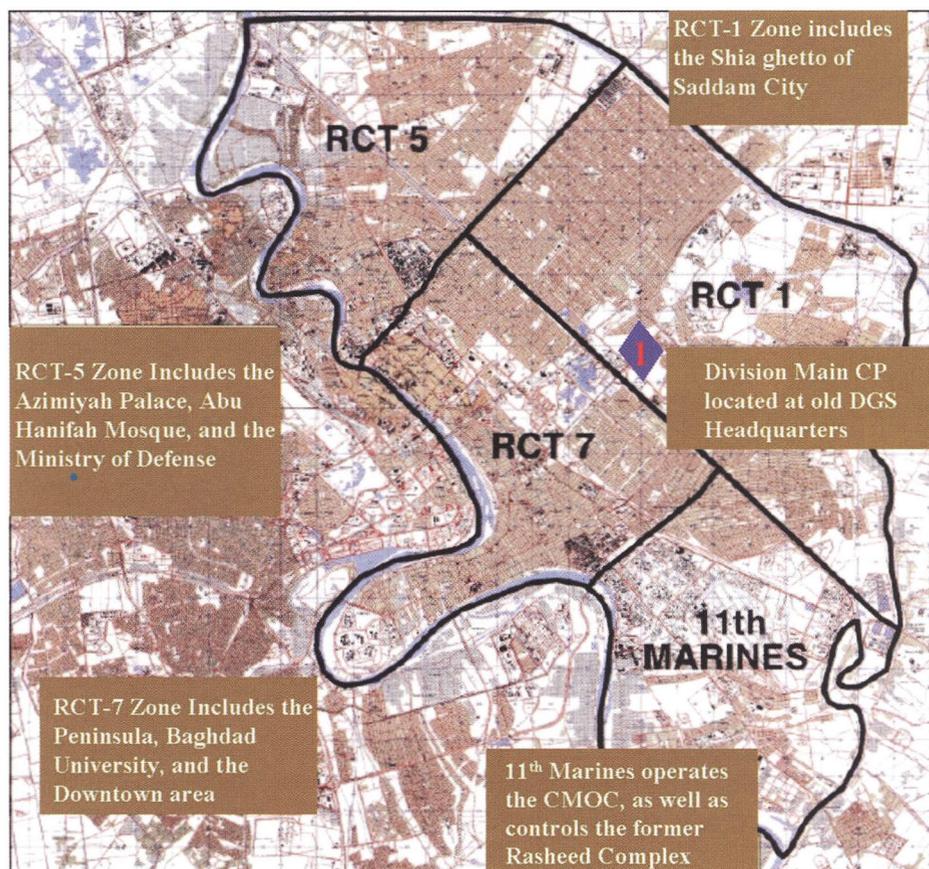


RCT-7 made adjustments to the battalion sectors within its zone. In the first days after the arrival of the Marines, widespread looting in the city was all too common. Third battalion, 4th Marines was called on to provide security for a Red Cross warehouse, and also got involved in stopping bank robberies. One such 'bust' resulted in the securing of \$3.6 million US dollars that Lieutenant Colonel McCoy personally delivered to RCT-7 for protection and forwarding to



Baghdad was divided into Areas of Responsibility for all four of the Division's regiments. Eleventh Marines also operated the CMOC.

higher headquarters. First Tanks secured a suspected Regime SSO site in a school and uploaded three MTVR trucks full of documents and communications equipment to be transported to the rear for document exploitation. Still, the Marines' focus remained cleaning out all remaining pockets of resistance spread across the city.

The people of the city took the opportunity to take their vengeance out on the buildings and property of the former Iraqi government. Looters streamed out to pick clean these areas. Too often, as they would finish clearing out a building, they would set fire to it. Smoke pillars were common sites throughout the city from numerous buildings on fire. The Marines saw this growing problem, and had many complaints from civilians, who repeatedly asked for security for their neighborhoods. In response, Colonel Hummer established an embryonic Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC) at the centrally located Palestine Hotel. The CMOC immediately began to grow with the reinforcement of the Division Civil Military Operations (CMO) team, led by Lieutenant Colonel Pete Zarconi (a reservist whose civilian duties as a Los Angeles police

sergeant made him singularly qualified for restoring order to Eastern Baghdad.) The Division's Public Affairs Officer (PAO), Captain Joe Plenzler, also arrived to take advantage of the significant media presence at the Palestine Hotel.

In sector, all Regiments began setting up meetings with local leaders, establishing local patrols, and gaining the trust of local contacts in the neighborhoods. The Marines found that local civilians were more than willing to point them in the direction of any Iraqi force holdouts or Fedeyeen fighters. Even though the needs of a city with millions of residents in a tightly packed urban center were well beyond the abilities of any single division to meet, places like the CMOC offered a place where some of the problems and solutions could start to find each other in a systematic way. Because of its central location, the CMOC at the Palestine Hotel was soon expanded and placed under the control of 11th Marines, using the manpower and systems of the Division Fire Support Coordination network as the 'backbone'. Representatives of 11th Marines, the 3^d and 4th Civil Affairs Groups participated. The CMOC soon became the hub of civil military interaction, and a magnet for Iraqis wishing to practice their newly discovered right of free speech.

Through constant vehicle and foot patrols, the regiments cleared objectives throughout the city. Government Ministry Buildings, key electrical facilities, water distribution facilities, and key road intersections all required coordinated effort, but soon all of eastern Baghdad was under the control of the Marines. In addition to these objectives, it seemed that virtually every block in Baghdad had a weapons cache. Some of these caches were monstrous, containing every conceivable type of weapon and ammunition, to include tanks, mortars, artillery pieces, and even FROG surface-to-surface rockets. For the remainder of its time in Baghdad, the Division had its hands full trying to dispose of these huge stockpiles.

The liberated people also had a million stories to tell, and the Marines were the closest sympathetic ears. Major Mike Samarov related one of the more interesting cases from 3/7:

A man of Iraqi descent approached Weapons Company. He was accompanied by two children, a thirteen-year old girl, and a nine-year old boy. He presented a new US Passport as proof of his identity. He claimed that he and his brother, both American citizens, were spies working with the Central Intelligence Agency. Nine years ago, they were betrayed, his brother killed, and he thrown in jail. He escaped yesterday, went to his old neighborhood, gathered up some few possessions and his children, and found the first US unit that he could. Captain Schmitt escorts the three civilians to the Battalion firm base. HET interviewed the gentleman and crosschecked his information. The information was legitimate. Headquarters and Services Company provided the family with a tent and sleeping bags. The following morning, a Military Police escort arrived at Battalion to escort the Iraqi man and his children to a flight that took them to the United States.

10 April
Battle of the Mosque

The fight for Baghdad was far from over. In one of the last but most fierce battles to secure objectives in Baghdad, RCT-5 attacked into the northwestern side of east Baghdad as the



International press vehicles staged near the Grand Mosque in downtown Baghdad.

Division's main effort. First Battalion, 5th Marines was tasked with the seizure of the Azimiyah Palace, one of Saddam's palaces in eastern Baghdad.

Lieutenant Colonel Padilla's 1/5 began moving from their positions near the Diyala River, heading north out of Baghdad on Highway 5 late on the evening of 9 April. As the evening progressed into night, the battalion headed west and then finally turned back south on the east side of the Tigris River along Highway 2. In the pre-dawn hours of 10 April, 1/5 conducted a passage of lines with 2/5. The night was suddenly brightened with red tracers fired in the direction of the column as 1/5 pressed into the heart of the city. Every street brought RPG,

heavy machinegun, and small arms fire. The tanks and tracks responded with .50-caliber, Mk-19, and 7.62mm machinegun fire as they continued to press toward the palace as quickly as possible.

The rate of incoming small arms and RPG fire continued to increase as 1/5 progressed further into the narrow streets and alleys of Baghdad. Navigating along the maze of Baghdad streets was extremely challenging. The maps that existed for the area did not show the level of detail required to navigate through the tightly constricted alleyways of an older section of the city. After making an exit off the main route and onto another highway, Alpha Company, in the lead, found itself on the wrong road, made a U-turn, and headed back along its original route. In the dark streets, the battalion pressed on to the objective, at times passing parallel to friendly units. "Don't fire to the left!" yelled Marines in the AAV's as they warned against possible friendly fire. Under the hailstorm of machinegun and RPG fire, Alpha Company's command AAV threw a track. The company halted and crewmembers hastily put the track back on. Bravo Company, led by Captain Jason E. Smith, seized the initiative, took the lead, and pushed on toward the palace. Visibility increased with the rising sun, and enemy fire became more desperate as they attempted to halt the Marines' advance.

While the battalion was still making its way toward the palace, they received an additional FragO, tasking them with the search of two possible American POW holding sites. This portion of the mission was given to Charlie Company. Near simultaneously, the Battalion was given yet a third mission, to proceed to the Imam Abu Hanifah Mosque where Saddam Hussein had

reportedly been sighted only hours before. This portion of the mission was given to Alpha Company.

On the tactical radio nets, reports could be heard listing Marines wounded from incoming enemy fire, as well as reports of enemy locations and activity. The fires continued to hit the entire battalion convoy; including headquarters and logistics vehicles to the rear of the attacking armor. Marines stayed the course, calmly continuing the attack and returning fire. The calm disciplined leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Fred Padilla and the other leaders of the Battalion kept the Marines on an even keel in the confusing and dangerous firefight.

Bravo Company finally reached the palace and attacked to seize the entire compound. They were supported by the 81mm mortar platoon and the counter-mechanized platoon. They met fierce resistance surrounding the palace, but quickly secured the eleven buildings inside the wall. Though the palace was secured, Bravo Company continued to receive fire from enemy forces outside the complex. They quickly established defensive positions around the compound and cleared an LZ to evacuate casualties and to receive needed resupply of ammunition. Under enemy fire, Bravo Company Marines were able to evacuate 12 casualties wounded early in the fighting. Charlie Company, simultaneously, moved towards the two suspected enemy POW sites they had been ordered to investigate, meeting moderate resistance but finding no signs of POWs.



The Azimiyah Palace after it was secured by 1/5 in a fiercely contested action. This battle marked the end of conventional combat operations for 1st Marine Division. The Division was to find that security and stabilization operations could be just as deadly.

Second Lieutenant Joshua Glover of C/1/5 recalled his attack to the POW sites:

“Our company was sent two km out into the downtown area to search for POWs. The stiff resistance that met us in the streets included small arms and many RPG shots. As my platoon dismounted the tracks and hastily began preparing to move out for the search, we were taking fire from several directions. As we moved out, fire teams placed suppression down the streets to cover movement across these danger areas. My radio operator, Private First Class Hahn, and I approached one of the cross streets and one at a time bumped across behind the Marines providing suppression. As we each darted across, three or four enemy fired AK-47s at us from down the street. The rounds they fired at us as we crossed impacted uncomfortably close to each of us, sending chunks of walls flying. After we both got across the cross street, I turned and saw PFC Hahn standing there with wide eyes. He looked at me solemnly and said, “Sir, that hundred fifty bucks a month of combat pay sure don’t make me feel too much better right now!”

Upon reaching and setting a perimeter outside the palace, 1/5’s tank platoon and AAVs continued to fire on enemy targets in houses, down streets, and even inside mosques after receiving fire from them. Alpha Company arrived at the palace and prepared to attack to the mosque. While Marines began resupplying the company, word was passed that the Alpha Company Gunnery Sergeant, Jeffrey E. Bohr, had been shot and killed. The expression of numbness could be seen on the faces of the Marines as they fought to maintain their composure. Gunnery Sergeant Bohr had been a battalion stalwart, a fine example of the highest standards of Staff Non-Commissioned Officer leadership. How could this seemingly 'untouchable' Marine be killed? The shock and grief had to be momentarily put aside, however, as the embattled force made ready to reenter the maelstrom. The earlier report that Saddam Hussein was hiding out in a mosque just to the north of the palace was time-sensitive information, and time was short. Gunnery Sergeant Bohr was killed just prior to entering the palace:

“Approximately an hour prior to crossing the line of departure, the battalion commander directed that all non-critical vehicles and soft-skin vehicles be moved to the logistics trains to link up with the battalion at a later date. The precedence during the operation to date was there could be up to several days before we could link-up with our company logistical train. The Company Commander discussed the issue with the Company Gunnery Sergeant over the radio and said that going on the mission would be on a voluntary basis. The company's water and ammunition supply could become critical if cut off from the log trains for an extended period of time. Shortly after the offer, Gunnery Sergeant Bohr responded that he would be moving with the mechanized column in his two high-back HMMWV's.

During the movement, the battalion was attacked from both sides of the roads, at all intersections and overpasses. Gunnery Sergeant Bohr personally affected suppressive fires against the dismounted enemy with his M-16. He was personally responsible for no less than two confirmed killed enemy soldiers during the initial contact. The company was receiving heavy small arms and machine gun fire, as well as numerous RPG shots.

After the Company Commander’s track was immobilized, and the company had to stop temporarily to effect repairs, Gunnery Sergeant Bohr moved his two HMMWV's behind the Company Commander's track and performed an administrative halt to confirm the vehicle’s

status, and he also checked his Marines to ensure they were not wounded. He gave words of encouragement and assisted in keeping his Marines calm and determined to achieve mission accomplishment.

On the move again to the palace, the company passed through a killsack from an enemy reinforced company. Alpha Company passed through the position to a dead end (a bridge that led into 3^d ID's zone), which left the logistical vehicles exposed in the killsack as the company finally began to turn around. At this time, Gunnery Sergeant Bohr had the company logistical vehicles continue moving into the middle of the column, bypassing AAV's for protection from the intense RPG and small arms fire.

Gunnery Sergeant Bohr killed an unknown number of enemy soldiers while providing suppression and protection to his driver and the company log train. The company vehicles were riddled with small arms fire during the action and no less than two RPGs passed through the canvas of the Company Gunnery Sergeant's high-back. At no time on the radio with the Company Commander was there anything other than "we are good to go".

Gunnery Sergeant Bohr continued to deliver accurate rifle fire at the numerous enemy soldiers in his vicinity. When he was informed by squad radio that one of the headquarters Marines was wounded with a bullet through the wrist, he quickly called in a CASEVAC while still providing cover fire from his vehicle. During this attempt to save another Marines life, Gunnery Sergeant Bohr was killed instantly by small arms fire.

The support provided by Gunnery Sergeant Bohr was critical, as the battalion's logistical trains did not arrive until two days later at the presidential palace the battalion defended.

Gunny Bohr's moral and physical courage were inspirational to his Marines, in the logistics train and the men of the company. His volunteering to go on the mission was above and beyond the call of duty. His sound decision making under the most extreme fighting kept his subordinates alive and achieved mission accomplishment of combat re-supply for the company."

As Alpha Company pushed out through the gates of the palace, Marines aggressively engaged any suspected enemy positions, in an attempt to suppress RPGs prior to being fired. Marines kept a vigilant eye as they moved through the narrow alleyways. Every Marine kept a careful watch on windows, doors, and rooftops as they passed; covering high, low, front and back to reduce vulnerability in the tight urban environment. The tank platoon began receiving sporadic small arms fire as soon as they exited the palace gates. It intensified with each block, as RPG teams fired from streets and alleyways. An RPG hit platoon commander First Lieutenant Ashley Patrick's tank in the rear compartment, rendering the M1A1 a mobility kill. Staff Sergeant Johnnie Hughes in the number two tank and Master Sergeant Stephen Eisel in the number four tank pulled into the intersection to provide covering fire as Sergeant Daniel Belgrader pulled in to swap tanks with Patrick. Hughes' tank immediately took two RPG direct hits but continued to fight and suppress along with Eisel's. Lieutenant Patrick directed suppression into the source of the fires coming from houses and down streets.

The tight, restrictive streets and alleyways allowed only a single tank at a time, acting as the lead element and navigator. As intense enemy fire poured in from two and three story structures and alleyways no more than five meters wide, Master Sergeant Eisel skillfully navigated and simultaneously fought the lead tank. Upon reaching the mosque, the tank platoon maneuvered into an intersection and began providing main gun and machinegun suppression. The mechanized infantry company moved into position for the assault.

Alpha Company's Marines heard, saw, and felt AK-47 fire as they moved into the open town square adjacent to the mosque. Tank main guns, AAV up-guns (.50 cal and Mk-19), and M-16's all answered back with a deafening clatter and boom. Several Marines dismounted their AAV to set into a cold position for a SMAW shot. As they did, a loud explosion rocked the engineer's track and it lurched to a stop. Marines exited the damaged AAV to jump in the back of adjacent AAV's. The remaining engineers climbed into the bucket of an Armored Combat Earthmover (ACE) that was following in trace of the now useless AAV. As they did, others fired at the buildings, suppressing the fires that had interrupted their movement.

With significant enemy contact in several locations along Alpha Company's axis of advance and in the objective area, Grizzly 6 committed the RCT Quick Reaction Force (QRF) in support of 1st Battalion. First Lieutenant Keith Montgomery was leading the QRF into 1/5's zone when an RPG struck his tank. Undeterred he continued the attack as the company's lead element. Two more RPGs slammed into his tank while crossing an intersection en route to the eastern Presidential Palace. One RPG penetrated the tank, causing minor injuries to him, his loader and his driver. This one-in-a-million shot struck the tank in just the right spot between the heavy turret armor and the hull. Despite the shock and surprise it caused, Montgomery concealed his injuries from his crew and continued to lead the attack to clear a route through the city. At that point, the only functional weapon system was the coaxial machinegun, which could only be aimed by pivot steering the tank. Lieutenant Montgomery maintained his tank in the fight, although he was reduced primarily to battle command of his platoon and moral support. The QRF moved into position to support Alpha Company.

Lieutenant Patrick's tanks engaged the top and bottom story of every structure in the square as well as every alleyway with 120mm main gunfire in an attempt to suppress the enemy fire. Captain Blair Sokol the Alpha Company Commander, moved the company into a perimeter around the mosque and then coolly directed dismounted infantry to move in and clear the compound. The QRF completed the cordon by establishing positions on the roads leading to the mosque from the south. Alpha Company was facing a platoon size force from inside the mosque and a company size force surrounding it. The company was receiving intense fire from three sides, and the company's FAC, Captain Ray Lawler provided close and accurate CAS to relieve the pressure. The CAS included Air Force A-10 'Warthogs' firing within 65 meters with their 30mm cannon, and F-14's delivering 1000 lb bombs at 'danger close' range. The tank platoon and infantry company continued to engage RPG teams, enemy machine gun positions and troops for the next 4 hours. Staff Sergeant Avon Paul attempted to kill a sniper firing from a building with machinegun fire from his tank. When that proved ineffective, he received permission to use a Multi-Purpose Anti-Tank main gun round. The round silenced the sniper but started a fire in the building (which proved to be a Fedeyeen ammunition storage facility.) Soon after, the area was rocked by secondary explosions as ammunition stored in the building cooked off.

The dismounted Marines moved in to clear the mosque and capture any Regime figures who might be inside:

“As the company began isolating the mosque, the amount of enemy fire reached its peak, with RPG and small arms fire coming from both a platoon size element inside the mosque and a company size element in the surrounding buildings. The company received at least 90 shots from RPGs, 33 of which were confirmed hits on the AAVs. The platoon commander’s AAV took a direct hit from an RPG, wounding four Marines. Staff Sergeant Coleman Kinzer dismounted his vehicle in the middle of the worst part of the fighting and moved to the platoon commander’s vehicle in order to ensure face-to-face coordination prior to conducting a breach into the mosque.

The platoon moved to the southern side of the mosque and began dismounting in the vicinity of a gate in the wall surrounding the mosque. Staff Sergeant Kinzer was the first Marine at the gate, and exposing himself to RPK machine gun fire, coordinated the breach on the western building of the complex to include a SMAW Novel Explosive shot that killed an RPK gunner. He then took a squad up to the building, threw a grenade through the breach site, and gained a foothold. Once the foothold was gained, Staff Sergeant Kinzer remained at the lead of the platoon while conducting high-intensity MOUT room clearing with more hand grenades. The squad thoroughly cleared the building and ensured that proper security was posted.

At this time, coordination was made for the movement across a courtyard and into the main temple. Second platoon had now entered the complex and while his platoon commander was coordinating with them, Staff Sergeant Kinzer continued to press the attack. He led the attack across the courtyard and gained a foothold in the temple. Upon making entry into the temple, he came under small arms fire from the north side of a long corridor inside the building. The enemy fired several rounds before they fled out of the north exit. Recognizing that he did not yet have enough forces in the building to pursue, Staff Sergeant Kinzer held the team in place until he had enough forces to clear the large cavernous spaces of the main temple. He continued to coordinate the attack until the platoon commander arrived.

During consolidation, it became apparent that there were several weapons caches hidden on the north side of the mosque. After several attempts to gather the weapons failed under heavy sniper fire, the platoon commander tasked Staff Sergeant Kinzer with gathering the weapons. Staff Sergeant Kinzer coordinated the use of smoke and suppressive fires and successfully gathered the weapons. Staff Sergeant Kinzer was the last Marine out of the mosque and the last Marine to load into the AAVs, ensuring accountability for all his Marines.”

With the assault on the last enemy hiding in the mosque underway, First Lieutenant Douglas Finn, the Company Executive Officer for the QRF, began to direct recovery operations for the numerous immobilized vehicles. Second Lieutenant Dennis Doyle dismounted his platoon and maneuvered through the alleys to establish perimeter security around Lieutenant Patrick’s abandoned tank. Clearing the buildings around the company battle position, Doyle’s platoon encountered several terrified Iraqi civilians caught up in the battle. The platoon detained an SUV containing several thousand dollars, Iraqi military uniforms, and documents. Another family

they met voluntarily cooked for the Marines during the fight. For Lieutenant Doyle's platoon, the battle was known as 'The Battle for Macaroni Alley'.

Alpha Company did not capture any Regime leadership figures at the mosque, but the vigorous delaying tactics used by the fighters here may have given them time to escape through the maze of winding Baghdad streets. Once the mosque was secure, Alpha Company began the movement out of the square through the route cleared by the QRF. The tank platoon provided rear security. The platoon continued to take fire and engage enemy positions until completely out of the square and into the small cleared alleyway. The narrow alley had built for pedestrians and donkey carts, and could barely accommodate the behemoth M1A1s. As the tanks squeezed through the route, the main turrets could not traverse, and several of the buildings' external air conditioner units were ripped out of second-story windows. The tank commanders and loaders were eye level with the second level of the homes and looking up to the third and fourth stories. As they moved down the alleyway they were given one last task, to destroy an immobilized Amtrak. As rear security, Master Sergeant Eisel dropped a thermite grenade into the AAV commander's weapon station and destroyed the vehicle.

In securing their assigned objectives, 1st Battalion suffered 1 killed and 60 wounded Marines. They defeated the suspected enemy battalion in zone and killed several hundred Special Republican Guard and Saddam Fedeyeen fighters. Following 1/5's swift and decisive attack, thousands of Iraqis spontaneously took to the streets of Baghdad to cheer and thank the Marines and Sailors. Once again, destroying the last vestiges of the Saddam Regime earned the Division Marines the grateful thanks of the Iraqi people.

RCT-5 experienced another enemy tactic on the 10 April. As the Marines of 3/5 were establishing a checkpoint in the city, a suicide bomber attempted to kill as many of them as he could. First Lieutenant Timms from Lima Company 3/5 remembered the incident:

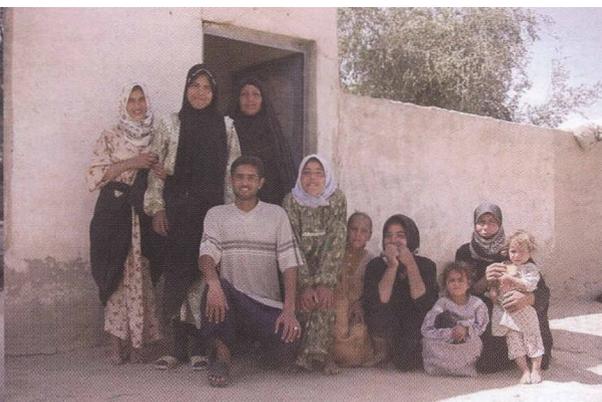
On 10 April we arrived in Baghdad. Second Platoon was tasked with manning a control point that was the border between three different units. The CP was located at a busy intersection between a main street, two side streets, a bridge over a highway, and an on-ramp. Second Platoon was reinforced by Machine guns, SMAWS, and a section of CAAT. Once we arrived we established security, which was challenging, as the crowds numbered in the hundreds and would not disperse. We set up on the right side of the end of the main street, 100 meters in front of the bridge. In the middle of the road on a median was an old Iraqi post made of sand bags. We set up a working party to move the sand bags over to our side of the road to block off the on-ramp and set up a post of our own. While this was being done an individual walked up through the crowd to the working party. Civilians shouted warnings as they ran away. The individual had an explosive device, and he detonated it near the Marines. Fortunately, The bomber's body absorbed much of the blast, but four Marines were severely wounded.

The heroes of RCT-5 responded with discipline and efficiency, as they evacuated the casualties, and restored the checkpoint.

Transition to Security Operations



No one was immune to the looting in Baghdad.



A rare photograph of an Iraqi family. The smiles on their faces reflect their joy in new found

The 'Battle of the Mosque' marked the end of major combat operations in eastern Baghdad, although the violence continued. Resistance remained, but the enemy encountered from here on was poorly organized and less capable than that encountered before. The Division did not have full control of all city sectors in zone, but anticipated having full control of the remaining sectors by the end of the day on the 11 April, thus securing the eastern half of Baghdad in its entirety. The Division's logistics posture was also steadily improving thanks to the heroic efforts of the 3^d MAW and CSSG-11.

Upon entering Baghdad, 11th Marines was given two additional tasks that are not typically assigned to an artillery regiment; to establish its own sector for security operations, and to man and operate the 1st Marine Division CMOC. The 11th Marines approached these new tasks with the same gusto and professionalism that they had when providing artillery support for the last 22 days. The regimental headquarters immediately established two command posts, one in the 11th Marine's sector (for security and stabilization operations) and a second at the Palestine Hotel in downtown Baghdad (where the CMOC would operate.) At the CMOC, 11th Marines began building on the excellent groundwork laid by RCT-7.

In their sector, the regiment's task was to restore order and help ease the suffering. Within 24 hours the sector around Rasheed was greatly improved. Both 1/11 and 3/11 worked throughout the community conducting patrols, removing weapons caches, detaining looters, and showing the Iraqi people that Americans were not conquerors, but liberators. Through it all, 11th Marines maintained a firing capability to support counterbattery missions and calls for fire anywhere in the city.

Colonel Marletto was assigned as the Civil-Military Operations Coordinator for the 1st Marine Division, and he set the tone for accomplishing the daunting challenges in Baghdad. Through daily meetings with the RCT commanders, the 3^d Civil Affairs Group liaison detachment, civic leaders, non-governmental organizations, and former Iraqi government officials, he organized the CMOC into functional departments to focus the humanitarian efforts

throughout the 1st Marine Division's area of responsibility. Each day the CMOC accomplished more, achieving small 'victories' to improve the situation in Baghdad.

The rest of the Blue Diamond Marines continued to work at improving the security situation. During support to other clandestine operations in the Division's zone, elements of the Division were routinely tasked with clearing a temporary area of operations for raids. One mission in 3/4's zone was planned to hit an objective very early in the morning, not far from the Palestine Hotel. Throughout the night, the RCT-7 watch officer tracked the movement of the forces that were conducting the raid. He noted traffic on the raid force's tactical radio net indicating that there were bright lights shining on them from a building off to their right. Just then, the Division watch officer called to say that Dan Rather was doing a live feed from the Palestine Hotel where he reported heavy armor driving by. The international media was filming every minute of the 'clandestine' operation as they snuck through the urban area. The raid force operations officer called on the radio to report their current position. The RCT-7 watch officer responded, "I know right where you are. Dan Rather has got you on the news right now!" This successful mission resulted in the capture of an internationally known terrorist.



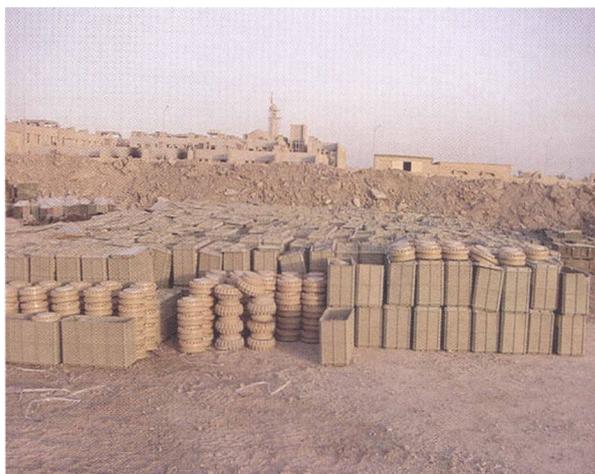
Abandoned Iraqi missiles are found throughout Baghdad.

Small Unit Actions Continue on the Baghdad Streets

After the initial push into the city, the RCTs divided their areas of operations into battalion and company sectors. In these zones, Marines established permanent traffic control points, set up spot check points and ran countless foot and vehicle patrols. Like good beat cops, the Marines were learning their neighborhoods. Each battalion created a collection matrix to record



The narrow maze of Baghdad streets make security operations difficult.



One of hundreds of caches of landmines in Baghdad

information the companies were generating on the streets. The matrix included locations and details of significant events, terrorist incidents, power plants, gas stations, hospitals, and anything else that could help restore stability and get the Iraqis back on their feet.

Even though major combat actions in the city had ceased, Baghdad remained a deadly and dangerous place. The vast majority of the five million residents welcomed the Marines, but the city also harbored those who did not. In a 'gun' culture, almost every household was armed, and the city was awash in automatic weapons and RPGs. The Marines of the Division worked to restore control during the day, and hunted the remaining Fedeyeen at night. The intensity of the resistance slowly diminished as the security situation improved, leaving only isolated incidents by the time the Division turned the Baghdad battlespace over to the US Army.

Kilo Company was tasked with conducting platoon-size urban security patrols in its area of operations as assigned by the battalion. First platoon conducted its patrol in the northern part of the company sector during the day without incident. Second Platoon was launched early on its night patrol to investigate random shooting roughly 700 meters west of the battalion CP. The shooting was random and, upon not being able to locate any suspects, 2d Platoon continued patrolling towards an intersection 600 meters south of the battalion CP.

It was at that checkpoint that the platoon came under the intense enemy fire of a near counter-mechanized ambush. Fighting ensued for just a few minutes as the platoon took automatic and RPG fire from enemy positions located all around the intersection and from as close as a few meters away. Sgt Navarro's 3d Squad was unable to effectively fight through the near ambush due to the enemy's use of natural obstacles and was ordered to pull out of the kill zone. Sgt Velis' 1st Squad, Sgt Hoover's 2d Squad, and the scout-sniper team quickly gained fire superiority over the enemy positions. Second Squad was instructed to cover the platoon's flank while 1st Squad bounded by fire team out of the kill zone with 3d Squad in over-watch. Finally, 2d Squad linked up with the rest of the platoon in consolidation and in securing a nearby field as an LZ after all enemy combatants fled or were destroyed. The company QRF was launched (under the command of Lieutenant Edwards) with two CAAT vehicles and linked up with 2d Platoon in order to effectively secure the LZ for CH-46s, which eventually evacuated the dead and wounded. The next morning, despite puddles of blood in the enemy's positions, the company discovered that all enemy casualties, shell casings, and weapons had been removed during the night. The local civilians were questioned but would not speak of the incident out of fear of retribution by the guilty parties. During the fight, Lance Corporal David Owens and Staff Sergeant Riayan Tejeda were both mortally wounded. SSgt Tejeda was ultimately recommended for the Silver Star (posthumously) for his heroic actions.

An example of the intensity of the lingering resistance was an ambush that occurred on 11 April on the northern side of the city. At night, the streets across Baghdad echoed with automatic weapons fire. It was often hard to tell the direction and target of this fire, but it was clear that the streets were still very dangerous, especially at night. To contain this threat, 3/5

(like other battalions in the city) conducted an aggressive patrolling posture. Only by hunting down the remaining violent elements that threatened the civilian population, would security be improved. First Lieutenant Michael Prato, from Kilo Company, 3/5, recounts:

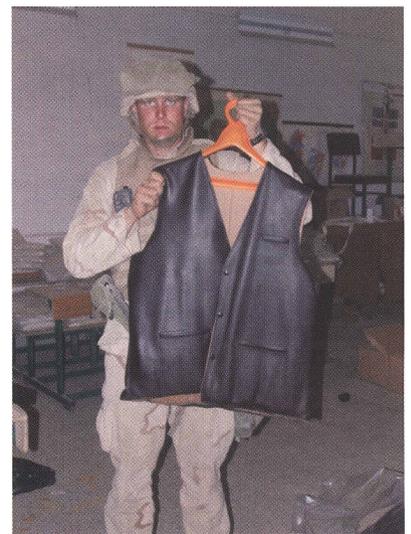
The loss of Staff Sergeant Tejada and Lance Corporal Owens was difficult for the Marines of Kilo Company. These Marines had fought heroically, and had died freeing another Iraqi neighborhood from the last of the Regime oppressors. Staff Sergeant Tejada had died while selflessly exposing himself to enemy fire in order to move all of his Marines to safer ground. He lived long enough to make sure his fellow Marines promised to tell his children how much he loved them. The commitment of these Marines to the future of all the children of Iraq was heroic. The streets of Baghdad remained a deadly and violent place, and the loss of these Marines served as a warning to the rest of the Marines in the Division.

The elimination of enemy fighters in the urban area took several days longer. Marines from each of the Division's regiments and separate battalions were engaged in restoring order to the streets of Baghdad. Manning checkpoints, supporting raids, or conducting security patrols were common tasks to all of the Division's Marines. The Division continued to suffer casualties in the execution of these dangerous missions. Corporal Jesus Gonzalez was killed on 12 April while manning a security checkpoint. A tank crewman from 1st Tank Battalion supporting India Company of 3/4, Corporal Gonzalez had displayed specific heroism earlier during the mission to secure the



Newly freed Iraqis pour back into the city.

southern bridge over the Diyala River. During that earlier mission, his company had come under heavy small-arms and RPG fire. Corporal Gonzalez had immediately identified the location of the enemy and marked the target by providing fires with his M-16 from atop the turret until his tank commander could call it in on the radio. During that fighting, Corporal Gonzalez had displayed a situational awareness and composure far beyond that expected from a Marine of his rank and experience. On 12 April, his platoon was providing security for a hospital compound in East Baghdad and Corporal Gonzalez managed a security checkpoint, controlling a frequently unruly crowd. While he was standing this post, a Fedeyeen gunman opened fire on the Marines at the checkpoint. Corporal Gonzalez immediately moved to the turret to assist in returning fire. As he moved to the turret he was struck by enemy fire and fatally wounded. His immediate response under fire revealed his dedication to the Marines around him and the mission at hand. Corporal Gonzalez was admired and respected by everyone who observed him.



Lieutenant Matt Danner holding a suicide bomber vest.

In addition to combat patrols, the Marines of the Division worked ceaselessly to clear the city of remaining weapons caches and unexploded ordnance. As the former Regime had used their schools and mosques to hide weapons, the people were eager to cooperate with the Marines to have the threat removed. Acting on one tip, Marines from RCT-7 entered a school. Inside, they found a terrorist bomb production facility full of black leather 'suicide vests.' After taking control of the facility, 3/7 counted 280 of the suicide vests, two blind-timer briefcase bombs, and dozens of SA-14 SAMs. The suicide vests looked brand new, carefully hung from a dry-cleaning rack, each individually wrapped in a plastic bag. Across the city, in each RCT zone, the engineers and EOD teams worked around the clock to disarm, disable, and destroy the tremendous numbers of weapons, ammunition, and explosives that were uncovered.



Marines found that being 'No better friend' to the Iraqi people was rewarded with smiles and trust.

The logistics focus also changed when the Division crossed the Diyala and began operations in Baghdad. In addition to their primary focus on ammunition, food, and fuel; logisticians added quality of life items. Mail arrived for the first time in weeks. Health and comfort packs were provided for basic hygiene. Even though the Marines remained busy, the static nature of operations in Baghdad allowed the Division to get logistically healthy.

11 April So what Happened to the Enemy?

As operations continued, the Division tried to reconcile pre-battle intelligence reports with the lack of a conventional military defense of Baghdad. The defense had been rigorous, but had lacked the coherence and firepower that had been expected. The Division had been told to expect a 'Chechnya', but had gotten something quite different. There were a number of likely causes of this apparent disparity. Probably the most significant, but least understood, was the internal political situation of the Saddam Hussein Regime. As always, it had been easier to count enemy equipment than it was to judge the enemy's will. The Regime leadership, never coherent to begin with, and motivated by fear, had begun to fracture even before the war began, and senior members of the Iraqi Regime had reportedly tried to escape the country to Syria or other destinations. In a quickly accelerating death-spiral, senior military leadership began to cut their own deals as they had opportunity. Some chose to deal with the Americans, but most chose to wring the last wealth they could from their position of power and attempt to go 'underground', out of the notice of military forces. Some of these individuals would not be captured for some months after the fighting had ceased. This spiral eventually took its toll on even the tactical leadership of the military units around Baghdad. With no senior military leadership remaining,