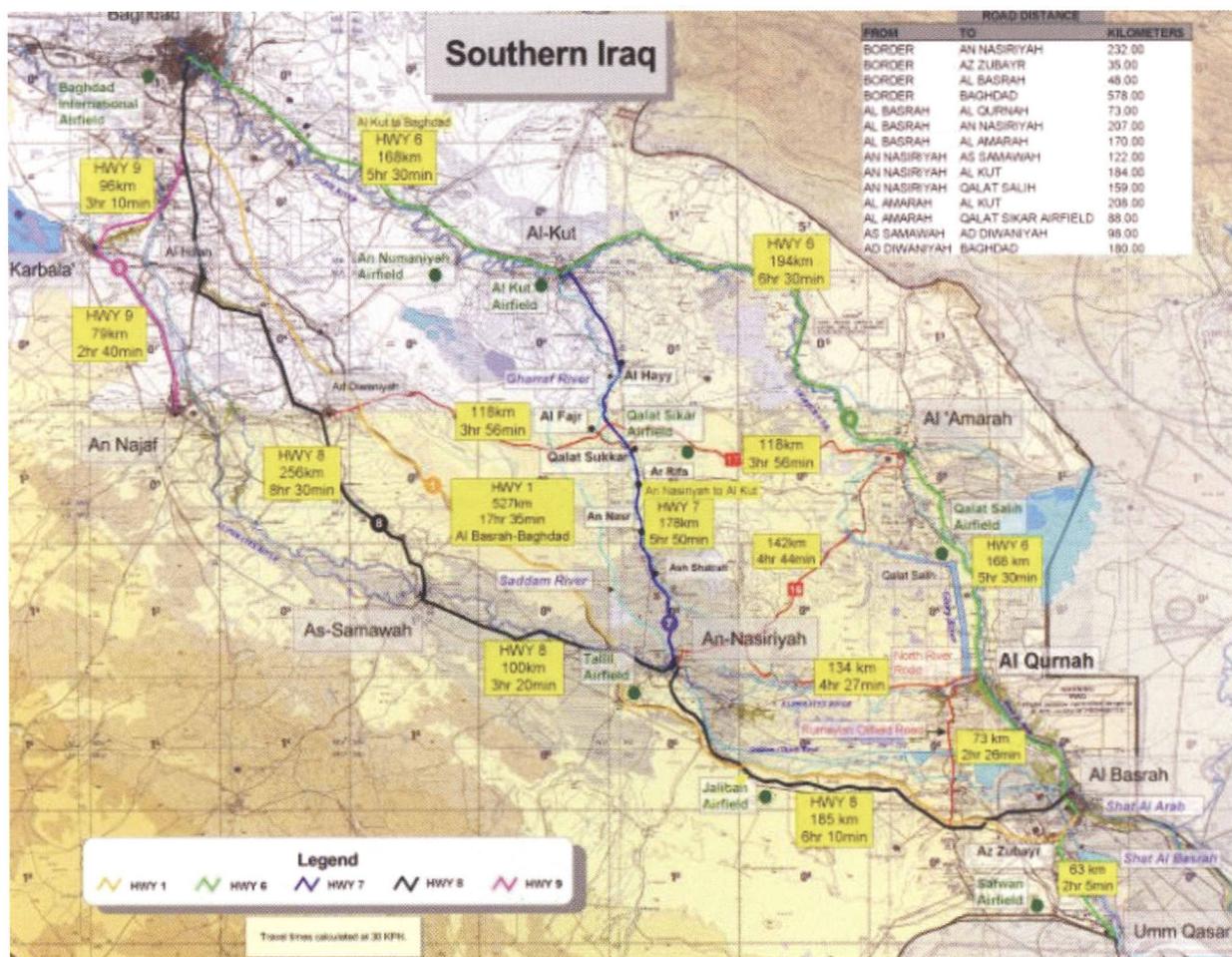


To orient the Division to this new topography, the CG directed the G-2 to prepare a southern Iraq orientation map. This map, created by three lance corporals (Robert Lupi, Aaron Lehn, and Andrew Sipe) gave a common baseline to every member of the Division, each of whom would memorize the route names, city names, maneuver corridors and water features of southern Iraq. The Division shared copies of this product out to supporting units, higher headquarters, and even the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The place names depicted on this product would soon have special meaning to the Division, as they would represent the battles fought and won by the blood and sweat of the Marines in combat, and would be the focus of the many efforts of thousands of individuals. The familiarity of the Division Marines with the places on this map would ensure these important places would have strong resonance during the execution of the battle plan.

The Division focused on the vulnerabilities of the large Iraqi force in order to ensure its rapid destruction. There were both physical and psychological weaknesses that could be



*The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division's Southern Iraq orientation map, the 'CG's Special', would prove to be a key familiarization tool for all the Division's Marines.*

exploited, and striking them became an important element of the Division plan. It was clear that although large in size, the Iraqi armed forces were poorly trained and equipped. Inadequate logistics and poor equipment readiness rates severely limited the offensive maneuver capability of even the best Iraqi units. The motivation and loyalty of the Regular Army (RA) units were reportedly poor, and their desertion rates high. The Iraqis' ability to command and control depended heavily on orders from a centralized higher headquarters, a system that would quickly break down during a fast-paced maneuver conflict. The Iraqi Regime had a reputation for punishing military commanders who took initiative without consultation. The Regime viewed effective commanders as a threat, and often transferred, punished, or even executed them. This heavy-handed treatment of commanders served to hamstring the maneuver capability of the Iraqi forces almost as much as physical equipment limitations.

Although limited in maneuver, the Iraqis had a robust indirect fires capability, which included a massive number of artillery systems and multiple rocket launchers. If forward deployed, many of these systems could range into northern Kuwait, including the assembly areas the Division would soon occupy. The fires capability of the enemy had its own weaknesses; however, including an inability to acquire targets, rapidly adjust fires, or logistically re-supply if deployed out of garrison. Even with these weaknesses, the Division was careful not to lose respect for the lethality of these Iraqi weapons systems. If the Iraqis used the terrain carefully, they could mount an effective positional defense and draw Division forces into preplanned firesacks and ambushes. The Iraqis could cause significant casualties and mount an effective operational delay by defending in a series of these well-planned tactical positions. Strategically, the Iraqis could then use this delay to continue efforts through diplomacy, employ WMD, or revert to a terrorist campaign. The combination of 'untrafficable' terrain and massed indirect fires might allow even a second-rate Iraqi army to have a strategic impact.

The I MEF Operational Planning Team (OPT), then under Lieutenant General Michael Hagee's guidance, opted to bypass the positional defenses of enemy units in the South (III and IV Corps) and avoid urban areas to the degree possible. The MEF would choose to fight terrain rather than play to the strengths of the Iraqis. The Division viewed this plan as on-target, and a shared appreciation developed among the MEF's major subordinate commands. With this appreciation, the Division concentrated on a scheme of maneuver that forced the enemy to reposition his artillery, and did not allow him adequate time to prepare artillery ambushes and fire sacks.

The Division G-2's well-presented, factual display of the enemy situation revealed the enemy vulnerabilities the Division would exploit, and the enemy strengths the Division would avoid. At the 2002 Division Officer's Ball (held annually to celebrate the Corp's birthday, that year in Primm, Nevada) General Anthony Zinni was the guest of honor. In a discussion of the Iraq situation, he jokingly told the assembled commanders that he would 'disown them' if they didn't handily destroy the enemy's army. These officers understood the Iraqi adversary so well that they only smiled grimly back at the beloved leader. Victory was never in doubt should the President call for the 1st Marine Division. Only the challenge of minimizing Marine casualties and the death of innocent Iraqi citizens gnawed at these men.

## Providing Focus

*“Everything we do is to be focused on the destruction of the Iraqi Army. Everything. Anything that does not point us to that objective needs to be eliminated.”*

The CG’s guidance laid the groundwork for the preparations of the Division, “Everything we do is to be focused on the destruction of the Iraqi Army. Everything. Anything that does not point us to that objective needs to be eliminated.” This focus meant some immediate changes in the Division’s peacetime posture. The Division recognized that a focus on fighting the Iraqis would leave some peacetime administria by the wayside. Like a turning ship, the Division’s momentum shifted from its peacetime direction to a war footing. One of the first (and most applauded) actions was the suspension of extraneous inspections, routine reports, and conferences. Focus meant a renewed emphasis on physical training as well. Every Marine and Sailor attached to the Division was ordered to conduct a minimum of 12 miles of personal physical training weekly, and also to participate in weekly NBC training. The main effort, however, was directed at the minds and spirits of the Marines. The CG’s intent was to ‘image’ the Marines of the Division through every step of the process. The embarkation, planning, deployment, and first five days of combat would all be second nature to the members of the Division, because they would have already ‘walked the ground’ in their minds. For many of the Marines this would be their first combat experience. The CG wanted these Marines confident, comfortable, and aggressive in the face of the enemy. Destruction of the Iraqi Army began with the construction of a fierce and confident band of warriors in the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. This construction was based on a strong foundation of three factors, the innate strength of the individuals drawn to serve in the Marine Corps, the Corps’ strong traditional and advanced training methods, and the practiced team the previous Division Commander (Major General James Conway) had turned over to the new CG.

Building teams out of these hardened individual warriors was the next order of business. The CG advised his commanders, “Look around you. These are the men you will take to war.” He cautioned them to look carefully at their staffs and ensure the team they had assembled was the team they wanted to take to the fight. The CG’s intent was to build a fraternity of warriors that would break down any unnecessary formality between commanders and staffs, and between officers and enlisted men of the Division. Rank was respected, but all Marines were accorded the mutual respect due a professional of arms about to enter harm’s way. A warrior code took hold, with each member of the Division valued for the contribution of his talents rather than the rank on his collar.

The CG had already inherited and assembled a strong team of officers in the Blue Diamond Staff. Brigadier General (Select) John Kelly, the Assistant Division Commander, was no stranger to division-level operations, coming from his latest assignment as the G-3 of 2<sup>d</sup> Marine Division. The Division Sergeant Major, Juan Duff, was a rock of stability and a key enlisted advisor. The Staff principals were also all high-caliber individuals in their respective fields, but many of them were newly joined to the Staff. The no-nonsense Chief of Staff, Colonel Ben Saylor, until recently the Commander of 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, went to work breaking down staff

fiefdoms, and developed the fraternity that would lead to success on the battlefield. The G-3, Colonel John Toolan, had been the S-3 of 7<sup>th</sup> Marines when the CG had been its commander, and had also been a Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Battalion Commander. Colonel Jim Howcroft, the G-2, had years of experience as a military attaché, and little patience for intelligence bureaucracies. His experience in the last Gulf War left him with a passionately held objective of focusing intelligence down to the lowest tactical level. Lieutenant Colonel John Broadmeadow gave the team a strong G-4, with broad-based expertise in logistics as practiced in the type of deep-striking operations the Division planned to execute. His recent Task Force 58 experience in Afghanistan would serve the Division well. Colonel Nick Petronzio, one of the scions of the communications community, and recently the commander of the Division's Headquarters Battalion, led the G-6. Lieutenant Colonel Cathy Powalski arrived fresh from her previous assignment as the 3<sup>d</sup> Marine Division G-1 and picked up 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division operations without missing a beat. The dashing Colonel Jim Lukeman, the G-7 and Division Inspector (and until recently the commander of 2<sup>d</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines) provided an experienced hand and a trusted agent for the CG for a host of special missions including the rapid fielding of new equipment and a streamlined inspection process focused on embarkation and NBC readiness. Colonel Robert Knapp was the Division's Headquarters Battalion commander, entrusted with the deployment readiness of the Division headquarters and the smooth operation of the Division Command Posts (CPs). He headed a strong team of Military Police (MPs), communicators, truck drivers, logisticians, and even musicians that would be the backbone of successful Division operations.

Not satisfied with a cumbersome field headquarters, the Division Staff immediately set to work on downsizing the Division's CPs. The staff would be small, with no stove-piped experts in any one field. Aggressive 'Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) officers' manned every post. "Everyone fills sandbags in this outfit," was the expression most heard around the new CP. Speed in decision-making and command and control were to be enabled by release from cumbersome bureaucracies. The intent was to command and control the Division's swift movement with closely integrated air and logistics support as if it were a much smaller unit. The members of the Staff were to think more like a brigade than a Division Staff.

Strong individuals and strong staff teams were critical enablers, and now the Division's organization for combat underwent some changes as well. The CG saw habitual relationships as a conduit for speed on the battlefield, and reorganized the Division into the Regimental Combat Teams (RCTs) with which it would fight. In combat, several 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division units would join the Blue Diamond team, and were planned into the RCT organization. RCT-1 ('Inchon') was commanded by Colonel Joe Dowdy, who had recently served as the MEF Future Plans Officer. In addition to 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, RCT-1 included 2<sup>d</sup> LAR Battalion, major elements of 4<sup>th</sup> AA Battalion, and 2<sup>d</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>d</sup> Marines, a superb 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division battalion. Colonel Joe Dunford commanded RCT-5 ('Grizzly') consisting of 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, 1<sup>st</sup> LAR Battalion, and 2<sup>d</sup> Tank Battalion. RCT-7 ('Ripper') was commanded by Colonel Steve Hummer, and included 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion and 3<sup>d</sup> LAR Battalion. The 'Cannon Cockers' of 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, commanded by Colonel Mike Marletto, were integrated into the RCT's in habitual direct and general support relationships, as were elements of the Division's 3<sup>d</sup> AA Battalion (reinforced by 2<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> AA Battalions), 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion, 2<sup>d</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion, and 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion. Thanks to the foresight and aggressive initiative of the 1<sup>st</sup> Force

Service Support Group (FSSG) commander, Brigadier General Edward Usher, the FSSG provided its own task-organized representation, with assigned logistics units providing direct support down to the regimental level.

Two weeks after the initial orientation, the CG gathered his four regimental commanders, principal staff, and separate battalion commanders. In a quiet setting at the recently built MEF Operations Center, the CG continued to build the command team for the Division. This ‘sweat lodge’ meeting had the same solemn contemplation, mutual respect, and shared commitment as a meeting of tribal chieftains joining their tribes for battle. There were clear lines of command, but the assembled chieftains were there to gain consensus on the Division’s vision, each committing himself to the fight ahead. The fraternity of shared risk and common vision grew. The CG provided his analysis of the upcoming fight, and imaged the commanders through the preparations he expected them to undertake. The assembled commanders were entrusted with the preparation of the Division for war with the final commission, “Gentlemen, we are now in the province of war. Consider every week your last week of peace, and apply your time accordingly.”

*“Gentlemen, we are now in the province of war. Consider every week your last week of peace, and apply your time accordingly.”*

### Operational Planning

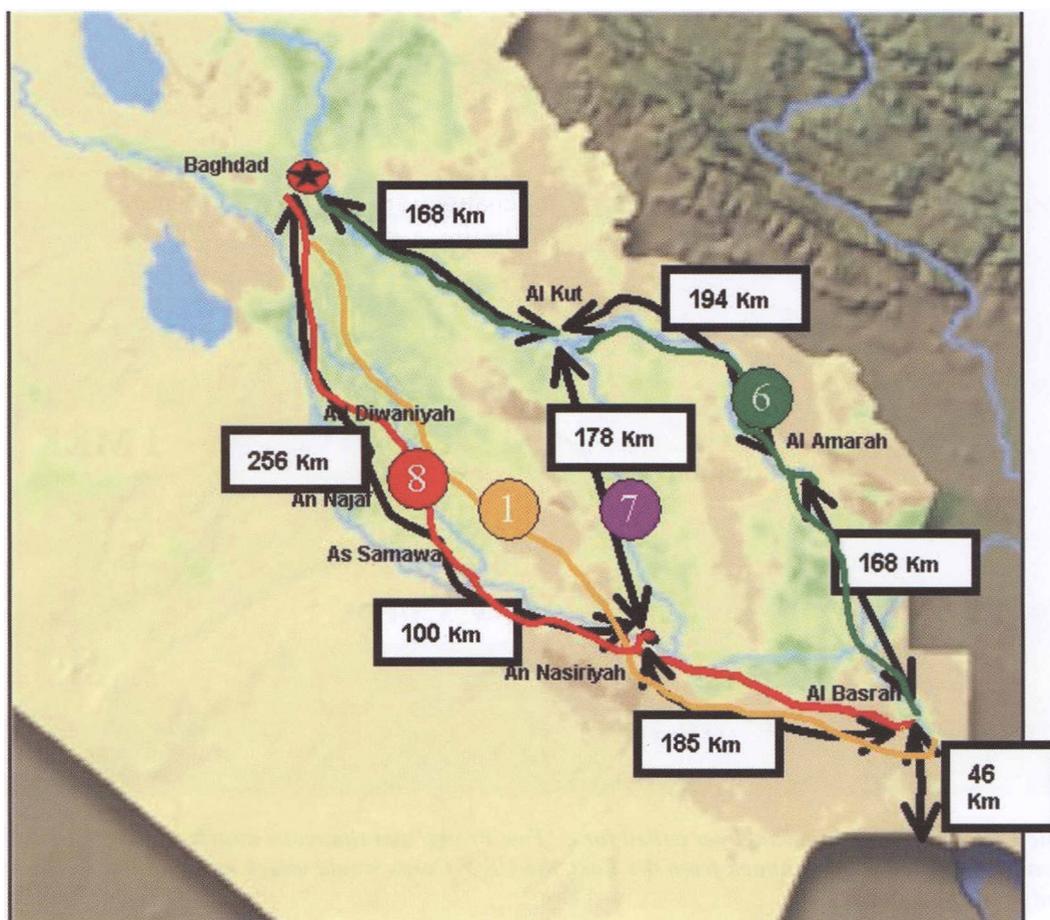
First Marine Division had always played a key role in plans for the defense of the Arabian Peninsula. Now, however, the Division changed its focus from the defense of the Arabian Peninsula to the eradication of the Iraqi Regime. August marked the arrival of a new G-



*Some of the major Routes, Cities, and Waterways that marked the Division battlespace. These places would become household words by the time the Division was through with them.*

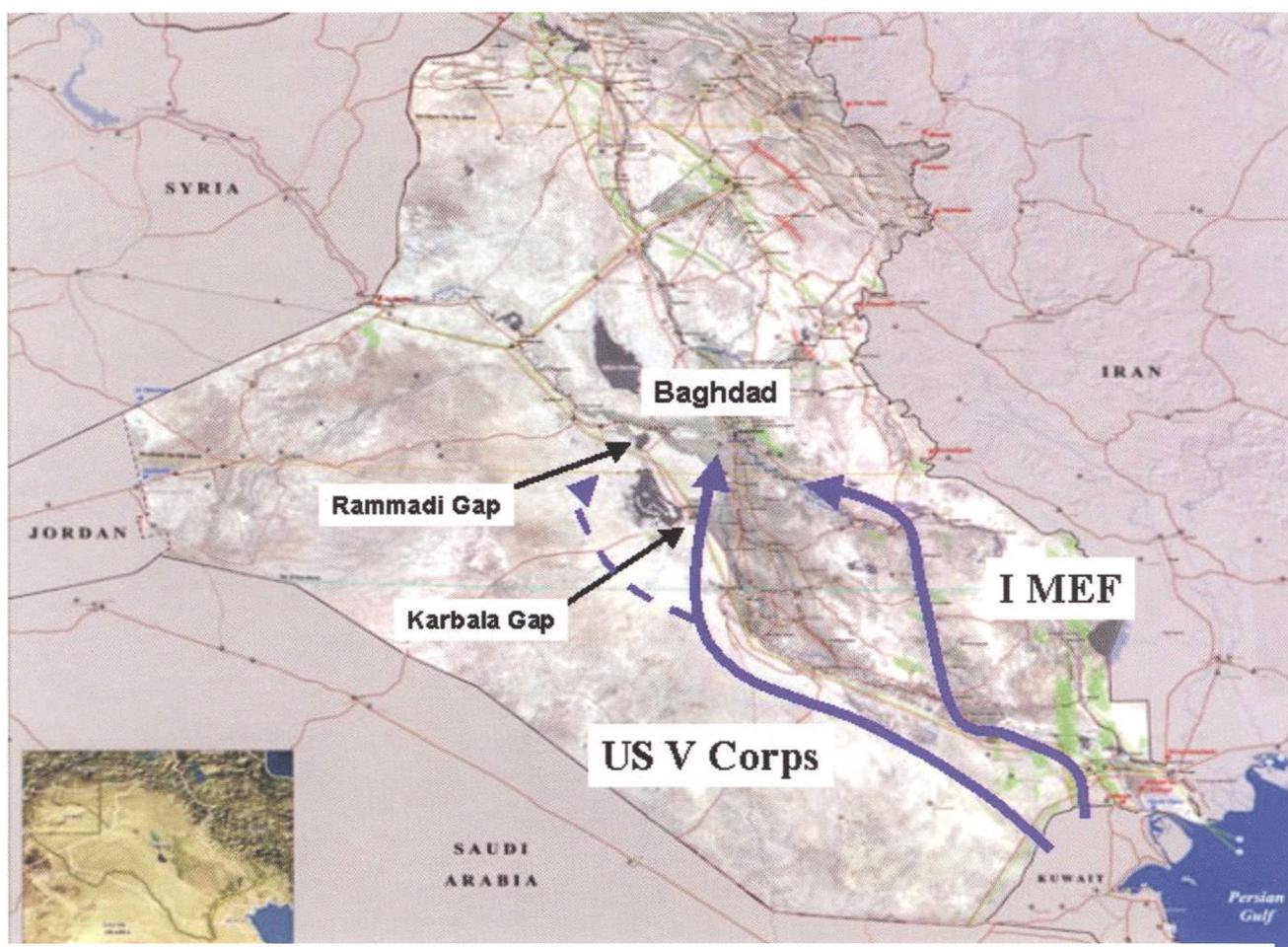
3 Plans Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Kennedy (replacing Lieutenant Colonel John Mayer who assumed command of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines.) He joined an already experienced planning team including Lieutenant Colonel Mike Groen from intelligence, Lieutenant Colonel (USA) Gary Smythe from Division fires. Communications, engineer, air, and logistics planners rounded out the team. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, as the major Ground Combat Element (GCE) of I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), would fight as part of the ground scheme of maneuver developed by the CFLCC. The CFLCC was a high-level headquarters that coordinated the land actions of Marine, Coalition, and US Army ground forces in southern Iraq. The CFLCC commander was Lieutenant General David McKiernan, and the headquarters was primarily staffed with Army personnel, although there were a number of Marine representatives and liaison officers. As the CFLCC plan matured, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division underwent a number of mission changes, often with short notice. Before crossing the Line of Departure, the Division was to plan and re-plan for operations against An Nasiriyah, Al Basrah, the South Rumaylah oilfields, Highway 7 to Al Kut, the Tigris River, Highway 6, and along the unfinished Highway 1 corridor. Planning would continue with the Diyala River crossing, Baghdad, Baqubah, Tikrit, and Bayji added before combat operations ceased.

Seemingly every combination of unit and objective was explored, and each of these



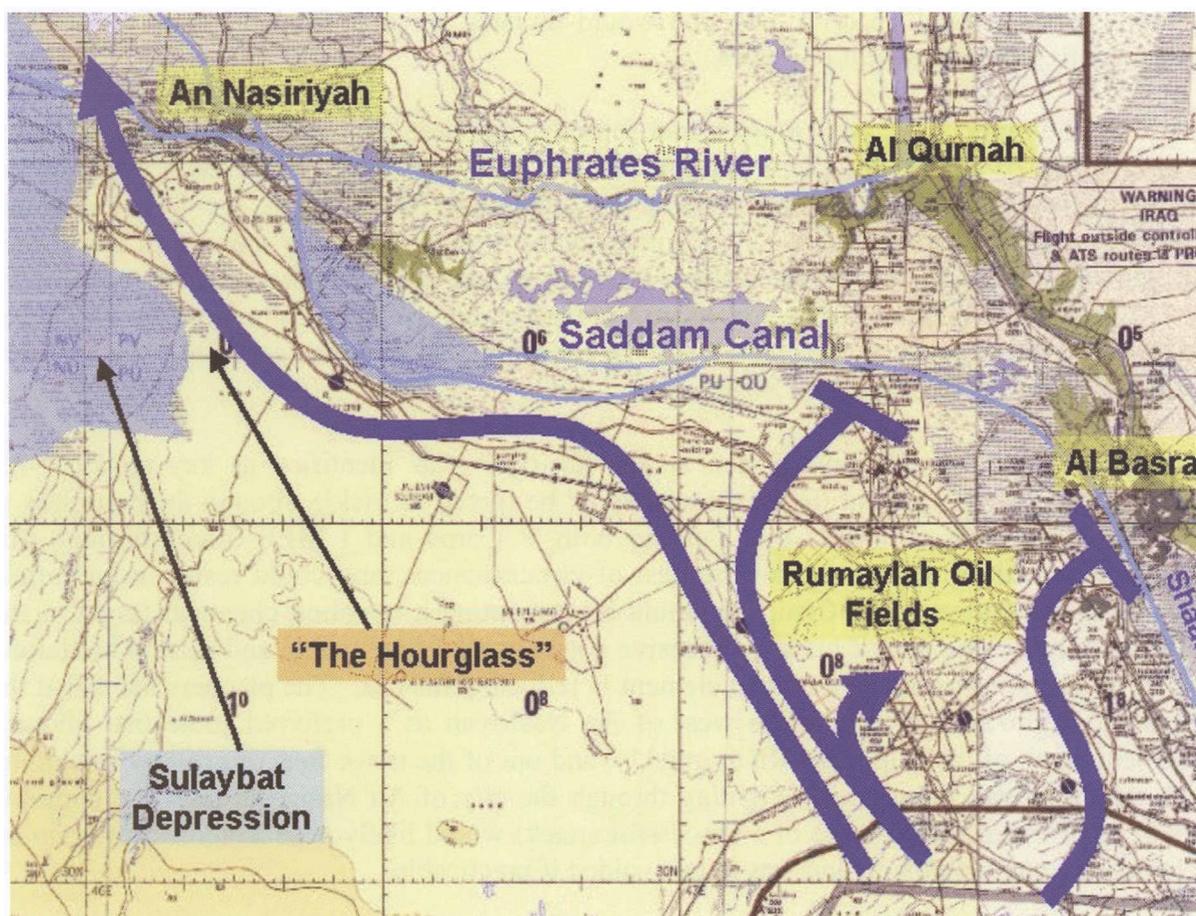
*Road distances between major cities in southern Iraq generally split the battlespace into three 100 mile segments between the Kuwaiti border and Baghdad. Movement was restricted to major highways due to canals and irrigation ditches.*

sequentially proposed scenarios required detailed planning. The staff paid special attention to the possibility of operations in the former marsh areas between Al Basrah and Al Kut, and noted the significance of rivers and bridges to every proposed course of action. Although none of the plans developed during this cycle were executed as written, the staff gained an invaluable understanding of the factors that would determine success or failure in the Division's coming fight. Major General Conway, the new I MEF Commander (who relinquished command of the Division in early August) quoted General 'Ike' Eisenhower on several occasions when referring to this rapid-fire planning environment, "The plan was useless, but the planning was invaluable." These words would prove prophetic, as the Division's eventual scheme of maneuver bore only slight resemblance to any of the original plans. The Division was able to maintain tempo and flexibility solely by a high degree of situational awareness and a full understanding of the commander's intent.



*The basic CFLCC Scheme of Maneuver called for a 'Two Prong' simultaneous attack on the Regime. With I MEF conducting a supporting attack from the East, the US V Corps would attack straight into the heart of Baghdad from the South.*

Like many armies with rigid centralized control, the Iraqi Army would likely collapse if cut off from their source of strength, in this case, Baghdad. The limited mobility of the Iraqi forces made them extremely vulnerable to a campaign of rapid maneuver, and the preplanned Iraqi defensive positions would only be effective if attacked from the expected direction and with a slow tempo. The Division planners worked aggressively to identify potential actions, timings, and routes that would allow the Division to seize its initial objectives and sustain its momentum to Baghdad, without playing to the enemy's strength. The G-2 assessed that the Iraqi divisions from III and IV Corps arrayed along the Iran/Iraq border did not pose a significant maneuver threat and could be safely bypassed. Once cut off from Baghdad, these units would be marginalized, and would likely surrender. With I MEF as a planned supporting effort to a V Corps attack to the west, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division could be most effective by defeating the Baghdad Republican Guard Infantry Division in Al Kut, the enemy's operational Center of Gravity in southern Iraq. This was forecast to be a fight of some significance, as it would mark the first engagement between Coalition forces and the Republican Guard. 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division intended



*The basic premise of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division's planned maneuver included bypassing major urban centers, and rapidly gaining a bridgehead over the Euphrates River in order to speed the attack on Baghdad, not getting 'bogged down' in heavy urban fighting.*

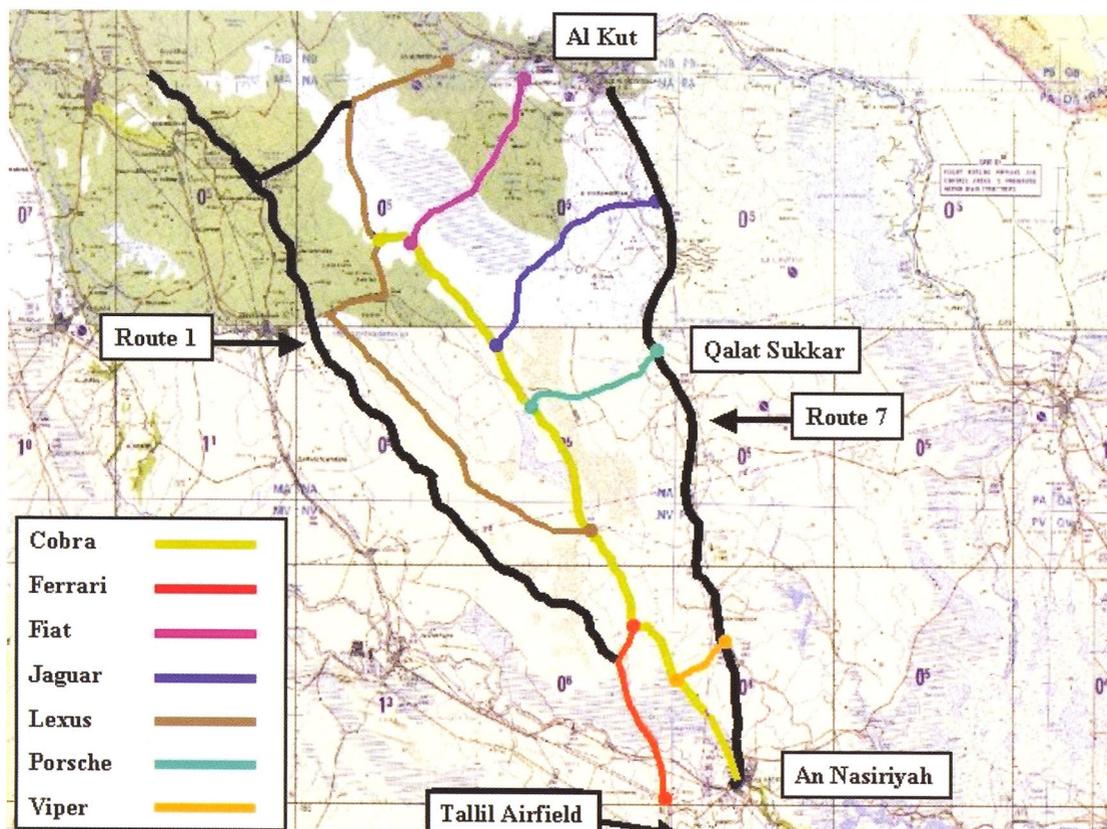
to destroy the Baghdad Division in detail, as an example to the rest of the Republican Guard, and those remaining loyal to the Iraqi Regime. The Division had met some of these units in combat during the first Gulf War, and the CG reminded the planners that those Iraqis who had faced 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division before "were not eager for a rematch."

Despite the sometimes-chaotic planning environment (due to uncertain deployment schedules and operational constructs that changed with the diplomatic situation) the seeds of the Division's basic operational concept were planted in this initial intelligence assessment. The Optional Planning Team refined the Division's concept of destroying Iraqi forces where necessary, but bypassing them where possible. In keeping with General Hagee's guidance, the Division would fight terrain rather than prepared defensive positions as long as it offered a faster route to Baghdad. The Division planned to bypass large elements of the Iraqi III and IV Corps, and quickly get to the north side of the Tigris River. Once the Division was across this strategic river, the Baghdad RG Infantry Division would be isolated, and ripe for destruction. Cut off from Baghdad, the remaining defenders in the south could be reduced piecemeal, with fewer casualties, and at the Division's chosen pace. In a coordinated action with the US Army's 3<sup>d</sup> Infantry Division, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division would threaten to enter Baghdad itself in order to destroy the Regime's true seat of power.

By late Summer 2002, the Division had formulated a base plan, with the bypass of major elements of the III and IV RA Corps as a fundamental premise. It was the Division's assessment that by succeeding in building and maintaining momentum to Baghdad, the Division would likely defeat large elements of the Iraqi armed forces without engaging them with direct fire. The plan was to destroy the 51<sup>st</sup> Mechanized Division in the Az Zubayr area, destroy elements of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in the An Nasiriyah chokepoint (formed by a number of canals, bridges, and untrafficable terrain) then block the remaining forces to the east while the Division continued the attack to Al Kut and Baghdad.

The 'hourglass' chokepoint formed at An Nasiriyah was identified as key terrain. All attacking forces from south of the Euphrates would be forced to trickle through the hourglass to get to the north side of the River. Passing both V Corps and I MEF forces through this chokepoint would be difficult under the best of circumstances, and could result in battlefield friction-induced delays. The Coalition would be presenting a tempting chemical target to the enemy after breaching one of his key defensive positions (the Euphrates), and careful battlefield circulation planning would be a critical element in reducing this risk. The planners identified the unfinished Highway 1 bridge to the west of An Nasiriyah as a preferred route that allowed movement north of the Euphrates River quickly, and out of the range fans of artillery remaining in the An Nasiriyah urban area. Fighting through the city of An Nasiriyah (and the enduring tasks of pacification in the wake of a successful attack) would likely pose a significant drain on the Division's combat power, and was to be avoided if practicable.

In anticipation of the second stage of the Division attack, the planning team refined their assessment of the attack routes from An Nasiriyah to Al Kut. The intelligence assessments of trafficability off the major highways in southern Iraq were quite bleak, presenting challenges for the attack to destroy the Baghdad Division in Al Kut. The Division's battlespace did not include the Highway 1 corridor at this time, but the Division recognized the necessity of finding a way to



*Numerous alternate routes (of dubious quality) were developed to facilitate a means to maneuver the Division if the primary routes were not viable.*

envelop the Al Kut defenders by using fix and bypass tactics. If the Division was constrained to an attack up Highway 7, it would be forced to attack as a Division in column and play directly into the Iraqi strengths along an expected avenue of approach. This was an unacceptable scheme of maneuver. The Division worked aggressively to identify alternatives, and the poor maneuverability along Highway 7 became a significant catalyst for some of the creative solutions the Marines crafted to maintain the tempo of the attack. From creative engineering solutions to KC-130 highway landing strips, the solutions originally developed for the Highway 7 problems were later implemented across the battlespace as a way to gain speed in the attack.

Repeatedly, terrain experts told the Division that any maneuver off Highway 7 was not possible, thus a frontal attack or localized envelopment of Al Kut appeared to be the only feasible schemes of maneuver. Because of the responsive high-quality support the Division experienced from the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) in the past, the Division turned to them again for an analysis of alternatives for routes to the north. The product was a 'route finding' study vice a 'mobility analysis', and took as a precondition that some route through the challenging terrain existed. An MCIA team led by Mr. Art Kohler and Captain Sean Braziel conducted the route finding analysis and presented the results to the Division. Together, the Division and MCIA were able to identify three potential bypass routes using combinations of canal roads, farm roads, and limited segments of cross-country movement. Although not suitable for large convoys or Combat Service Support (CSS) elements, these bypass routes offered some limited maneuver options. The Division still assessed that it could defeat the Baghdad RG

Infantry Division by cutting them off from the capitol, leading to their rapid collapse. The MCIA identified routes were critical to this concept, and the Division planning effort continued using these limited bypass opportunities as the planned basic maneuver routes for the Al Kut fight.

There was the usual competition of tactical concepts among the Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) of the MEF. One of these planning issues faced by the Division was the requirement to secure a Forward Operating Base (FOB) for 3<sup>d</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) aircraft and 1<sup>st</sup> Force Service Support Group (FSSG) sustainment forces. The MEF chose Qalat Sikar as the site for this FOB. The Division was concerned that it lay 30 km to the east of Highway 7. Using this airfield for sustainment required a round trip excursion from Highway 7 of over 60 km, along a single access road into and out of the airfield. The momentum of this sustainment would be due east, opposite the northwesterly direction of the Division's attack. This airfield, well to the east of Highway 7, was also in the direction of the Iraqi 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division in Al Amarah, the operational reserve for the III and IV Corps. From its position to the north of the major river obstacles, this potentially pivotal Iraqi force could move to reinforce the defenses at Al Qurnah, An Nasiriyah, Highway 7, or even Al Kut. The MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP) Red Cell had moved the 10<sup>th</sup> Armor Division in this fashion during the April 2002 MEFEX. More troublesome, the 10<sup>th</sup> Armor Division could readily move to interdict an FOB located at Qalat Sikar. Given its material limitations, the ability of the 10<sup>th</sup> Armor Division to mount a long distance maneuver was questionable, but the proposed FOB site lay nearby, and right on one of the primary routes the 10<sup>th</sup> Division could take to move to the west. Even with a limited maneuver threat, the vulnerability and importance of a FOB at Qalat Sikar demanded a combat force sufficient to deter or defeat the 10<sup>th</sup> Division should it sortie west. To address this issue, the Division's scheme of maneuver incorporated the 1<sup>st</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion in an unconventional 'economy of force' role. Instead of being used in the standard 'team operations' role in front of the Division's advance, Recon Battalion was prepared to fight in larger units, forming a 'picket line' to the east of Qalat Sikar, observing each of the possible routes the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division could take in a potential attack into the Division's east flank. Recon Battalion's elements were augmented with additional Forward Air Controllers (FACs) to ensure that any sortie attempt of the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division would meet a swift and deadly response by 3<sup>d</sup> MAW.

Preparing for the multiple wet and dry gap crossings that the Division's scheme of maneuver entailed was a major element of the plan, and one that cut across multiple lines of responsibility. The Division planning team hosted a 'River Crossing OPT' that brought together elements of intelligence, maneuver, engineering and logistics from across the MEF. 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Paul Cyr), 8<sup>th</sup> Engineer Support Battalion (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Rick Nelson), and the MEF Engineer Group (commanded by Admiral Charles Kubic) all participated. The Division planners drove this OPT as a way to 'jump start' engineer planning by providing them with a nominal ground scheme of maneuver as a base plan. A detailed assessment of potential gap crossings revealed over 220 bridge or culvert crossings on Highway 7 alone. An additional 55 or more were on each of the MCIA bypass routes. From an enemy perspective, each of these served as a potential ambush and delay point, the very sort of asymmetric tactic that a second-rate military might use to level the playing field. The use of captured Iraqi bridging equipment was even considered as a way to reduce the

Division's dependency on bridging assets. The OPT served as an extremely useful review of the potential engineering requirements, and was a valuable tool to assess likely enemy actions to the attack north from An Nasiriyah.

### **Force Deployment Planning**

An experienced deployment team was assembled under the deputy G-3, Lieutenant Colonel Clarke Lethin, and the Plans Chief, Gunnery Sergeant Timothy Brimhall. This team looked at all possible ways to get forces into theater to support the new operational construct. Gunnery Sergeant Brimhall implemented a plan to reassign Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 0511s (MAGTF planners) from the G-3 Plans section down to the regimental level to decentralize the enormous task of building the Division's Time Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD). The Marine Corps' assignment of 0511s to the Division and subsequently by the Division down to the regimental staff allowed the Division to quickly produce solid deployment plans for forwarding to the MEF.

Early planning began for the employment of two of the Division's RCTs: one using gear from the Maritime Prepositioned Ship Squadron (MPSRON), and the other using amphibious shipping. This plan called for an offload of MPSRON-2 by RCT-7 (with MPSRON-1 by an RCT



*Units were to deploy to Kuwait from both East and West Coast ports, bases and air stations*

from the 2<sup>d</sup> Marine Division) followed by the arrival of the amphibious RCT (or MEB) some weeks later. Getting a desired two additional RCTs into theater required additional lift, and a variety of methods were explored to avoid placing the bulk of this requirement on strategic air. Teams of logisticians explored options as diverse as extending the deployment window, using contracted cruise ships, and massing amphibious shipping to support the deployment of additional brigades. With the switch from a reactive 'defensive' force to an 'offensive' force, the nature and composition requirements changed.

Continued updates to the force deployment plan occurred. Eventually, the first two RCTs of the force would both come from 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division (instead of one each from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Marine Divisions) and take advantage of the two Maritime Prepositioned Ship Squadrons (MPSRONS) for the bulk of their equipment, utilizing strategic and commercial air to transport personnel and other specialized equipment not contained on the MPS shipping. The force flow planning was updated to reflect MPSRON-1 gear supporting RCT-5 and 2<sup>d</sup> Tank Battalion. The Division needed to make the total force as mobile as possible, and requested all available AAV companies, both active and reserve, from throughout the Marine Corps. Planners also applied all available truck companies to the TPFDD, and updated the plan as refinements continued. The last RCT from the Division to arrive in theater would travel by amphibious shipping. By the original timeline, the first RCT would arrive and be ready for combat in fifteen days from the order, with the rest of the Division completely closed within 30 days.

The continuously changing mission, size, and deployment windows for 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division forces were a significant challenge to the force-flow and operational planning processes. Since most of the information related to operational planning was 'Originator Controlled' (ORCON), only selected individuals could be 'read-in' to portions of the plan. As a result, eager Marines from across the Division built deployment plans based on only broad generalized guidance of what to take and what to leave behind. No mention of mission specific tasking was possible, and what was understood often changed rapidly. Strong leadership, social energy, and patience on the behalf of the entire Division team allowed for the building of a solid TPFDD despite these challenges. Planners at I MEF worked throughout this period to clarify basic decisions, but the MSCs had to remain highly flexible. It was clearly time to get the staffs of the Division's RCTs read in to the plan. In September 2002, the CG assembled a briefing team, and brought all battalion and regimental commanders assigned to the Division into the information exchange. The briefing sequence included an 'Intelligence Roadshow' brief, an operational overview, and a discussion of the CG's intent. This briefing had a tremendous impact on building situational awareness among the Division's commanders and staffs, during a time when this information was still very closely held.

As the plan evolved, there were no less than seven TPFDD planning conferences at the US Transportation Command, at Scott Air Force Base (AFB) near Belleville, Illinois. Here, the assembled experts put together a global transportation plan that would take men and machines around the globe in massive numbers. Close by Scott AFB, the people of Belleville were the manufacturers of the most prolific transportation means the Division would use in the coming fight, the new desert combat boot. In just one example of the strong mutual pride between the American people and their Marines, the Division planners were welcomed with open arms to a tour of the factory.



*Ships from all three USMC Maritime Prepositioned Ship Squadrons (MPSRONS) supported 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom by delivering the vital equipment and vehicles that were pre-staged throughout the globe.*

### **Fire Support Planning and Preparation**

Regardless of which route the Division took, the CG's guidance made the role of fire support in the coming fight clear. The enemy's tactical center of gravity was his indirect fire weapon systems; artillery, rocket launchers, and surface-to-surface missile systems. The mission of Fires was their destruction. The BM-21 mobile rocket launchers, elusive, easily camouflaged, and capable of firing in seconds a salvo that could saturate a grid square, would be relentlessly hunted down. The batteries of G-5 and GHN-45 howitzers, capable of outranging the Division's own M198s, and other medium range artillery would be located, identified, and attacked. The ideal prosecution of these targets was by 3<sup>d</sup> MAW aircraft before the Division closed within their range, but many would survive the air strikes, hidden in palm groves or withdrawn into urban centers for concealment and protection. For those, retribution by reactive counterfire would be swift and certain. The Iraqi Regime's FROG-7, Astros, and Ababil missile launchers topped the list of priority targets due to their ability to range the Division's Tactical Assembly Areas (TAAs), breach sites, and bridges from extreme standoff ranges. All of these systems were also capable of delivering WMD.

Hostile artillery is the natural enemy of artillerymen. The Division Fire Support Coordinator, Colonel Mike Marletto, and the fire supporters of the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines had been preparing for this fight for years. While the Division's organic artillery would remain the workhorse of the counterbattery fight, the fires planners knew they would have to leverage the capabilities of Army Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and Marine Air. Speed, again, would be the measure of effectiveness and the Division would stack the full capabilities of combined arms in its favor. The goal was to prepare the way for the RCTs to advance unimpeded, so that the momentum and combat power of the Division could be sustained all the way to Baghdad. This

would be accomplished by an aggressive Division deep fight, destroying artillery and maneuver formations before the RCTs ever closed with them.

The Division G-3 Fires and Air sections, together with 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, had invested considerable time and effort in the development of techniques for controlling the Division's general support fires with airborne controllers, but the work remained in its infancy. The Division had also begun experimenting with a 'quickfire' capability to bring air fires against counterbattery targets. The wholehearted support of Major General James Amos, Commanding General of 3<sup>d</sup> MAW, now energized the dialogue between Wing and Division planners. Captain Rylan C. Bennigson of the Division G-3 Air Section, Captain Joe Deigan, the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines Air Officer, and Chief Warrant Officer Dave Thomas, the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines Radar Officer, were chief

among the authors of the Division's new quickfire procedure. The quickfire procedure developed used the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines Target Processing Center (TPC) to provide radar data to the Direct Air Support Center (DASC), Division Air, and to the Division Fire Support Coordination Center (FSCC). In order to ensure redundant lines of communication and to expedite target processing, an Air Support Liaison Team (ASLT) was assigned to the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines CP. Captain Mark Halverson, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines S-6, and Major Roger Stanfield of the Division Communications Company engineered the critical communications link between the counterfire headquarters and the DASC. Automated fire support technology and training with the new systems progressed to the point where a hostile weapon, detected by counterbattery radar and selected for attack by the TPC, could be engaged by air within minutes. If within range, surface artillery could respond immediately to provide suppressive fires while aircraft from the stack were pushed to attack the target.

The full support and cooperation of 3<sup>d</sup> MAW ensured that assets required to validate the concept were available. In November, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, the Division FSCC, and Marine Air Control Squadron Three (MACS-3) cooperated in the first live-fire rehearsal of the quickfire procedure at Camp Pendleton's Zulu and Whiskey Impact Areas. This exercise validated the concept, with artillery response times and the aviation targeting cycle gradually going faster as the procedure was practiced.