure was being placed on U.S. troops, and that they should be withdrawn from a self-destructive war. Following his statements, Haditha became yet another test in a polarized nation, and never mind the details: if you liked President George W. Bush, you believed that no massacre had taken place; if you disliked him, you believed the opposite. As part of the package, *Time* came in for Internet attacks, hate-filled attempts to find any small discrepancies in its reporting, and, again, never mind the underlying truth.

Amid the vitriol came allegations of other U.S. atrocities in Iraq, some of which turned out to be real. The Iraqi prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, who had enjoyed the strong support of the U.S. government, stated publicly what has long been obvious on the streets—that the abuse of Iraqi civilians by American soldiers is routine. He did not say what is equally obvious—that abuse of Iraqis by Iraqis is even more routine, and that, along with horrors inflicted by Sunni groups, much of the worst is done by Shiite militias, who constitute a significant portion of the government's own forces as Iraq slips into civil war. Al-Maliki vowed to launch his own independent investigation of the Haditha killings—

wishful thinking for a government leader forced to hunker down in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone. But tempers were fraying in both Iraq and the United States.

Meanwhile, Kilo Company and the rest of the 3d Battalion had returned to California on schedule in the early spring of 2006, and had been greeted with the usual fanfare. But one week later the division's top general relieved Captain McConnell and Lieutenant Colonel Chessani of their commands, stating that he had lost confidence in their abilities to lead. The two officers remained on duty in other roles, though straining against bitterness, and anxious about the future. McConnell hoped that by remaining silent he might prevail, standing against the assault as a Spartan would. *Semper fi*. Nonetheless, it seems eventually to have dawned on him that his own beloved Corps might not be at his side. Reluctantly, McConnell hired a private defense lawyer, as did Wuterich and others. The naval investigation dragged on, and in midsummer produced a 3,500-page report. The report has not been made public, but apparently suggests that some members of the squad had engaged in murder, and that afterward they and perhaps others had agreed on a narrative to hide the crime. The Marine Corps began to ready charges, and to prepare for military trials and lesser career-ending disciplinary actions. The trials will take place at Pendleton, probably sometime before spring. The penalties may include capital punishment and prison for life. In the most general terms the outcome is already known. A former officer close to McConnell said to me, "The Corps has this reflex when it feels threatened at home. It has a history of eating its young."

II: The Fallujah Legacy

Who among these young should be eaten, and how, are questions that Marine Corps justice will decide. But the story of Haditha is about more than the fate of just a few men, the loss of their friend, or the casualties they inflicted along the Euphrates River one cool November morning. More fully explored, it is about the observable realities of an expanding guerrilla war—

about mistakes that have been made and, regrettably, about the inability to fix what is wrong. Those limitations appear to be inherent in the military, and though they certainly have much to do with the reactions and resentments of the least competent soldiers, they also, in a different way, apply to the very best. No matter how sophisticated or subtle our military thinkers may be, ultimately they have use of only this very blunt device—a heavy American force that is simply not up to suppressing a popular rebellion in a foreign land. Despite all the fine words and intentions, the U.S. military turns out to be a tool that is too large and too powerful to be sharpened. Our soldiers collectively did not want this war, and many have come to believe that it cannot be won, but they are not in positions to act on those thoughts, and have no choice but to perform their assignments as their capacities allow.

The starting point of the Haditha killings is early 2004, when the occupation was nearly a year old, and the Marines were brought back to Iraq to take over from the U.S. Army west of Baghdad, in the Sunni strongholds of Anbar Province. Anbar was said to be restive, but it was already dangerous as hell. The Army had blundered there. Soon after the invasion, in April 2003, soldiers from the 82d Airborne Division had gone into the center of Fallujah, where they set up an observation post in a schoolhouse. The best account yet of the consequences, and indeed of the entire war, is contained in the recent book *Fiasco*, written by Thomas E. Ricks of the *Washington Post*. Ricks quotes the Army colonel in command, who said, "We came in to show presence just so the average citizen would feel safe." But it didn't work out that way, as it has not worked out for all the iterations of "presence" ever since.

This is an aspect of the war still poorly accepted by the military, and by critics who believe that by sending more troops the U.S. might have done a better job, or could do so today. The view from the street has always been different. Iraq steps aside to let soldiers pass by, and then immediately fills in the void behind them. The soldiers are targets as hapless as any German

conscript ever was. Reduced to giving candy to children, and cut off by language and ignorance from the culture around them, they work in such isolation that the potentially positive effects of their presence usually amount to nil. The potentially negative effects, however, are significant. Back in April 2003, the U.S. colonel's average Iraqi citizen might have told him, "You don't know what you don't know, and, sir, you don't know a lot."

The colonel's soldiers had set up the observation post high in the schoolhouse, from which they could see over the tops of garden walls and into family compounds where unveiled women did housework and hung laundry to dry. The soldiers did not understand that this amounted to a violation of the local women, and a serious insult to their men. An angry crowd gathered in front of the school to demand the soldiers' withdrawal. From their positions in the building, the soldiers eyed the demonstrators warily for a while, but then rifle rounds began to hit the walls, fired perhaps from both a rooftop and the street, and the soldiers responded by firing directly into the crowd. Massive response had been the norm during the recent invasion, when the opponents were enemy troops, but times had changed and these were mostly noncombatants on the street. As many as 71 people were wounded, and between 5 and 17 died, depending on the truth of the American or Iraqi versions. The commander of the 82d Airborne, General Charles Swannack Jr., later claimed that his men's marksmanship had been precise—and indeed so accurate that every one of the casualties (he counted five or six) was an identifiable instigator who deserved what he got. In other words, within the Army there was no question of disciplinary action. But the schoolhouse shootings had given the insurgency a cause, and the guerrilla war had begun.

By the time the Marines arrived in early 2004, nearly two years before the killings in Haditha, the war was out of hand. This was true not just in Anbar but all through central Iraq, where it was obvious that the crude tactics of the Army were failing, and playing into the insurgents' plans. Individual soldiers were brave, but the

Army as an institution was averse to risk, and it was making a show of its fear by living on over-protected bases, running patrols only in armored vehicles, and overdoing its responses to the pin-prick attacks by the insurgents—arresting far too many men, and answering rifle fire with tanks, rockets, artillery, and air strikes. It became so common to call down precision bombs against even individual suspected insurgents (for instance, someone spotted by drone, walking with a shovel along a road at night) that a new term was coined, based on the physical effects that could sometimes be observed on video. "Pink misting," some soldiers called it, and in their growing frustration they said it with glee.

Excessive force was employed not merely because the weapons were available but also because high technology had led Americans to expect low-casualty wars. Especially in the context of a conflict that had never been adequately explained, the U.S. military for political reasons could not afford any implication that it was squandering its soldiers' lives in Iraq. It is difficult to argue publicly that the military's caution was not a good thing. Strictly in gaming terms, however, there was a problem: by squandering innocent Iraqi lives instead, in order to save American soldiers, the Army in particular was spawning untold numbers of new enemies who would mount more frequent attacks against those same soldiers in the future. This was happening, and fast. The Army was locked into a self-defeating cycle by the very need to keep its casualties down. Meanwhile, the insurgent campaign was expanding in proportion to the number of noncombatants dishonored, brutalized, or killed. It was expanding in proportion to outrage.

Perhaps because of their history in irregular wars, the Marines seem to have a special sense for such cycles of violence. Despite their public image as leathernecks and fighters, they possess a contemplative strain, and their organization, because it is relatively small, is also relatively amenable to change. When they returned to Iraq in 2004, they knew that the fight had grown much trickier than before, and they announced that in Anbar they would demonstrate a new

approach to winning the war. They would shed the excess of armor, use military precision rather than power, get out of their vehicles and walk through the towns, knock on doors rather than break them down, and go out of their way to accommodate the Iraqi culture. They would base their tactics on good intelligence. They would not overreact when provoked. They would shoot insurgents, and even enjoy the kills, but they would be careful not to hurt innocent bystanders. They would provide the necessary stability to allow a civil Iraqi society to grow. They would be understood, and they would make friends.

It was to be a textbook counterinsurgency campaign. In abstraction the strategy made sense, and it was the obvious choice—indeed, the only potentially productive one remaining. In practice, however, it quickly encountered an uncooperative Iraq. With its population of 250,000, Fallujah was particularly tough. In addition to all the native insurgents there, it contained foreign fighters from elsewhere in the Middle East, who had arrived to do battle under the banners of God. Within a couple of weeks the Marines were being forced by hostile fire back into their armored vehicles, and were encountering the same frustrations that the Army had, of not speaking Arabic, not having reliable translators, not knowing whose advice to trust, and not being able to distinguish between the enemy and ordinary people on the streets. As for the Iraqis in Anbar, the distinction so dear to the American forces, between the Army and the Marines, meant little to them. The view from the rooftops was that all these guys wore the same stars and stripes, and were crusaders for Zionists and oilmen, if not necessarily for Christ. Recently on Capitol Hill, John Murtha, the congressman and former Marine who has been so vocal about the killings in Haditha, mentioned those early encounters with reality to me. He said, “The Marines came over here to my office and said, ‘Jesus, they’re shooting at us!’ And I said, ‘Well, where did you *think* you were going?’”

The Marines did not formally abandon their strategy, but they saw it torn from their grasp. On March 31, 2004, precisely two years before

Captain McConnell and his Kilo Company came home from their momentous tour in Haditha, four American employees of a security firm called Blackwater were ambushed and killed in Fallujah. Their corpses were hacked apart and burned, and two of them were hung from a bridge amid celebrations on the street. Images were beamed around the world. Judging correctly that it could not leave the insult unanswered, the Bush administration, after brief consideration of the options, decided on an all-out assault against the city. That decision continues to stand as one of the worst of the war, ranking only below the decision to disband the Iraqi Army and the initial decision to invade. At the time, for those of us living independently in Iraq outside of the American security zones, and with some sense therefore of the mood on the streets, it demonstrated once again the inability of officials to imagine the trouble that the United States was in, and the astonishing insularity of Washington, D.C.

The Marines knew better. They wanted to respond to the Blackwater ambush by going after the individual killers, and then following through with a well-crafted counterinsurgency campaign to stabilize and mollify the city. But when they were overruled and ordered to do the opposite—to mount an immediate full-frontal offensive—they set aside their theories, and as professional soldiers they dutifully complied. It was a disaster. Backed up by tanks and combat aircraft, the Marines went into Fallujah dealing destruction, and quickly bogged down in house-to-house fighting against a competent and determined foe. To make matters worse, the showcase battalion of the new Iraqi Army mutinied and refused to join the fight. The battle cost several dozen American dead and many more wounded, and did immeasurable damage to the prospects for American success. It turned into a humiliation for the United States when, after four days of struggle, the Marines were ordered by a nervous Washington to withdraw. Again they dutifully complied. Afterward, the jubilant insurgents took full public control of the city, and with the help of the foreign fighters turned it into a fortified haven which U.S. forces did not dare to enter.

To get a feeling for Kilo Company and the killings in Haditha, it is necessary to remember this. After the spring battle was lost, Fallujah became an open challenge to the American presence in Iraq. There were plenty of other challenges, and to speak only of Fallujah is grossly to simplify the war. Still, Fallujah was the most obvious one, and the United States, unless it was to quit and go home, had no choice but to take the city back. Everyone knew it, on all sides, and for months the antagonists prepared. Because of the fortifications and the expectation of active resistance, there was no question this time of a patient counterinsurgency campaign: the Marines were going to have to go in and simply smash the city down. In November of 2004, they did just that, with a force about 10,000 strong. Before attacking they gave the city warning, and allowed an exodus to occur. Nearly the entire population fled, including most of the insurgents, who spread into Baghdad or up the Euphrates to carry on the rebellion, leaving behind, however, a rear guard of perhaps 1,000 gunmen who, exceptionally, wanted to make a stand. This was their mistake. The Marines attacked with high explosives and heavy weapons. Over the 10 days it took to move through Fallujah, and the following weeks of methodical house-to-house clearing, they wrecked the city's infrastructure, damaged or destroyed 20,000 houses or more, and did the same to dozens of schools and mosques. They were not crusaders. They did not Christianize the place. They turned Fallujah into Stalingrad.

Many insurgents survived the initial assaults and emerged to contest the Marines at close quarters, room to room and in the rubble. It is said to have been the most intense battle by American forces since Vietnam. The insurgents were trapped inside cordon upon cordon of American troops, and they fought until death. For the Marines the rules of engagement were necessarily loose. Rules of engagement are standing orders that limit the targets of soldiers, defining the difference between appropriate and inappropriate killing according to strategic and tactical goals, and between legal and illegal killing according to interpretations of international law. In Fallujah the rules allowed Marines to

kill anyone they believed to be dangerous, and others who got in the way. In addition to those seen carrying weapons, in practice this meant everyone in every structure from which hostile fire came, and any military-age male seen moving toward the Marines or running away. Obviously, the Marines were not allowed to kill wounded prisoners, but in a televised case one of them did, and Marine Corps justice averted its gaze.

The men of Kilo Company fought through the thick of Fallujah. Lance Corporals Terrazas and Crossan, and most of the other men of future Haditha note, ran the course from start to finish. Kilo Company lost four Marines killed and at least 20 seriously wounded, and was involved in the best-known close-quarters combat of the battle—a desperate attempt to clear insurgents from the rooms of a house, which came to be known as the Hell House fight. Toward the end of it, a New York-based photographer named Lucian Read snapped an iconic picture of a blood-drenched sergeant who had been shot seven times and blasted with an enemy grenade, but who nonetheless was emerging on foot from the house, holding a pistol in one hand, supported by a Marine on each side. The photograph showed the Marines as they like to be seen, and as some like to see themselves. There's a lot to be said for going to war with a photographer in tow, until something happens that you would rather forget.

Fallujah was a victory for the Marine Corps, but a victory narrowly defined. The reality is that a quarter-million people were forced from their homes and, when they returned, were faced with a city in ruins, surrounded by concertina wire and watched over by armed men in towers. Marine General John Sattler, who had led the assault, claimed that the insurgency had been broken. But as the seasons slid by in 2005, guerrillas slipped back into Fallujah, or sprang up from its ruins, and they surged forward through all the other towns of Anbar, including Haditha. Sattler was wrong, and embarrassingly so. Within more contemplative circles of Marines, the battle of Fallujah became less of a triumph than a warning. The consequences were not difficult to

discern. A hard-pressed combat officer once put it this way to me: “Yeah, we won Fallujah. But before that we *made* Fallujah. And we definitely can’t afford to make another.”

The hell of it was that the reasonable alternative—a nuanced counterinsurgency campaign—was not showing much promise either. At its core, the counterinsurgency campaign asked a lot. On the Iraqi side, it required the people of Anbar to place their faith in a United States government that had repeatedly blundered over the previous few years, and that was unable to protect collaborators from the insurgents’ knives. On the American side, it required young Marines with little worldly experience to show trust in a foreign population on alien streets where they were being shot at and blown up. Indeed, the formula asked so much from everyone involved that it was becoming difficult to know when it was realistic anymore. Specialists in Washington advocated patience and wisdom, and said the standard thing about our instant-gratification society. Officials in the Green Zone highlighted the slightest positive signs. But on the ground in Anbar the trends were all wrong.

III: First, Do No Harm

After Fallujah and the Hell House fight, Kilo Company flew home to California, spent a half-year retraining under its new captain, Lucas McConnell, and then returned to Iraq in September 2005, with Haditha in its sights. Haditha at that point had been largely ignored by the Marines for nearly a year. It was being ruled by an uncompromising group of insurgents who had instituted Islamic law and done some good deeds, but had also carried out public floggings and beheadings, and were using Haditha as a base from which to launch attacks in the region. In April of 2005 they had taken 19 Shia fishermen to a soccer field and slaughtered them all. The few policemen in town had resigned or fled to avoid similar fates. Then, on August 1, roughly two months before Kilo Company returned to Iraq, six Marine snipers from an Ohio-based company of reservists had been ambushed and killed on the outskirts of the city, in a scene that

was videotaped by the insurgents and made available on DVDs in the market. Two days later another 14 Marines from the same reserve company were killed when their armored personnel carrier was destroyed by an improvised mine. By the end of its tour, primarily around Haditha, that company had suffered 23 dead and 36 wounded, earning it the unfortunate distinction of having been the most badly mauled of any company in the war thus far. Upon returning to Ohio, one of the sergeants described his rage after the destruction of the personnel carrier. He had busted into a nearby house and had barely restrained himself from shooting two women and a teenage boy whom he found inside. He said he realized then that he had been too long in Iraq. He had been there seven months. He left in September 2005, when Kilo Company arrived.

The Marines decided to clean out Haditha once and for all. At the start of October they positioned about 3,000 troops in an arc to the south, west, and north, around the town. Roughly 700 of the troops were from Pendleton’s 3d Battalion under its new commander, Lieutenant Colonel Chessani. The men of Kilo Company were assigned the lead. They waited in the desert west of the city center. Before the offensive began, they knelt with their helmets off and prayed. They expected intense resistance in the form of rifle fire and rocket-propelled grenades. The plan called for them to advance on foot on a broad front, and to push the insurgents through the city until they were backed against the Euphrates, where they would surrender or die. The strategy was odd—as if the Marines had forgotten exactly which war they were in. Before dawn three bridges that crossed the river were bombed to cut off the enemy’s escape. Later, at a Baghdad press briefing, Major General Rick Lynch said, “We took out a portion of each of those bridges to deny the terrorists and foreign fighters—the insurgency—the ability to come from north to south, or south to north, across the Euphrates River. It was a precision strike so that when we indeed defeat the insurgency in these areas—and we’re on a glide path to do that—we can go back and replace those segments of the bridges so that the people in that

area can regain their own freedom of movement.” It was a tidy plan for an orderly war, everything in its place. Lynch continued, “Put that original chart up, please, the one that I just took down.”

When the Marines advanced into Haditha, on the first day of Ramadan, October 4, 2005, they encountered a town so peaceful that at first it seemed deserted. They knew that it was not—that they were being watched from behind the compound walls, and that the residents were playing it safe by staying off the streets. The frustration was that the insurgents were lying equally low, and not standing to fight or run away, as conventional combatants would. They could do this because of a reality soon evident to ordinary grunts but stubbornly denied by the U.S. command, which was that in Haditha the insurgency enjoyed widespread public support, and all the more so now with American soldiers suddenly walking around. The insurgents did not need to consult with experts to understand guerrilla war. Why bother to confront these Americans immediately, when you could let them pass by and later hunt them down? Why bother to go north to south or south to north when you could simply stay at home?

Within hours the Marines had walked all the way through Haditha and had reached the Euphrates with little to show. Over the next two weeks Chessani’s battalion remained in town, searching house to house and encountering hardly any opposition. Evidence of the insurgency was all around. By the time the offensive was formally called off, the Marines had netted 119 improvised mines, several facilities for making them, two car bombs, 14 weapons caches, and a propaganda shop equipped with computers, copiers, and several thousand blank CDs and audiotapes. They had found a note pinned to the door of a mosque, on which a former policeman renounced his collaboration with the invaders and begged the insurgents for their forgiveness. Finally, they had detained about 130 suspects, of whom they released about half and shipped off the others for interrogation. Against the scale of the rebellion, these were illusory accomplishments.

When Chessani’s battalion withdrew in mid-October, it shifted a few miles to the north and settled into its comfortable quarters at the dam above Haditha. McConnell and his Kilo Company were left behind to maintain a full-time presence in the center of town. They set up Sparta Base in a former school administration building, in a walled compound that could accommodate their generators and Humvees. The perimeter was reinforced with coils of concertina wire, sand-bagged machine-gun emplacements, and blast walls made of HESCO barriers—large dirt-filled cubes heavy enough to limit the effects of mortars and rockets. The administration building was H-shaped and low-slung. It contained about 15 rooms of various sizes, all with linoleum floors and painted concrete walls. One of the rooms was made into the company’s office and called the Combat Operations Center. Two others were made into a chow hall and a kitchen. The kitchen once burned because the cooks were not paying attention, but the food that was served was surprisingly good, and later sometimes included crab. Most of the building was made into general living quarters, where the men slept on cots and kept their personal gear, including an abundance of iPods, video games, and DVD players. As a final special touch there was even a makeshift photography studio where Lucian Read, who had rejoined the company, shot individual portraits of the men. Despite all that is said about difficulties endured by American forces in Iraq, as time passed the Marines at Sparta Base tended to feel that, if anything, they were not roughing it enough.

A sign on the wall read:

Habits of Thought

1. Sturdy Professionalism
2. Make yourself hard to kill.
3. No Better Friend, No Worse Enemy
4. First, Do No Harm
5. The Iraqi People are not our enemy, but our enemy hides amongst them.

Corollary 1: You have to look at these people as if they are trying to kill you, but you can’t treat them that way.

Corollary 2: Be polite, be professional, have a plan to kill everyone you meet.

This was standard Marine Corps stuff, passed down from above. It was meant as a guide to the war in Iraq, but it was unclear and overwrought. The men of Kilo Company had a culture of being assertive and tough, partly because of the Hell House fight and the publicity that had followed. But now that this latest offensive had fizzled, they were being asked to do exactly what? They were wandering around Haditha just waiting to get hit. Lieutenant Colonel Chessani, up at the dam, was a strange guy to them. He had a reputation of being standoffish, intensely religious, and uncommunicative; he seemed to know the enlisted men only by the nametags on their chests, and they felt he offered them little guidance at best. Captain McConnell was a different story. He was seen as an accessible and straightforward guy, but also as a military lifer, whose talks to his men, though intended to be inspirational, were dulled by Marine Corps clichés and pre-fabricated thoughts. He was always talking about responsibility and honor. He seemed sincerely to believe that in Haditha they were fighting the global war on terror—oh yes, and winning it, too. He insisted that the insurgents were cowards who lacked values, when the opposite was evidently true. He made Wagnerian vows like “We will not falter in the clashing of spears.” At Sparta Base sometimes it got a little thick, especially for a place with no enemy in sight. In fairness, however, officers who can inspire enlisted Marines are rare, and McConnell, because he was new, was perhaps just trying too hard.

Meanwhile, the Marines mounted patrols every day, often for no better reason than to spot something unusual on streets that to them remained strange. This was said to be an intelligence-based war, but the intelligence was poor. Sometimes the Marines detained men whose names appeared on their lists; more often they went into houses, asked a few questions, and walked away empty-handed. Officially their rules of engagement were only slightly more restrictive than those that had applied to the free hunting in Fallujah, with their tolerance for the killing of

people who got in the way. In Haditha, however, there were civilians all around. Reflexively the city was known as a battlespace, and perhaps it was one, but if so it was barely recognizable. Simply put, though Haditha was still largely controlled by the insurgents, during all the weeks prior to the killings of November 19, the Marines of Kilo Company saw very little action there. Battlespace? They killed one man—a town idiot who insisted on crossing their perimeter wire. They found some munitions caches in sandy soil along the riverbanks. They talked to some tribal leaders. But the largest measure of their success was a circular one—the continuing discovery of improvised land mines, which were laid each night, but which would not have been planted in the first place were it not for the presence of American troops in town. Indeed, the whole war had become a chicken-or-egg question, around and around with no answer possible.

The enlisted men of Kilo Company rarely philosophized. Many had joined the Corps in response to the September 11 attacks, now four years past, but the emotions that once had motivated them had been reduced by their participation in an enormously bureaucratic enterprise, and by the tedium of war. Fine—they were probably better soldiers for it. These were not the taut warriors portrayed in action movies. As they shed their helmets and body armor, they emerged as ordinary five-foot-nine-inch, 150-pound middle-class Americans, sometimes pimple-faced, and often sort of scrawny. Some of them were mentally agile, and some quite obviously were not. By the stringent standards of the U.S. military, they were not always well behaved. At Sparta Base there was a bit of illicit drinking, a touch of pornography. There are rumors about the use of narcotics as well. But the unit's morale was good enough, largely because the men had become close friends. They liked motorcycles, they liked cars, they liked guns. They especially liked girls a lot. Some could not speak without f**k. For instance, they f**king did not want to be in Iraq. Not anymore, if they ever did. Those who were returning felt they had come back way too f**king soon. And no, they did not respect the Iraqi culture—who the f**k would? Iraqi men

wear man-dresses. Iraqi men think everyone wants to eye-f**k their precious wives. Iraqi men kill their own people, then turn around and kill Marines. It's f**king bulls**t. God should paintball the genuine bastards so the Marines could then blow them away. Sometimes on the streets of Haditha it seemed like every man would get splattered.

But the Marines did not sit around Sparta Base and worry this to death. They talked about other things, their exploits, their party binges, the really dumb moves of their friends. They laughed and gave each other hard times. They gave each other names. When they mounted their patrols, they went up and down the designated streets and did their jobs as they were told. Be polite and have a plan to kill everyone you meet? Yes, sir, roger that, and on streets like these that would mean shooting the guy from up close, sir, at any false move on his part—is that what you mean by a plan? If the counterinsurgency mission in Haditha seemed half-cocked, so did any real chance for success in Iraq, but that was for others to decide—not for the soldiers who had to carry out the fights. The Marines of Kilo Company were well-intentioned guys who took pride in their conventional battlefield skills and, partly as a result, now just wanted to go home. As a group they were not like people who join the police for the satisfaction of hurting others. They were more like people who join Outward Bound. Until the killings of November 19, there is no evidence that in Haditha they abused the f**king Iraqis even once.

Then suddenly on Route Chestnut, Guzman and Crossan were wounded, Terrazas was torn in two, and Sergeant Wuterich was calling for back-up. The events that followed will never be reconstructed completely, no matter what the courts may find. Through the dust and noise on that Haditha street, they played out in a jumble of semi-autonomous actions, complicated by perceptions that had been narrowed by the attack and further confused by the ambiguities associated with fighting a guerrilla war on foreign ground. Some of the Marines may have suspected that a line had been crossed, and that crimes might have been committed, but in the urgency

of the moment it would have seemed less likely than it seems now, and even today the principal view of those involved is anger that the accusations are cheap, and that Kilo Company has been unfairly singled out. There is probably a feeling of remorse as well, but, to generalize, it is regret that the killing of noncombatants had so little to do with the intentions of the men, and that the story cannot somehow be taken back and run all over again.

IV: From House to House

The boom of the land mine exploding was heard throughout Haditha. Immediately afterward the city went quiet, except near the convoy, from which the Marines piled out shouting. Some ran back to the shattered Humvee to render aid as they could; the others quickly settled down, and indeed milled around uncertainly until Wuterich ordered them to spread out into defensive positions. It was still barely 7:15 in the morning, the Humvee boiled with black smoke, and the possibility existed that its destruction marked the start of an ambush that would now expand into overlapping attacks with automatic fire and rocket-propelled grenades. All through Iraq the insurgents were laying such lethal traps. For the moment, the houses on both sides of the street showed no sign of activity, though certainly they contained people lying low, if only out of fear.

Again it is important to face the realities here. According to counterinsurgency doctrine, these people were not necessarily the enemy, but Terrazas was nonetheless spilling his guts into their street. Among these very houses was one where the Marines had discovered a bomb factory just a few days before. Moreover, even if the neighbors were not directly involved, they must have known the location of this land mine, which could not have been planted without the locals taking notice. Surely some residents could have found a way to warn the patrol; if they were not the enemy, surely some could have acknowledged that Kilo Company during its stay in Haditha had been showing goodwill and restraint. But no, it was apparent that to these

people Terrazas was just another dead American, like roadkill, and good riddance to him. For Wuterich's squad the silence of the neighborhood was therefore less reassuring than ominous. It was the quiet before the storm, the prelude to an attack. The Marines were angry and tense. They sighted their rifles at the walls and rooftops, thinking every variation of f**k and waiting for the incoming rounds.

Instead, a white Opel sedan came driving up the street. It was an unmarked taxi carrying five young men, four of them college students bound for school in Baghdad, the fifth their driver. They were only about a hundred yards away from the blast site when they happened upon the scene. Through their windshield—dirty, bug-splattered, against the sun—they would have seen one of the most dangerous sights in Iraq: smoke rising from a shattered Humvee, a stopped convoy, and American soldiers in full fighting mettle coming at them down the street. The Marines halted the car from a distance. When soldiers do this in Iraq, they are supposed to follow a progressive escalation of force, with hand signals first, followed by raised weapons, then warning shots with tracers visible, then shots to the engine block, and finally, if the car keeps coming, shots directly into the driver. Because of the risk of car bombs, however, the procedure is typically shortened: weapons go up, and if the car doesn't stop, the driver and other occupants are liberally sprayed with fire. Those are the rules of the road, and so be it; given the circumstances, they are well enough understood to seem fair.

This time the driver stopped, as most drivers do. Some witnesses in the nearby houses later said that he tried to back away but then desisted. The Marines came running up, shouting and cursing. Presumably they told the occupants to get out of the car and to kneel on the street with their hands on their heads. What the Marines thought of them is not clear. Later they said they believed the men were associated with the landmine explosion, and were perhaps the spotters who had pushed the button, or were following up now with a car-bomb attack. This strains credulity for several reasons, not the least of which is that five people in a car are about four

too many for either purpose. Equally unlikely was another explanation sometimes mentioned, that these were insurgents driving up to do battle. But the truth is that the Marines neither knew nor needed to know why they stopped the car. The stop was legitimate. It was a necessary act to limit the risks to the squad, and to keep the confusion from growing.

The problem is what happened next, after a quick search revealed that the car contained no weapons or explosives, or any other evidence that linked the men to the insurgency. The Iraqis perhaps should have been held for a while or, better yet, allowed to take their car and leave. Instead, all five of them were shot dead by the Marines. Later, the Marines reported that they killed them because they had started to run away. Even if true, by normal standards this raises the question of what threat these men could have posed when they were fleeing unarmed—or at least what threat could have justified shooting them down. But in Iraq the question was moot, and for reasons that give significance to the Haditha story beyond mere crime and punishment. The first and simplest reason is that, because of reluctance to second-guess soldiers in a fight, the rules of engagement allow for such liberal interpretations of threat that in practice they authorize the killing of even unarmed military-age males who are running away. The second reason derives from the first. It is that the killing of civilians has become so commonplace that the report of these particular ones barely aroused notice as it moved up the chain of command in Iraq. War is fog, civilians die, and these fools should not have tried to escape.

The incident reemerged only because of the insistent inquiries of *Time* magazine. During the subsequent military investigations that were forced onto the Marine Corps in the spring and summer of 2006, grainy images from an aerial drone were found that appeared to show the five bodies lying clustered together beside the sedan, with one sprawled partly atop another. Perhaps they had been dragged back and placed there, but this was not part of the original story. Certainly the pattern as seen from overhead was not one of men killed while trying to scatter.

Equally troubling were the statements of one of the Iraqi soldiers who was with the convoy, and who four months later was questioned by a naval investigator. The questioning was incomplete, full of opportunities never pursued, and further weakened by an incompetent interpreter. A lawyer in court could tear such testimony apart. Nonetheless, what emerged was a picture of murder. The Iraqi soldier said he had been only about 25 yards away from the Opel sedan, and had watched the entire scene. It was obvious to him that the Iraqis were noncombatants—otherwise, why would they have driven up like this? He said the Marines had yanked open the Opel's doors, taken the men out, forced them to kneel with their hands on their heads, and, without bothering to search them, had quickly gunned them down. The investigator said, "Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang." Well yeah, well no, well actually the Iraqis were sprayed with rifle rounds. The M16 is a light, clip-fed weapon with a plastic stock and a metal barrel. It fires a three-round burst when it is switched to automatic. It does not bang then, but ripples sharply. The Iraqi soldier said he saw a head come apart and a face split in two. He also said that one of the Marines used a pistol, and he called that man a captain, but he did not appear to know any of the squad members' names, and this element he seems to have gotten wrong. By my calculation, there were no officers yet on the scene.

Errors are too easy to make when assigning individual blame. Sergeant Wuterich, for instance, has been repeatedly singled out. If the five Iraqi civilians from the car were summarily slain, Wuterich was probably elsewhere, closer to the center of concern, placing his men into defensive positions and watching the houses for hostile fire. Indeed, it is wrong to brand any of the Marines of his squad without knowing what each was doing, and where each one was. I do not know those details, though by now the military prosecutors must. It appears that only a few of the Marines handled the people from the car, and that, while all of them were angry, only two let loose with their guns. The killing was not agreed upon or planned. It started without warning and finished too fast to stop. Claims have

been made of an extensive conspiracy to cover up murders and protect the Marine Corps from embarrassment—but no such conspiracy was necessary, and it is unlikely that any occurred. As for the killings of the car's occupants, all that would have been required was a shift at the outset contained in two simple words. They ran. It would not matter who first uttered the words, or if these were the ones actually spoken. Among the men of Wuterich's squad the elegance would immediately have been understood. We are brothers by other mothers. The dead do not return to life, but some mistakes can be undone. Killing is not wrong in Iraq, if you can say the rules allowed it.

Within minutes the force from Sparta Base arrived. It was a squad of about the same size as Wuterich's, led by the only officer present on Route Chestnut the entire morning, a young lieutenant named William Kallop. Like other lieutenants in Kilo Company, Kallop was junior in all but rank to the senior enlisted men, to whom he naturally deferred. He had a reputation of being a little soft, a little lost. He was the pleasant son of a wealthy New York family, who had joined the Marine Corps, it was believed in Kilo Company, to prove something to himself before returning to a life of comfort. As a soldier he was said to be average. When the allegations against Kilo Company surfaced in the spring of 2006, his parents vigorously reacted. They hired a New York public-relations firm that specializes in legal cases, and then engaged a defense attorney who is a former Marine general and was once one of the top lawyers in the Corps. The implicit warning may have had some effect. While McConnell and Chessani were humiliated and relieved of their commands, and Wuterich was fingered in public, Kallop was left untouched, though technically upon his arrival at Route Chestnut on November 19 he had become the commander on the scene.

Apparently his command didn't amount to much. For the most part he remained on the street by the Humvees with the rest of his squad and allowed Wuterich and his men to work their way through the four houses where, to repeat the number, they killed the additional 19 Iraqis—

children, women, and men. It is virtually certain that none of the dead were combatants, but little else about the case is so straightforward. Strange though it seems at first glance, the military courts will probably have a very difficult time deciding if war crimes were committed inside the houses. The difficulty will not be due to a Marine Corps agenda. Indeed, the expedient solution for the entire U.S. military would be to treat Wuterich and his men as criminals, and to destroy McConnell and Chessani as well, thereby avoiding the alternative conclusion, that the debacle in Haditha is related to normal operations in the war. But it just does not seem plausible, as John Murtha and others have claimed, that these particular Marines, who had enjoyed a relatively low-key tour, went so berserk after Terrazas's death that, having already slaughtered the five Iraqis by the car, they proceeded without specific reason or provocation to enter people's houses and execute even the children at point-blank range in a feverish rampage sustained for several hours, even while Lieutenant Kallop and the other recent arrivals listened to the rippling of gunfire and the screams of the soon dead. The killings in the houses on November 19 were probably nothing so simple as that.

Wuterich may have explained it best, because he has insisted that his Marines came under AK-47 attack, and defended themselves as they had been trained to do, by returning fire and surging forward to suppress the aggressors. Critics have expressed skepticism, pointing out that there was little evidence of exterior damage to the houses, and that certain neighborhood witnesses heard no firefight before the first house was stormed. Other witnesses, however, did hear firing, and the same Iraqi soldier who gave the damning description of executions by the car, and who was certainly no friend of the Marines, repeatedly described coming under attack from the south side of the street.

When the naval investigator asked for details, the interpreter summarized the soldier's answers. He said, "Fire open at them. Shots were shooting at them. Fighting between them and forces are fighting at us, shooting at us. The Americans spread through the houses, and they stayed.

They were going to take care of this. So they went where the fire was coming, receiving fire, in that direction.... Somebody's shooting at us, we're shooting at them, but they are just shooting at us and we're shooting back."

The investigator said, "Okay. And how many Marines did that?"

Translating directly now, the interpreter said, "It was all mixed up. Even I was a little shaken. . . . I didn't see who's shooting at us."

"Did you shoot your weapon at all?"

"I shot in the air. Yeah, we shot, but we shot in the air."

"Why did you shoot in the air?"

"He says, Who am I going to shoot? I got to see somebody I'm shooting."

"Okay. So why shoot at all?"

"When they start firing, the Marines were like, 'Oh come on, you shoot too.' Everybody shot five, six rounds."

Maybe this investigator had not been around the Iraqi Army before. He said, "In the air?"

"In the air, yes, sir. . . . I mean, we have no effect when we go out there. We have no effect on anything because they take orders from whatever they tell us." The Iraqi soldier obviously wanted to make it clear that he had not killed any of the dead.

"So you shot in the air?"

"Yes, I did."

"Who told you to shoot in the air?"

"They told."

"But who told you?"

"Not all, not everybody, sir."

Evidently, the investigator tried to recover his balance. He said, "Did you ever see anybody—you said that you were taking shots from the neighborhood. Did you ever see anybody shooting at you or the Marines?"

"No, I haven't seen. I know the fires were coming at us, but from where, I don't know."

"But you're sure that you were being shot at?"

"Yes, yes. They want to kill us."

"Was it a lot of shots or just here and there?"

"Spray. It was spray continuous."

"Spray continuous. For about how long?"

"When we first received spray, and then after that, hell break loose. All Americans were firing

and everything. I couldn't tell which one's which."

"Okay. And you shot in the air?"

"Yes sir."

The testimony rings all too true, with compensation for some light twisting of facts. It is very likely that the Marines did indeed begin taking fire on Route Chestnut, a short while after the occupants of the car were killed, and possibly in angry response. Someone is bomb me, I am shoot him, but he is just shoot at me, and I am just shoot him back. This is the kind of fight that Donald Rumsfeld could not imagine.

It was now perhaps 7:30 in the morning. Kallop had arrived with his reinforcements. The fire seemed to come from a house on the south side of the street. In hindsight we know that no insurgents were discovered there, but chances are they were present nonetheless, if not in that house, then in others nearby. The evidence remains uncertain, but Wuterich, for one, insists that his men believed the house contained aggressors, and that they proceeded with a by-the-book operation to clear them out, exactly as the rules of engagement allowed. This may very well be. If you assume it is true, you can watch Haditha play out from there, largely within the legal definition of justified killing—a baseline narrative that becomes the happiest possible version of the morning's events.

With Kallop in place among the Humvees, Wuterich led his men from the front. They got to the house, kicked through the door, and in the entranceway came upon the owner, a middle-aged man, whom one of them shot at close range, probably with a three-round burst to the chest. The Marine's M16 would barely have kicked in his hands. Beyond the sound of the shots, he might have heard the double pops of the rounds entering and exiting the man, the heavier snap of bullets against bone, perhaps the metallic clatter of spent cartridges hitting the ground. The Iraqi was not thrown by the rounds as people are thrown in the movies. If no bones were broken, he may not have felt much pain, except for some stinging where his skin was torn. Unless he was struck in the heart, he did not die immediately, but soon succumbed to

massive hemorrhaging. Chances are his blood first splattered against the wall, then flowed into a dark-scarlet puddle beneath him until his heart stopped pumping.

The power was out in the house, and the light inside was dim, all the more so for the Marines, who were piling in from the sunshine of the street. Inside a hostile house, survival requires fast reactions. The Marines fired on a figure down the hall, who turned out too late to be an old woman. There could have been a message there, but guerrilla wars are tricky, and the Marines were not about to slow down. She screamed when she was hit, apparently in the back, and then she died. The Marines were shouting excitedly to one another. They worked down the hallway until, busting open a door, they came upon a room full of people. Later some of the squad said they had heard AK-47s being racked, though whatever they heard turned out not to be that. The room was dim, and the people were glimpsed rather than clearly seen. The Marines rolled in a grenade, hugged the hallway for the blast, and then charged into the dust and smoke to mop up with their rifles as they had been trained to do. This is my weapon, this is my gun. It was the Hell House fight all over again, though, as it happened, without the opposition. Nine people had sheltered in that room, three generations of the same family, from an ancient man paralyzed by a stroke to an infant girl just three months old. When the grenade exploded, it blew some of them apart, wounded others with penetrating shrapnel, and littered the room with evil-smelling body parts. In the urgency of the moment the old man forgot that he was paralyzed and tried to stand up. He took rounds to the chest, vomited blood as he fell, and then lay on the floor twitching as he died. In that room four residents survived. A young woman left her husband behind, grabbed the infant girl, and managed to run away; a 10-year-old girl and her younger brother lay wounded beside their dead mother and remained conscious enough to be terrified.

The Marines went on to the neighboring house, still seeking insurgents, as they believed. What happened there was a repeat of what had

just happened next door, only this time the Americans knocked before they shot the man at the gate, and a grenade tossed into an empty bathroom ignited a washing machine, and a grenade tossed into the room where the family was sheltering failed to go off, and perhaps only one American came in and sprayed the room with automatic fire. This time there was just a single survivor, a girl of about 13, who later was able to provide some details of her family's death. There was a lot of smoke, but:

Daddy was shot through the heart. He was 43.

Mommy was shot in the head and chest. She was 41.

Aunt Huda was shot in the chest. She was 27.

My sister Nour was shot in the right side of her head. She was 15.

My sister Saba was shot through the ear. She was 11.

My brother Muhammad was shot in the hand and I don't know where else. He was 10.

My sister Zainab was shot in the hand and the head. She was five.

My sister Aysha was shot in the leg and I don't know where else. She was three.

The brains of at least one of the little girls were shoved through fractures in her skull by the impact of a bullet. This is a standard effect of high-velocity rounds fired into the closed cavity of a head. Later that day, when a replacement Marine came in to carry out the bodies, the girl's brains would fall onto his boot.

Wuterich's men pursued the search to the north side of Route Chestnut, where they put the women and children under guard and killed four men of another family. There on the north side they found the only AK-47 that was discovered that day—apparently a household defensive weapon, of the type that is legal and common in Iraq. No one has claimed that the rifle had been fired.

On Route Chestnut the killing was over, and the cleanup began. Nearly a year later, the Marines who were involved unanimously insist that it was just another s**ty Anbar morning. By narrow application of military law, the upcoming trials may indeed leave it as such. If so, however, those trials will have to justify the shootings

around the car and, furthermore, will have to account for certain statements by witnesses that call into question the scenes inside houses as I have described them in the happiest possible version of the events. Those statements, which again are full of contradictions and uncertainties, raise the possibility that, behind the privacy of the walls, Wuterich's men were carrying out deliberate executions and laughing about it, that one aimed and said "You! You!" before he shot the old man down, that they made return trips to the killing rooms to finish people off, and that on the north side of the road they herded their victims into a wardrobe before shooting them through the door. Unless the Marines of Wuterich's squad suddenly start confessing to war crimes, these are questions only the courts will be able to decide.

V: A Thanksgiving Prayer

On the afternoon of November 19, when the reports of civilian casualties reached Captain Lucas McConnell, it did not cross his mind that anything unusual had occurred: the killing by American forces of noncombatants in Iraq is simply so commonplace. Sergeant Wuterich reported on the fight as he defined it. Lieutenant Kallop acquiesced. An intelligence sergeant who surveyed the carnage said much the same thing. Captain McConnell scarcely reacted, because this slaughter seemed to lie within the rules of engagement, and in that sense was little different from any other. McConnell inhabited a military world, full of acronyms and equipment, and peopled by identifiable combatants—a place where spears clashed and civilians unfortunately sometimes came to harm. For him it had been a very active day. Soon after the land-mine explosion that had killed Terrazas, ambushes and firefights erupted elsewhere in Haditha, and all four of his platoons were engaged.

The main thread started at 8:35 in the morning, when an explosives-and-ordnance squad heading to Route Chestnut for a post-blast analysis came under fire from a palm grove. The squad returned fire and drove on. Twenty-five minutes later, and slightly to the south, an aerial drone observed 10

men meeting on a palm-grove trail between River Road and the Euphrates. The men appeared to be MAMs, or military-age males, and clearly were not just farmers. Two came on foot, one by motorcycle, and seven by car. They loaded gear into the car and, leaving three men behind, drove slowly south along the trail. McConnell called this “egressing.” The drone circled lazily overhead, performing well in the global war on terror. The time was approximately 9:12. At 9:48, about a kilometer away, a Kilo Company patrol was attacked by small-arms fire, and the Marines shot back, resulting, they believed, in three enemy wounded in action, or EWIA, though all of them got away.

The men in the car on the palm-grove trail were in no particular hurry. They stopped beside other cars on the trail, presumably to coordinate future attacks. Eventually they came to River Road, not far south of Route Chestnut, where they parked the car and entered two houses. McConnell called the houses “safe houses,” perhaps because the men calmly entered them. There was little doubt that all seven men were insurgents, but it was impossible to tell who else was in the houses, and specifically whether families were sheltering inside. Force-protection standards precluded the possibility of checking, and since the rules of engagement sanctioned collateral casualties with the enemy so near, a flight of Cobra helicopters arrived and fired two AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, one into each house, to soften things up. Kilo Company Marines then rushed forward to clear the rooms as required. The first house was empty, but as they approached the second one they were greeted by small-arms fire and grenades. The Marines pulled back—way back—and called in an AV-8B Harrier jet to drop a guided 500-pound GBU-12 Paveway bomb. The bomb crashed into the house with impressive precision, but did not explode.

At this point the drone saw two MAMs leave through the back door and run into a little palm-grove patch to hide. The Marines brought the Harrier around to pink-mist these guys with a second 500-pound bomb—this one guided into the patch—but it, too, turned out to be a dud. Undaunted, the troops switched weapons and hit the patch with a \$180,000 air-launched AGM-65

Maverick missile. The strike resulted in one EKIA. The surviving MAM egressed the patch and ingressed the house again. It was ridiculous. The Harrier came back around and dropped a third 500-pound bomb directly through the roof, blowing the whole house and everyone in it to bloody shreds.

This was McConnell’s reality as Haditha settled down for the night. He gave a talk at Sparta Base, in which for once he did not overstretch. He said: Men, we’ve had a tough day, it’s sad about Terrazas, but everyone functioned pretty well, so good job and keep at it. He did not mention—and apparently did not much think about—all the non-combatants who had died. Look, this was Iraq. The clearing operations on Route Chestnut did not stand out as being significantly different from the other main act of the day, the use of missiles and bombs against a house that may well have contained a family. God knows there were enough body parts now scattered through the ruins. Killing face-to-face with an M16 allows you at least some chance to desist from slaughtering women and children, which is not true once a bomb is called down on a house. But there is no evidence that McConnell was even thinking about these matters. The photographer Lucian Read, who had been traveling elsewhere in Anbar, returned the day after the killings and later snapped digital pictures of shrouded corpses in the houses by Route Chestnut. Read believes McConnell was aware of the pictures; if so, he did not try to suppress them or to limit their distribution. McConnell was such a company man, such a by-the-book Marine, that, like the entire chain of command above him, he was numb to the killings of noncombatants so long as the rules of engagement made the killings legal. If there was a failure here, it was not that of McConnell but of the most basic conduct of this war.

Five days after the killings, Kilo Company celebrated Thanksgiving with a turkey dinner, including stuffing and potatoes. The occasion was recorded on video. Before the meal McConnell led the men in prayer. He said,

Father, we thank you for this food which you have prepared for us. Please bless this

food with your great grace, and please let us take the sustenance that you provide for us, and go forth and do great things in your name. We are very grateful here in Kilo Company for many things. We thank you for the mission that you have provided for us, to leave America and go into foreign lands and try to do good things for the world and for our country. It's our greatest honor, and we thank you for that. We thank you for our families, who support us back in the States, and the brotherhood that we have here. It is our greatest strength, and we thank you for that as well. We also want to thank you for the veterans and those who have gone before us, because without them there would be no Marine Corps legacy, and there wouldn't be that great standard to uphold. So we thank you for that because it guides us, it keeps us on the right track, and it's that steering factor that helps us go forth and do great things. We thank you for the memory and the life of Lance Corporal Miguel Terrazas, who did great things in his life, did great things for all of us, was a great friend and a great Marine. We just ask that you help us take this food that you've provided us here today, help it maintain, sustain our bodies so we can uphold that legacy that our fallen comrades have provided for us. We say all these things in your great name. Amen.

The men answered with Marine Corps *Hoo-rah*s and Amens.

McConnell said, "Hey, please enjoy the meal. Make sure you pat the cooks on the back. They work hard. And if you see someone from the Four shop here in the near future that you know, pat them on the back, because they get all that stuff out here, and it's not the most safest place to be pushing food around. But I appreciate you all being here, and first and foremost Happy Thanksgiving. Go forth and do great things. *Hoo-rah!*"

Hoo-rah. Iraqis live in an honor-bound society, built of tight family ties. When noncombatants are killed, it matters little to the survivors whether the American rules allowed it, or what the U.S. military

courts decide. The survivors go to war in return, which provokes more of the same in a circular dive that spirals beyond recovery. Haditha is just a small example. By now, nearly one year later, hatred of the American forces in the city has turned so fierce that military investigators for the trials at Pendleton have given up on going there. That hatred is blood hatred. It is the kind of hatred people are willing to die for, with no expectation but revenge. This was immediately apparent on a video that was taken the day after the killings by an Iraqi from the neighborhood—the same video that was later passed along to *Time*. The Marine Corps was wrong to dismiss the video as propaganda and fiction. It is an authentic Iraqi artifact. It should be shown to the grunts in training. It should be shown to the generals in command. The scenes it depicts are raw. People move among the hideous corpses, wailing their grief and vowing vengeance before God. "This is my brother! My brother! My brother!" In one of the killing rooms, a hard-looking boy insists that the camera show the body of his father. Sobbing angrily, he shouts, "I want to say this is my father! God will punish you Americans! Show me on the camera! This is my father! He just bought a car showroom! He did not pay all the money to the owner yet, and he got killed!"

A man cries, "This is an act denied by God. What did he do? To be executed in the closet? Those bastards! Even the Jews would not do such an act! Why? Why did they kill him this way? Look, this is his brain on the ground!"

The boy continues to sob over the corpse on the floor. He shouts, "Father! I want my father!"

Another man cries, "This is democracy?"

Well yeah, well no, well actually this is Haditha. For the United States, it is what defeat looks like in this war.

Notes

Vanity Fair, November 2006, 312-28, 350-55. Reprinted by permission from *Vanity Fair* and Darhansoff, Verrill, Feldman Literary Agents on behalf of the author.

1. Josh White and Sonya Geis, "4 Marines Charged in Haditha Killings: Deaths of Iraqi Civilians Also Lead to

Letter to the Editor, *Vanity Fair*

William Langewiesche's "Rules of Engagement" concerning allegations that Marines killed unarmed Iraqis in Haditha, Iraq, on 19 November 2005 is replete with inaccuracies and errors. The fact that the article effortlessly flows from facts to opinion to pure conjecture without any distinctions is equally disturbing. I'd like to address two of Langewiesche's most fundamental errors.

First, his declaration that the Marine Corps was forced to accept the findings of two independent investigations is simply false. There were actually four investigations initiated after the allegations were brought forward. Rather than being forced into action, as suggested in the article, the Marine commander acted quickly to initiate both a criminal and an administrative investigation once the matter was brought to his attention. Marine Corps leadership was

immediately informed of his decision.

Secondly, Langewiesche tries and convicts the Marines of Kilo Company without access to facts and evidence that are still being developed in the ongoing criminal investigation. His article does a great disservice not only to the military men and women serving with honor and courage throughout the world but also to the constitutional principles of due process and the presumption of innocence, which are guaranteed in the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

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[This is a copy of the letter as it was submitted by General Milstead. *Vanity Fair* edited it for publication in the January 2007 issue.]

Dereliction Counts Against 4 Officers," *Washington Post*, 22 December 2006 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/21/AR2006122100124.html>).

2. Mark Walker, "Haditha Case Continues to Unravel," *North County Times*, 28 June 2008 (<http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2008/06/28/military/zcaed43dd200c477388257472005a24b4.txt>).

About the Author

William Langewiesche is an international correspondent for *Vanity Fair*. He previously worked for *Atlantic Monthly*. He is the author of several books, including *Fly by Wire* (2009), *The Atomic Bazaar* (2007), *The Outlaw Sea* (2004), and *American Ground* (2002).

