The fire came as a shock to the 1st ANGLICO teams maneuvering outside the city alongside the Saudis and Qataris, since Colonel Turki and Colonel Admire had agreed that all fire would be coordinated through the supporting arms liaison teams. Lieutenant Colonel William C. Grubb, Jr., 1st ANGLICO commander, went to the 3d Marines combat operations center and fixed the fire support coordination problem, which led to the order that all fire missions be approved by the air-naval gunfire teams. Despite these attempts to avoid firing on Coalition forces, the Qataris claimed one of their AMX-30s was disabled by Marine artillery fire, although it was not confirmed.

Meanwhile, the 7th Battalion, 2d Saudi Arabian National Guard Brigade, was preparing another attempt to storm al-Khafji and relieve the reconnaissance teams. This time, the attack was more carefully prepared, with artillery support from both Saudi and Marine artillery units and extensive Marine close air support coordinated by the teams working alongside the Saudi Arabian National Guard units. Despite the air and artillery support, the Iraqis still put up a fierce fight, destroying three Saudi V-150 armored cars.

Tank main gun, recoilless rifle, TOW [antitank missile], and small arms fire came thick and furious,” 1st ANGLICO later reported. “The Saudis and Qataris charged through the streets firing at everything and anything and in every direction.”

The battle raged through the southern half of al-Khafji, while Marine AV-8B Harriers and AH-1W Cobras provided direct support to the Saudi and Qatari troops. Air-naval gunfire teams directed the Cobras in a strafing run against the town’s water tower, and Harriers destroyed Iraqi vehicles at the major road intersection in that quarter of the city.

The Marine reconnaissance teams took advantage of the confusion of this assault to withdraw safely from al-Khafji, one on foot, the other team in humvees that had sat inside a courtyard, undetected by the Iraqis since the first hours of the battle.

In the afternoon, the 7th Battalion withdrew to rest and resupply, and the 8th Battalion, 2d Saudi Arabian National Guard Brigade, took its place clearing al-Khafji buildings. By this point the Saudis had lost 7 Cadillac Gage V-150 Armored Cars, 18 dead, and 50 wounded. The clearing operation continued throughout the night. “Saudi urban operations were different than what Americans practice,” Captain Braden later noted. “Instead of room-by-room clearing, they simply occupy a block and if they take fire they target with TOWs and heavy machine guns until resistance stops and then move to the next building of street. As a result of these techniques there were numerous pockets of Iraqis left in the city that would be killed or captured over the next few days.”

In the north, 5th Battalion, 2d Saudi National Guard, and its attached air-naval gunfire teams under Captain Kleinsmith and First Lieutenant Paul B. Deckert stopped Iraqi units trying to reinforce their forces in al-Khafji. At Observation Post 7, a battery of Iraqi self-propelled howitzers had taken up position, supported by infantry and armored personnel carriers. A division of four Cobras destroyed the battery under Captain Kleinsmith’s direction, but their arrival coincided with the destruction by enemy fire of two Saudi armored cars and an ambulance. Convinced that they had suffered friendly fire, the Saudis withdrew, leaving Captain Kleinsmith and his team to stabilize the line with air support. When the immediate Iraqi threats were removed, Kleinsmith’s team rejoined the 5th Battalion.

As the ground fight for al-Khafji drew to a close, the air effort continued to devastate the Iraqi forces. After a slow start, Coalition air forces claimed hundreds of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery tubes destroyed during the five
days that al-Khafji remained the main effort. An Air Force post war study highlighted the effect of the air attacks: "pilots described the frantic maneuverings of surviving Iraqi vehicles as visually equivalent to the results of ‘turning on the light in a cockroach-infested apartment.’" The report added: "perhaps the most revealing comment of all came from a member of the Iraqi 5th Mechanized Division who had fought in the Iran-Iraq War. This veteran soldier stated that Coalition air-power imposed more damage on his brigade in half an hour than it had sustained in eight years of fighting against the Iranians."

The next morning, 1 February, Saudi units advanced all the way through al-Khafji, encountering only light resistance. They cleared the city of remaining Iraqi troops, although solitary holdouts would appear to surrender over the next few days, and established a defensive position north of the city. The Battle of al-Khafji had ended.

Considerations

Every battle has losses. During the Battle of al-Khafji, 25 Americans lost their lives, 11 Marines and 14 airmen. Three Marines were wounded and two soldiers captured by the enemy. One LAV-25, one LAV-AT, and one AC-130 gunship were destroyed. The Saudis and Qataries suffered 18 killed and 50 wounded. Ten armored cars and two tanks were destroyed. After the war, the Iraqis claimed to have destroyed 4 helicopters, 30 tanks, and 58 armored personnel carriers, as well as capturing 13 prisoners. They listed their losses as 71 dead, 148 wounded, and 702 missing, as well as 186 vehicles destroyed, but their actual losses were likely higher. In the immediate vicinity of al-Khafji alone, 1st ANGLICO reported 90 vehicles destroyed, at least 300 Iraqi soldiers killed, and 680 captured. By most accounts, the 6th Brigade, 3d Armored Division was badly mauled and the 15th, 20th, and 26th Brigades of the 5th Mechanized Division were nearly destroyed.

The Battle of al-Khafji had some immediate consequences. The deaths which occurred in the early morning hours of 30 January, when an Air Force A-10 fired the missile into the Marine LAV-25, were one of several similar events during January. As a result, General Boomer ordered an investigation to determine what measures could be taken to prevent future casualties. The investigation team’s report was completed prior to the invasion of Kuwait and its recommendations implemented.

Otherwise, Marines, Saudis, and Iraqis all took differing views of the battle. Marines generally took away an increased confidence in techniques and doctrines, and a clearer idea of the enemy they would face. Lieutenant Colonel Myers felt that the screening forces along the border had exceeded expectations and the battle “proved the concept, philosophically” of the light armored vehicle. Captain Braden saw al-Khafji as proof of the value and importance of the air-naval gunfire liaison company, and long after the battle ended, he was using al-Khafji as an example to argue against its disbandment: “Without ANGLICO, it is difficult to envision another successful Battle of al-Khafji,” he wrote.

Marines gained confidence in their Saudi allies. Colonel Admire, for one, now felt there was “no doubt in the Marine Corps force’s mind that when the time would come to in fact attack into Kuwait, the Saudis and the Qataries and the Coalition forces would be with us. Absolutely no doubt.” Captain Molofsky agreed because “when push came to shove, without any real plan, any real direction, those Saudi soldiers obeyed their orders and went forward. And, they did so courageously.”

General Boomer saw al-Khafji as further proof that the Iraqi military was a hollow force. “We knew they weren’t motivated even by the time al-Khafji occurred, and it confirmed it. We were beginning to pick up POWs who said, ‘I don’t want any part of this deal. I am down here getting the heck pounded out of me everyday, food and water are short. Why am I here?’ In essence they were saying, ‘I don’t want to die here, in this conflict.’ We were getting enough of that so that I really came to believe that there was a significant morale problem on the other side.” But for Captain Molofsky, the view at the tactical level was somewhat different: “My opinion was that; if that’s what it was gonna take to get started in the recovery of a small town like al-Khafji, that we were gonna be involved in
Marines of 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, search al-Khafji for Iraqi stragglers and examine the battle damage as depicted in the painting “Cleaning up Khafji” by Capt Charles G. Grow.

a prolonged and bloody struggle."\textsuperscript{193}

The U.S. Air Force saw the Battle of al-Khafji as the proof of air power: "The Battle of Khafji was preeminently an airpower victory." Close air support and battlefield interdiction had isolated the battlefield and inflicted great destruction upon the Iraqis. The result was a "devastating defeat" for the Iraqi military and "airpower was the decisive element."\textsuperscript{94}

General Khaled bin Sultan explained that while the battle was such an important victory for the Saudis had it gone badly, "the blow to our morale would have been severe. But victory changed the mood of our soldiers to an amazing degree. They had been given a chance to prove themselves and had done so splendidly...." Our forces were now equal partners with our allies, ready to play a full role in any future battle."\textsuperscript{195}

Perhaps the most surprising conclusion concerning the Battle of al-Khafji came from the Iraqis. Iraqi post-war studies present al-Khafji as a victory whose techniques and procedures should be emulated to ensure future success. The Iraqis were able to plan and launch a major offensive despite the Coalition’s air power advantage. They succeeded in capturing al-Khafji and held it for two days against an enemy superior in technology and numbers.\textsuperscript{196} As General Salah Aboud concluded: "The al-Khafji conflict is on the list of the bright conflicts in Iraqi Army history.... one of the thousands recorded in the Iraqi Army history for the new generations."\textsuperscript{97}

In the end everyone but the dead and wounded won the Battle of al-Khafji. Although the battle did not accomplish any of the Iraqi objectives, it presented enough of an appearance of success that Saddam was able to claim a credible propaganda victory. After the war, the Iraqis were convinced that the battle had somehow influenced the Coalition’s decision to end the war after evicting the Iraqis from Kuwait, but before removing Saddam Hussein from power.

The Saudis faced an invasion of their territory and defeated it. Although Coalition air power undoubtedly played a key role in the defeat of the Iraqi offensive, it was the bravery of the Saudi ground troops, with American advisors, who actually ejected the Iraqis from Saudi soil. Al-Khafji enters Saudi military history as a great victory.

For the Americans, al-Khafji was won almost by accident. American forces proved so superior that it did not completely register that a major Iraqi offensive had occurred. As a result, U.S. Central Command planners did not expect the Iraqis to collapse as quickly as they did in the February invasion.\textsuperscript{198}

At al-Khafji, all of the Marine deaths were caused by U.S. fire, but that should not detract from their sacrifice, nor from the bravery of the Marines who survived the battle through luck and training. Endorsing the final report on the Marines killed by the A-10’s missile, General Boomer said: “The technological marvels that helped the Coalition forces defeat Iraq sometimes fail, and with disastrous results.... Marines, heroes in my heart, lost their lives while repelling an enemy force. They were good Marines.”\textsuperscript{199}
Al-Khafji Order of Battle

U.S. Marine Forces

I Marine Expeditionary Force

1st Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Group
1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company

1st Marine Division

1st Reconnaissance Battalion
1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion (Task Force Shepherd)
1st Battalion, 12th Marines
3d Marines

2d Marine Division

2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion

3d Marine Aircraft Wing

Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 367
Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369

2d Saudi Arabian National Guard Brigade

5th Battalion, 2d Saudi Arabian National Guard Brigade
7th Battalion, 2d Saudi Arabian National Guard Brigade
8th Battalion, 2d Saudi Arabian National Guard Brigade

Qatari Brigade

Iraqi Forces

III Corps

5th Mechanized Division

15th Mechanized Brigade
26th Mechanized Brigade
20th Mechanized Brigade

3d Armored Division

6th Armored Brigade

IV Corps

1st Mechanized Division

Lieutenant General Walter E. Boomer
Colonel Michael V. Brock
Lieutenant Colonel William C. Grubb, Jr.
Major General James M. Myatt
Lieutenant Colonel Michael L. Rapp
Lieutenant Colonel Clifford O. Myers III
Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Rivers
Colonel John H. Admire
Major General William M. Keys
Lieutenant Colonel Keith T. Holcomb
Major General Royal N. Moore, Jr.
Lieutenant Colonel Terry J. Frerker
Lieutenant Colonel Michael M. Kurth

General Khaled bin Sultan bin Saud
Major General Sultan 'Adi al-Mutairi
Colonel Turki Abdulmohsin al-Firmi
Lieutenant Colonel Naif
Lieutenant Colonel Hamid Matar
Lieutenant Colonel Hamud
Lieutenant Colonel Ali Saeed

Major General Salah Aboud Mahmoud
Brigadier General Flyeh Yaseen
Colonel Khalif Hamid
Colonel Amid Abduljabir
Brigadier General Hussan Zedin
Colonel Ibdil Raziq Mahmoud
Major General Yaiyd Khalel Zaki
Brigadier General Hussen
tack on Marine LAV, SWA-0062, Seq. No. 01980 (MCLLS, Quantico, VA)
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86 Myers intvw, 8Mar91.
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91 2d LAI ComdC, Jan-Feb91 (Gray Research Center, Quantico, VA).
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93 Ibid.
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100 ANGLICO AAR.
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103 ANGLICO AAR.
104 Khaled, Desert Warrior, p. 366.
105 Palmer, "Gulf State.
108 ANGLICO AAR.
109 Molofsky intvw, 16Aug96.
110 Khaled, Desert Warrior, p. 368.
111 Ibid., p. 365.
112 Ibid., p. 368.
113 Braden, "Kha'fji," p. 15.
114 Titus, "Kha'fji," p. 11.
115 Titus, "Kha'fji," p. 11; Gordon and Trainor, Generals' War, pp. 273, 278.
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