The 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, was heavily engaged in An Nasiriyah and needed immediate reinforcement. With minimal delay, Team Tank, along with a platoon of infantry, crossed the southern bridge (RCT Objective 1 on Map of An Nasiriyah) over the Euphrates River into An Nasiriyah, where they came upon four tanks mired in mud and sewage. The tanks were receiving indirect fire and their platoon commander was concerned the attacking Iraqis might overwhelm their position. A forward air controller directed helicopter gunships to their location and assisted in fighting off the Iraqis. Team Tank encountered a reverse slope defense of Iraqi T-55 tanks that had attempted to cut off 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. Four enemy tanks were quickly destroyed, but Team Tank still was under heavy Iraqi fire coming from con-

Marine tank crews from Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, take a brief pause during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

A Marine maintenance crew does its part to keep their equipment combat ready.

While RCT-2 sailed to Kuwait, Marines trained in the well deck of the USS Gunston Hall *(LSD 44) focusing on tactics for urban warfare, February 2003.*

cealed positions, as well as from paramilitary forces in civilian clothing.

While Team Tank fought off numerous waves of Iraqi attack, it was ordered to assist Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, north of the Saddam Canal Bridge (RCT Objective 2 on Map of An Nasiriyah). Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, had moved through the gauntlet known as "Ambush Alley", but was blocked by enemy forces and pinned down under heavy fire. Team Tank split its force, leaving an element of firepower with Company A, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, at the southern bridge over the Euphrates River while the other element moved through "Ambush Alley" and drove three miles north to the northern bridge over the Saddam Canal. This element of Team Tank came upon a rifle squad near a destroyed amphibious assault vehicle and engaged many enemy targets with its main guns and machine guns while coordinating air and artillery fire support on Iraqi positions north of the Saddam Canal. Team Tank also assisted in the evacuation of wounded Marines and consolidated its forces into a blocking position north of the Saddam Canal along Highway 7 by the end of the day. Team Tank and Team Mechanized occu-

Captured Iraqis being escorted by Marines from Task Force Tarawa, March 2003.

Marines from 4th Force Reconnaissance Company and 4th Reconnaissance Battalion rapidly integrated into I MEF and served with the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, Task Force Tarawa, and Task Force Scorpion.

pied key tactical positions along Highway 7 around An Nasiriyah from 23 to 29 March, protecting and defending this route for the passage of follow-on forces. Subsequently, RCT-1 successfully conducted a forward passage of lines with RCT-2, advancing through the city and pushing north along Highway 7 toward Al Kut.

On 2 April, a section of tanks and Marines from Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, served as a security force in the rescue mission for Private First Class Lynch, who was being held prisoner in the Saddam Hospital on the east side of An Nasiriyah. Throughout the month of April, Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, continued to support the operations of RCT-2, assisting in the pacification and restoration missions along Highway 7.

In May 2003, Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, returned to Kuwait and completed back-loading on amphibious shipping by the middle of the month. The unit returned to Camp Lejeune in late June 2003 and moved back to its home training center in Fort Knox in July 2003.

Companies C and D, 4th Reconnaissance Battalion

In January 2003, the 4th Reconnaissance Battalion's Company C, from San Antonio, Texas, and Company D, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, were mobilized for active duty. Company C was assigned to the 2d Force Reconnaissance Company, which served with Task Force

Tarawa, while Company D was assigned to the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division. Company C conducted route reconnaissance missions for Task Force Tarawa in the movement toward the town of An Nasiriyah. Company C was involved in the heavy fighting around An Nasiriyah and served an integral role in the nighttime evacuation of wounded Marines in "Ambush Alley" and the subsequent mission that rescued Private First Class Lynch. Company C continued conducting route reconnaissance and raid missions for Task Force Tarawa and on 12 April 2003, Company C secured the Al Kut airfield. This enabled Task Force Tarawa to establish its combat operations center at the airfield, also known as Blair Field. Once at Al Kut, Company C continued providing security and reconnaissance patrols for Task Force Tarawa.

Company D deployed with 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, which supported the 1st Marine Division's route of maneuver. Company D conducted mobile reconnaissance missions, screening and blocking operations, and humanitarian operations. In the movement toward Baghdad, Company D encountered some fighting around the town of Baqubah and provided security for important energy facilities north of Baghdad.

Marine assault amphibian vehicles moving in convoy formation.

A Marine assault amphibian vehicle presses forward as the 1st Marine Division moves rapidly toward Baghdad.

4th Assault Amphibian Battalion

The 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion, from Tampa, Florida, was mobilized in January 2003 and provided personnel and equipment to the 2d and 3d Assault Amphibian Battalions in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The battalion staff from Headquarters and Service Company, 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion, integrated with the 2d and 3d Assault Amphibian Battalions, which supported the 1st Marine Division. Companies A, from Norfolk, Virginia, and B, from Jacksonville, Florida, provided vital

All Business. This Marine vehicle crewman is ready for the task at hand.

support to RCT-1. Company A provided mechanized support to 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, while Company B provided mechanized support for 1st Battalion, 4th Marines. Although amphibious assault vehicles are designed for ship-to-shore transit and limited inland travel, the efforts of the Marines and equipment of the assault amphibian battalions was truly remarkable as they covered the massive distance from the port facilities in Kuwait to Baghdad, which is well beyond the recommended traveling limit of these vehicles. It is important to note that equipment maintenance was paramount in keeping the Marines mechanized and mobile in the swift maneuver to Baghdad by the 1st Marine Division.

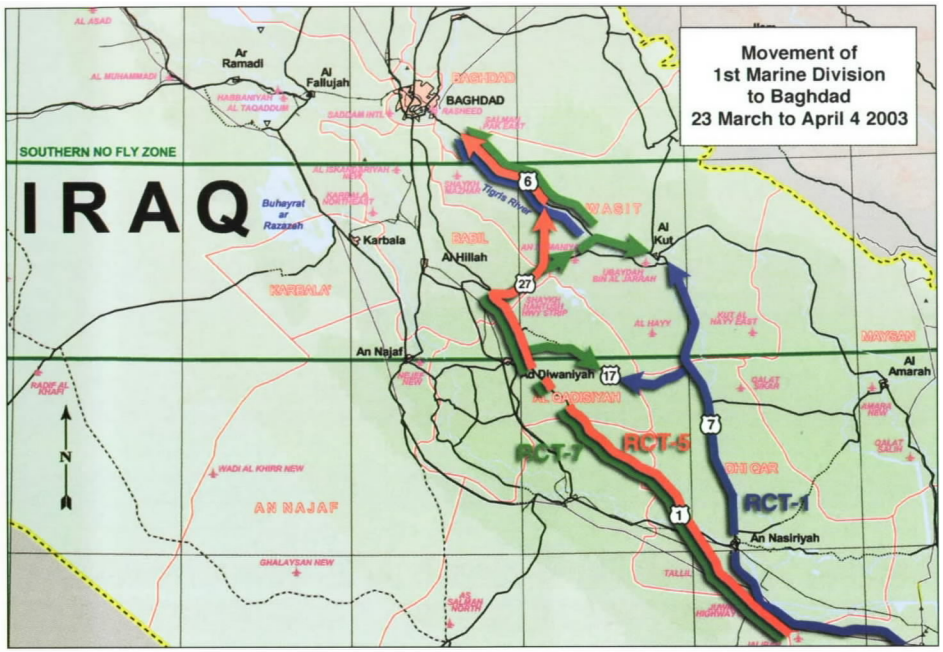
Detachment, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion

A detachment of Marines from the 4th Combat Engineer Battalion was mobilized for active service in January 2003 and deployed to Kuwait the following month. This detachment augmented the staff of the I Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group, which was under the direction of Rear Admiral Charles Kubic of the First Naval Construction Division. The Marines of the I Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group served as advisors to the Naval Construction Division on how I MEF and the Marine air-ground task force operates. The main focus for the I Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group was the mission of providing sustainment bridging for I MEF attack routes to Baghdad. The four key bridging obstacles identified by I MEF were the access across the Euphrates River, the Saddam Canal, the Tigris River, and the Diyala River. The Diyala River is located just outside of Baghdad. As I MEF moved rapidly toward Baghdad, the towns of An Nasiriyah, An Numaniyah, and Al Kut quickly fell to Marine forces and the key bridges remained intact. However, Iraqi demolitions caused some delay in crossing the Diyala River, but the engineers quickly overcame this so the 1st Marine Division could enter Baghdad.

As the emphasis shifted from combat operations to rebuilding missions, the Marines of the 4th Combat Engineer Battalion detachment focused on the construction and repair of bridges, hospitals, schools, water purification plants, and port facilities. In June 2003, the 4th Combat Engineer Battalion detachment returned to the United States.

2d Battalion, 23d Marines

The 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, was one of three infantry battalions that formed RCT-1. The other two bat-

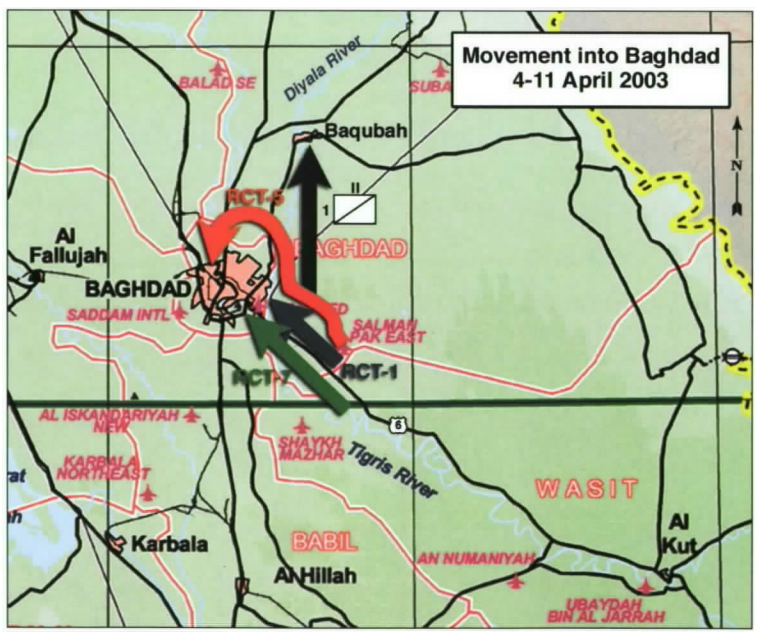


Movement of 1st Marine Division to Baghdad 23 March to 4 April 2003.
23-31 March: *RCT-1 attacks up Hwy 7 while RCTs 5 and 7 move along Hwy 1.*
1-3 April: *RCT-1 attacks and fixes the Iraq's Baghdad Republican Guard Division near Al Kut. RCT-5 attacks along Hwy 27 crossing the An Numiniyah Bridge, beginning the advance toward Baghdad. As RCT-5 isolates the Baghdad Republican Guard Division in Al Kut and engages Iraq's Al Nida Republican Guard Division, RCT-7 blocks Hwy 6 to the east and proceeds to neutralize the Baghdad Republican Guard Division.*
4 April: *RCT-1 backtracks south down Hwy 7 and moves east across Hwy 17 on a 200-kilometer night march to link up with the rest of the 1st Marine Division on Hwy 6.*

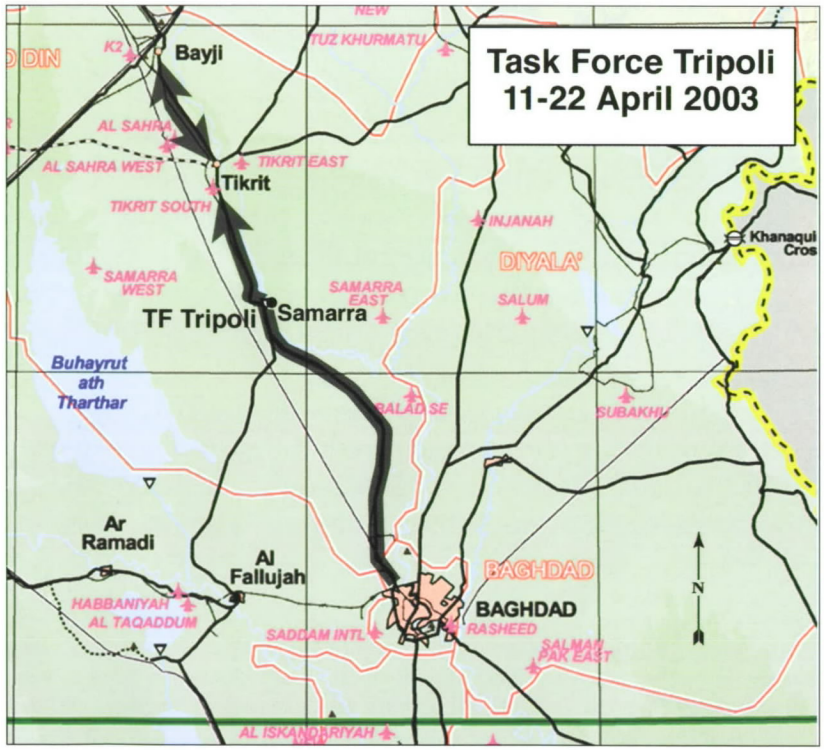
A Marine sniper team with 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, moves into position during a security halt along the route to Baghdad.

talions of RCT-1 were 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, and 1st Battalion, 4th Marines. During the fighting in Iraq, there were several days when 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, served as the lead element for RCT-1 and the 1st Marine Division. Upon entering Baghdad, the battalion was involved in operations that secured the United Nations compound.

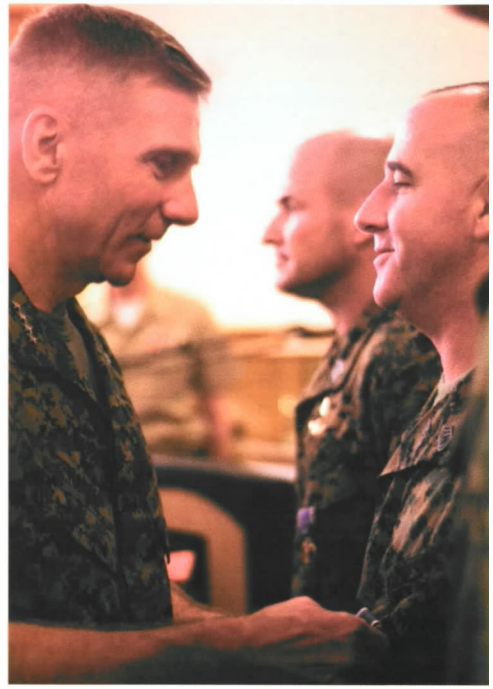
As the 1st Marine Division moved into Iraq, the regimental combat teams reached a fork along the main supply route west of Jalibah. At this location, RCT-1 took the northern route of the fork along Highway 7 while RCT-5, followed by RCT-7, took the northwestern route along Highway 1. After the ambush of the U.S. Army's 507th Maintenance Company, Task Force Tarawa was heavily engaged with Iraqi forces around An Nasiriyah. The



Movement into Baghdad 4-11 April 2003.
4-5 April: *RCTs 1, 5, and 7 assault toward Baghdad. RCT-5 seizes the Diyala crossroads and RCT-7 attacks terrorist training facilities in Salman Pak.*
6-11 April: *RCTs 1 and 7 attack across the Diyala River and seize objectives in Baghdad. RCT-5 moves north crossing the Diyala River and completing the outer cordon of Baghdad. This isolates the eastern half of Baghdad. 1st Reconnaissance Battalion moves toward Baqubah encountering resistance from Iraqi forces.*



fighting around An Nasiriyah delayed RCT-1's passage through this area and the 1st Marine Division's eastern prong attack along Highway 7. As these units moved through An Nasiriyah, Baath Party loyalists put up heavy resistance. After a weeklong battle that liberated the town, the Marines in Task Force Tarawa and RCT-1 moved along Highway 7 toward



Gen Michael W. Hagee, 33d Commandant of the Marine Corps, pins a Purple Heart on GySgt Michael E. Heath at Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton, 12 May 2003. GySgt Heath was wounded in Iraq while serving with 2d Battalion, 23d Marines.

Sgt Scott C. Montoya with 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, receives the Navy Cross for his actions in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is credited with braving enemy gunfire and rescuing five Marines and an Iraqi civilian caught in crossfire in Baghdad. The Navy Cross is the nation's second highest award for bravery and heroism in combat.

Capt Michael H. Mittelman, (second from right) Commanding Officer, U.S. Naval Hospital, Okinawa, receives a donation to the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society from Ryanosoke Megumi, (third from right) president of the Gloria Business School in Chatan, in honor of SSgt James W. Cawley and his wife, Miyuki Cawley (far right). SSgt Cawley died in Operation Iraqi Freedom while serving with 2d Battalion, 23d Marines.

Due to the threat of chemical and biological weapons, the Marines and Coalition Forces often wore protective equipment.

the intersection of Highways 7 and 17.

Great concern focused on the Baathist activities in Al Fajr, which is located at the eastern end of Highway 17. Highway 17 served as the main supply route that connected Highway 7 in the east to Highway 1 in the west. Securing Highway 17 was instrumental in the 1st Marine Division's sector because of the gap that existed between RCT-1 along Highway 7 and RCT's 5 and 7 along Highway 1. On 28 March, 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, led a raid on the town of Al Fajr, locating and clearing out Baath Party members operating in the city. In early stages of this mission, Marines met no resistance as Baath Party members kept a low profile. In gathering further information from the townspeople, the Marines learned that approximately 60 Baath Party members ruled the town, using local schools as their headquarters. Subsequently, the Marines inserted scout sniper teams observing enemy forces carrying weapons through crowds of people. One sniper team came in contact with armed Iraqis and immediately broke contact fighting their way to a link up location for an extraction team. During the extraction a HMMWV hit Staff Sergeant James W. Cawley and Captain Harry S. Porter of the response team, killing Cawley and injuring Porter. The actions of the sniper and response teams provided key information for the battalion raid launched on Baathist locations inside Al Fajr on 29 March.

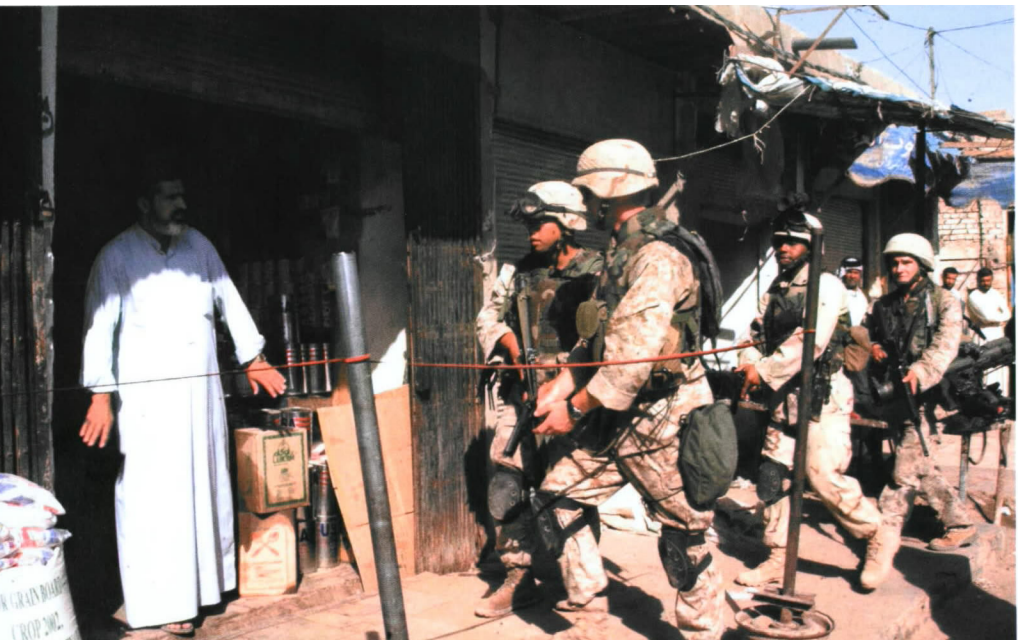
Companies E, F, and G, along with the battalion's combined anti-armor team, cleared and secured suspected Baath Party residences and headquarters, uncovering large caches of weapons and numerous documents confirming the extent of Baathist activities in the area.*

* In a Marine infantry battalion there is a Headquarters & Service Company, three rifle companies (identified by letters of the alphabet, e.g. Company A, Company B, Company C, etc.), and a Weapons Company. Antiarmor units are found in Weapons Company.

Baath members were even spotted and detained trying to disguise themselves in traditional Arab robes, underneath which they wore Iraqi military uniforms. The Marines of 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, successfully established good relations with the local inhabitants of Al Fajr, which helped in capturing Baath Party members and loyalists. Upon completion of their raid, the Marines conducted humanitarian operations providing medical supplies and assistance to the townspeople. On 30 March, 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, moved west along Highway 17 and successfully linked up with 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, of RCT-7, at a bridge over the Saddam Canal. This link-up allowed the division to move north without having to attack within isolated corridors.

As RCT-1 moved into Baghdad, 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, captured the United Nation's compound and secured the building and surrounding area from looters.

Marines from Company F, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, conduct a raid on a suspected illegal arms market in An Nasiriyah.



LCpl Jason Fogg, a rifleman from Company F, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, looks for unexploded ordnance and weapons caches near An Nasiriyah in April 2003.

Although the building had been damaged, 2d Battalion, 23d Marines, was able to get the electricity, telephone, and water systems working within five days.

2d Battalion, 25th Marines

After actively serving with the 2d Marine Division for a year, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, returned to Garden City, New York in December 2002. However, the battalion staff received notification in January 2003 that the unit would be participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom. This required a quick "turn around" mobilization plan for the entire battalion — a plan that was implemented on 8 March 2003. On 12 March, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, arrived at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for three weeks

Marines from Company E, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, prepare a meal in a makeshift kitchen at their unit headquarters in An Nasiriyah. Marines used metal bowls and steel rods to construct a grill. Simple cooking tools were fashioned from wire.

of pre-deployment training where the command conducted small unit exercises, nuclear-chemical-biological training, force protection training, small arms firing, culture briefs, rules of engagement briefs, and physical fitness training.

By 29 March, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, moved from Camp Lejeune to Camp Shoup, Kuwait, via commercial and military airlift. On 1 April, the battalion joined the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and received orders for combat operations in An Nasiriyah, Iraq. In the mid-morning hours of 3 April 2003, Company E, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, was inserted into a captured Iraqi Army base using Boeing CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters. The base, later dubbed Camp Whitehorse, was located approximately 6 miles south of An Nasiriyah. The remaining elements of 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, moved to the base over the next three days while Company E pushed north into An Nasiriyah and established a company command post at an abandoned building on the south side of the Euphrates River.

On 5 April, Company F provided security on a bridge approximately 15 miles west of An Nasiriyah along a critical supply route for the Marine forces fighting north of An Nasiriyah. Through an established checkpoint at the bridge, Company F apprehended and confiscated numerous former Iraqi Army personnel and weapons. The company held the bridge until relieved by follow-on forces 22 days later.

By 6 April, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, established a base of operations at Camp Whitehorse with its subordi-

A Marine from Company F, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, speaks with local villagers during a raid at a suspected arms market in An Nasiriyah, June 2003.

Sgt Joseph Martino from 3d Platoon, Company F, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, watches the perimeter where his unit searches for unexploded ordnance and weapons caches.

nate companies occupying positions inside An Nasiriyah and the surrounding areas. Eventually, the battalion became the sole military command in An Nasiriyah, making the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Murphy, the military governing authority of the city. To maintain security, Lieutenant Colonel Murphy divided An Nasiriyah into sectors. The eastern sector was assigned to Company E, the northern and western sectors were given to Company G, and the southern sector was assigned to Weapons Company. The companies conducted patrols, established checkpoints, and setup security posts on the bridges throughout the city. House searches for weapons and ammunition was given a high priority, resulting in the acquisition of large caches that were subsequently destroyed.

During this time, the battalion established an information-gathering network with local Iraqis that led to the identification and apprehension of numerous Baath Party officials, Fedayeen members, war criminals, rebel insurgents, weapons dealers, and other security threats. Company F apprehended Hussein Hamoud Hamid, who participated in the execution of American soldiers in the early stages of fighting in An Nasiriyah.

An Nasiriyah sustained significant infrastructure damage during combat operations. However, with the situation stabilizing, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, initiated an aggressive civil affairs and humanitarian aid program. In conjunction with the U.S. Navy Mobile Construction Battalion's (also called Seabees), the Marines repaired government buildings within the city, cleaned and painted schools, drained flooded areas, and distributed food and humanitarian aid. On 23 April, a significant change came to An Nasiriyah with the restoration of electrical power. Under Saddam Hussein's rule, An Nasiriyah had only a few hours of electrical power each day because the dictator sold the power to the Kingdom of Jordan. Once the Navy Seabees and 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, restored electrical power, An Nasiriyah received 23 hours of electricity each day. This had a monumental impact in not only maintaining security, but also in winning the hearts and minds of the local citizens.

1st Battalion, 24th Marines

The Marines from 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, extensively supported Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and training missions such as the Bilateral Exchange with the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps and the Ulchi Focus Lens Exercise in Korea. Companies A, B, and C incorporated Marines from

Cpl Brian Velliquette assists with humanitarian aid at a village outside of An Numaniyah.

Marines arrive in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

Headquarters and Service Company and Weapons Company in the deployment to the Horn of Africa and Southwest Asia. As previously mentioned, Company A, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, mobilized in January 2003 and deployed with the command logistics element serving in the Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa.

Companies B and C were mobilized simultaneously in February 2003. Company B deployed to Kuwait and attached to the 2d Military Police Battalion with the assignment of providing security for the Marine Logistics Command. Initial duties included static and mobile security and force protection for the perimeter of Camp Fox and its adjacent ammunition supply point. Additional missions included protecting the Kuwaiti public transportation center, which served as the staging area for all equipment that was shipped through the Kuwaiti naval base. Subsequently, Marines from Company B, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, provided convoy security from the Marine Logistics Command to Logistics Support Area Viper and Supporting Area Chesty near An Numaniyah, Iraq. During the company's nine-month deployment, it safeguarded Marines and coalition personnel and equipment that were necessary for the success of Operation Iraqi Freedom. After completing their mission, Company B returned to the United States in October 2003.

Company C deployed to Southwest Asia and

Navy Hospitalman 2d Class Lesten L. Hilkemeier (left) and Capt Thomas F. Kisch (right) with a local Iraqi outside of Al Kut. HM2 Hilkemeier provided medical assistance for this Iraqi's family.

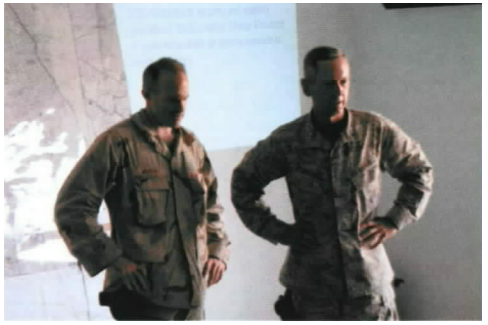
attached to Marine Wing Support Group 37, where it successfully executed security missions in the defense of forward arming and refueling points that supported the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing from March to May 2003. The Company executed combat operations for 60 days in Iraq, pressing as far north as Tikrit. At the conclusion of the war, the Company redeployed to Camp Commando, Kuwait, providing force protection for I MEF Headquarters. Like Company B, Company C returned to the United States in October 2003.

Security and Stability Operations

2d Battalion, 25th Marines

As the focus in Operation Iraqi Freedom transitioned into security and stability operations in May 2003, some units of the 1st Marine Division moved from Baghdad to Kuwait while other units stayed in Iraq. Reserve units such as the 4th Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion; 2d Battalion, 25th Marines; and 3d Battalion, 23d Marines, served during the security and stability operations phase.

MGen James N. Mattis (right), Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, and LtCol Robert C. Murphy, Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines, discuss security and stability operations during a battalion briefing.



After Companies A and B, 4th Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion served with RCT-5 and RCT-7 respectively from March to May 2003, both of these units returned to their traditional higher headquarters. At this time, 4th Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion served as the command element of Task Force Scorpion, which was under the control of the 1st Marine Division and conducted operations in the North Babil Province. Task Force Scorpion, consisting of Headquarters and Service

Iraqi weapons captured in a raid conducted by Task Force Scorpion, August 2003.

Iraq broken down by provinces. During security and stability operations, Marine and coalition units provided provincial leadership throughout most of the country.

Company and Companies A, B, and D, performed security operations and raid missions capturing Baath loyalists as well combating foreign fighters in Iraq from June to September 2003. By October 2003, with the exception of Company C, the 4th Light Armor Reconnaissance Battalion returned to the United States.

Task Force Scorpion established its combat operations center at Forward Logistics Base Dogwood in August 2003.

Task Force Scorpion staff.