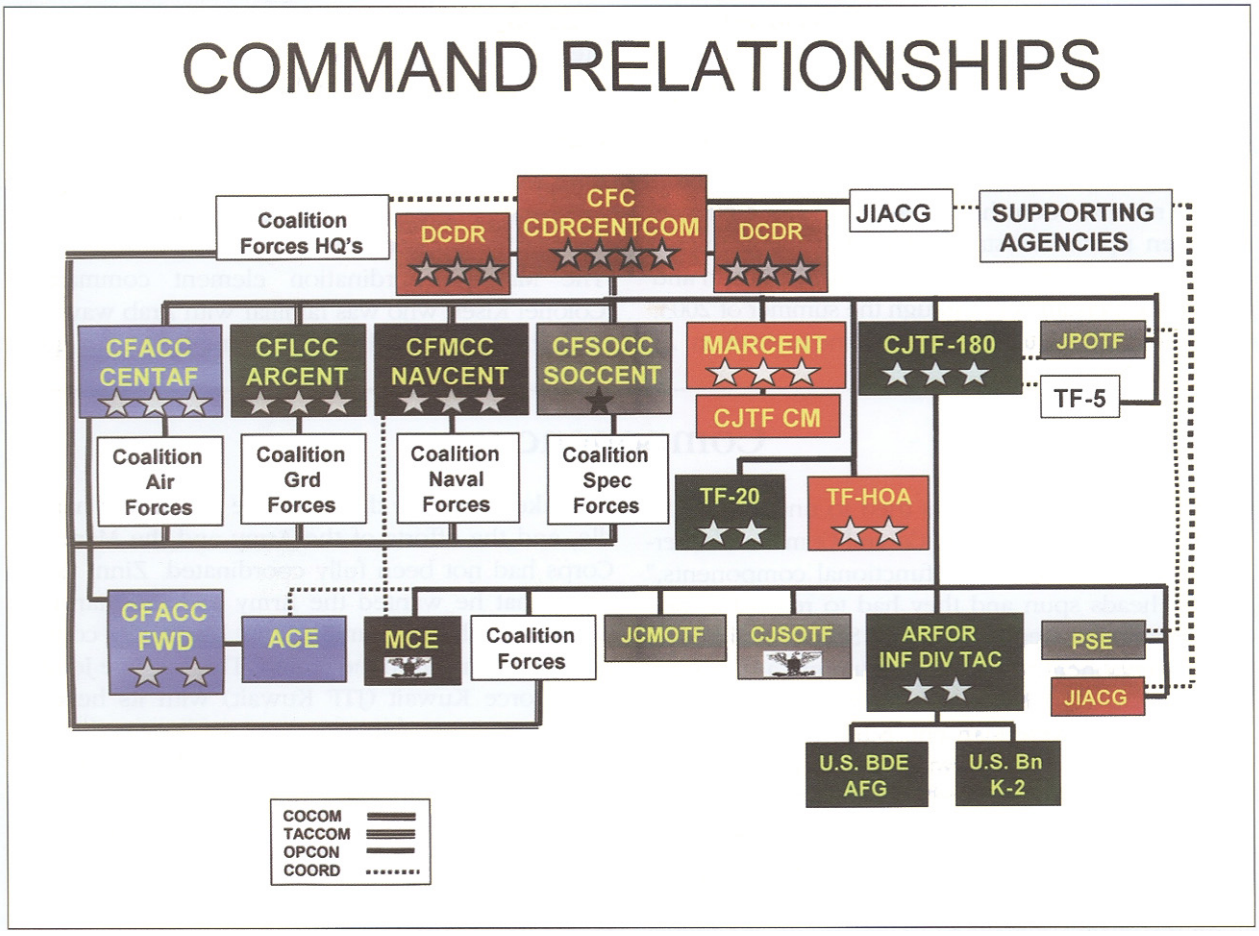

Courtesy of U.S. Central Command, 14 January 2003

from the beachhead, 15th MEU (SOC) flew in to seize a landing strip in Afghanistan that became known as Forward Operating Base Rhino. This was the start of roughly two months of Marine operations in country, first in and around Rhino, and later from Kandahar Airfield, which 26th MEU (SOC) later seized on 14 December.

Repeating a phrase attributed to war correspondent Richard Harding Davis in 1885 and used many times since, General Mattis wrote in a 26 November message, "the Marines have landed and the situation is well in hand."[15] * It was, in the words of the Naval Institute's annual review of the Marine Corps, a display of "flexibility and operational reach . . . [that] stunned many outsiders."[16] The task force's movement from ship to shore was right out of the Marine Corps doctrine known as expeditionary maneuver warfare, which called for fast and deep movements, directly from the sea to objectives inland. But this was still something relatively new and largely untried. General Mattis was not exaggerating when he commented that if he had proposed this kind of operation at Quantico or Newport, Rhode Island, the home of the Naval War College, he would have been told it could not be done.[17]

In the meantime, back in Hawaii there were changes afoot that would shift some of the burden from the small liaison elements in Tampa and Bahrain, and from General Mattis himself. On 24 October, the Commander, MarForPac, Lieutenant General Earl B. Hailston, had formally taken on the additional duty of Commander, MarCent, and begun to play a much more prominent role in the CentCom arena.[18] By January 2002, Hailston was in the process of moving his flag to Bahrain "to establish [the] MarCent HQ in theater in support of CincCent [Commander-in-Chief, CentCom] and Operation Enduring Freedom."[19] Even though he occasionally shuttled back to Hawaii, Bahrain became his home for much of the next year and a half.[20] Hailston's move, made with some 200 of his Marines, signaled the Marine

*Some journalists reported the remark as, "The Marines have landed and we now own a piece of Afghanistan," which the Pentagon apparently "scrambled to disavow." (See, for example, Christopher Cooper, "How a Marine Lost His Command in the Race to Baghdad," *Wall Street Journal*, 5Apr04, p. 1)

Corps' intent to build a strong infrastructure in theater to support Marine commanders on the ground. It was as much a matter of Iraq as it was of Afghanistan; by early 2002 the administration had directed the military to plan for a possible war with Iraq while consolidating its gains in Afghanistan.

The new MarCent headquarters in the Gulf was not even up to the standard of MarCent Tampa's building; like virtually all Marine headquarters in and around the Persian Gulf through the summer of 2003, it was never much to look at, let alone to work in. At first MarCent even had trouble finding a home in theater. When they landed at Sheikh Issa Air Base in Bahrain, the Marines from Hawaii and Tampa started to build an expeditionary headquarters on a part of the base. But the initiative had not been fully cleared with the Bahrainis, there had been some kind of cross-cultural misunderstanding, and they "requested" that MarCent find somewhere else to go. The Marine coordination element commander, Colonel Kiser, who was familiar with Arab ways and with the Navy establishment, came up with a quick

Componency

The first time outsiders tried to understand the relationship between Central Command's "service components" and "functional components," their heads spun and they had to reach for their favorite painkiller. Each Armed Service had a Service component, with a headquarters and a staff, commanded by its senior officer in theater. These components were MarCent, NavCent, ArCent, and CentAF. Their purpose was to provide and sustain their forces. NavCent and CentAF were commands that could easily transform themselves into functional commands, that is, commands responsible for combat at sea and in the air. It seemed natural for the naval commander to take on the additional duty of the Coalition Forces Maritime Component Commander for naval warfare, while the CentAF commander could become the Coalition Forces Air Component Commander for the fight in the air. There was even a commander for special operations, Coalition Forces Special Operations Command (CFSOC). It also seemed natural for the ArCent commander to become dual-hatted as the Coalition Forces Land Component Commander, but what about MarCent? There were no provisions for an "Expeditionary Forces Component Command." In the Gulf War of 1990-1991, there had been nothing even remotely like a functional component command for the war on land; the CentCom commander, Army General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, had decided to take on the additional duties of being his own land component commander, not unlike the Confederate general Braxton Bragg, who had been his own supply officer. After he became the CentCom commander in the late 1990s, General Zinni had wrestled with the problem. His view was that the United States had fought two ground wars in Desert Storm. General Schwarzkopf had taken on more than any one man could handle, and the efforts of the Army and the Marine Corps had not been fully coordinated. Zinni decided that he wanted the Army and the Marine Corps to establish a standing joint land forces component command in the region. This became Joint Task Force Kuwait (JTF Kuwait) with its headquarters at Camp Doha, Kuwait.* Marines, and Marine units, rotated through the command, whose staff was largely identical with that of ArCent. In the fall of 2001, for example, then-Brigadier General Emerson N. Gardner, Jr., was in command of JTF Kuwait. ArCent and the joint task force morphed into Coalition Forces Land Component Command in late 2001, under the command of a three-star Army general, Lieutenant General Paul T. Mikolashek, who moved his flag to Kuwait in December. Like his predecessor Zinni, General Franks wanted a strong Coalition Forces Land Component Commander, with its own staff, to focus on the ground war while he focused on his own responsibilities for the war at the next higher level. The officer who was to command Coalition Forces Land Component in 2003, Lieutenant General David D. McKiernan, found that there was "huge goodness in that arrangement."**

*In 2003, while serving at Coalition Forces Land Component Commander, Marine BGen Christian M. Cowdrey made much the same point, commenting that the combined/joint land headquarters CFLCC fulfilled a function that would have been difficult for any other organization to fulfill, that of orchestrating the plan. (BGen Christian B. Cowdrey intvw, 26Apr03 (MCHC, Quantico, VA); Tom Clancy, Gen Anthony Zinni, and Tony Koltz, *Battle Ready* [New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004], p. 315; see also Zinni intvw)

**Kevin Peraino, "Low-Key Leader; LtGen David McKiernan is the Soft-Spoken Soldier with the Hard Job of Commanding U.S. Ground Forces in Iraq," *Newsweek* Web Exclusive, 19 Mar03.

solution. He crafted an arrangement with NavCent for MarCent to come onto the Naval Support Activity itself, even though there was little room to spare on that small base. NavCent agreed to allow MarCent to set up on a baseball field that was, by turns, the source of fine dust and, when it rained, some very sticky mud.[21]

The result was an unusual overlay of temporary structures on a base with some amenities. Some of the MarCent Marines worked in the general-purpose tents on the baseball field. They had some air conditioning, as much for the computers as for the Marines, but were often hot and uncomfortable. Other Marines worked in only slightly more comfortable expeditionary buildings. Like most Marines on major staffs after 11 September, the MarCent Marines worked incredible hours, under great pressure, with little time off. But there was a small upside; less than 100 yards away was a well stocked food court, as well as a gym, exchange, and swimming pool. Sometimes, when the force protection condition was high, one might witness the anomalous sight of half-camouflaged U.S. Navy personnel with loaded rifles sitting or lying among the palm trees and brush outside the food court, on the lookout for any terrorists who might have made it through the perimeter, which was an elaborate affair with concrete barriers, barbed wire, and sentries. This was not quite as farfetched as it sounds; not only was there a continuing terrorist threat, but, especially in early 2003, there were also anti-American demonstrations and occasional terrorist attacks throughout the region. If there had been a firefight, the personnel on base could have watched it while sipping cappuccinos. It was an unusual way to go to war.

MarCent now became the only purely "service component command" in theater, with the enormous responsibility of providing and sustaining thousands, and potentially tens of thousands, of Marines and sailors. Like his counterparts at NavCent; Army Forces, Central Command (ArCent); and Air Forces, Central Command (CentAF), General Hailston reported to the Commander-in-Chief, Central Command, General Tommy Franks, who held sway over all U.S. forces in the region, whatever their purpose. Unlike his counterparts, General Hailston was not a tactician. He would get the Marines to the war, make sure they had what they needed for the fight, and generally offer advice to General Franks on how best to employ them. It was Hailston's job to look 45 to 60 days into the future, anticipate Marine requirements, and then fulfill them, all in all an enormous undertaking. But when Marines went into combat, they would fight under one of the "functional components" like the Coalition Forces Maritime Component Command (CFMCC), which was NavCent's warfighting guise. For example, Admiral Moore became both the NavCent commander and the CFMCC commander. There were similar arrangements for CentAF and ArCent to become, respectively, the Coalition Forces Air Component Command (CFACC) and the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC). This was a radical departure from the organization for Desert Storm some 10 years earlier,

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LtGen David D. McKiernan, USA, a graduate of the College of William and Mary, gained experience in the Balkans as a staff officer in the 1990s. In September 2002, he assumed command of the U.S. Third Army and U.S. Army Forces Central Command, and became the Coalition Forces Land Component Commander in preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Marine Corps Photo 020112-M-1586C-002

Afghans greet Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit's Company A, 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, on a routine mounted patrol through a village near Kandahar, Afghanistan.

which had been fought without a unified land command.*

This created a dilemma for the Marine Corps, naval infantry and air forces that did not fit neatly into any of these categories. In 2001 the result was another set of complications. Task Force 58 initially reported to NavCent/CFMCC. This was a natural relationship, especially while the task force remained afloat. Once it was ashore, and after CFLCC had stood up in mid-November, it had to develop a relationship with that headquarters, which had assumed responsibility for all operations on land in Afghanistan. Accordingly, on 30 November, CFMCC assigned tactical control of Task Force 58 to CFLCC, without giving up operational control. Especially at first there was some friction between Task Force 58 and CFLCC; the CFLCC culture was "Big Army," the world of large staffs and detailed reporting, certainly a change for the Marines on Task Force 58. But over time everyone made it work, the "TF 58 staff was able to adapt to the new information requirements while continuing to develop a solid working relationship with the CFLCC staff. The positive relationship would last throughout the operation as CFLCC buttressed and represented CTF 58's interests."[22]

Most Marine staff officers in the Persian Gulf became well versed in the intricacies of operational control and tactical control. By and large, what General Hailston exercised was operational control, organizing and employing forces, sustaining them, and assigning general tasks, but not tactical control, which was the specific direction and control of forces, especially in combat. The two exceptions were CJTF-CM and an organization known as the Marine Logistics Command (MLC), which would play a prominent role in the Iraq War in 2003. Like the organization for the land war, this, too, was different from Desert Storm. Then the senior Marine in theater, Lieutenant General Walter E. Boomer, had commanded I MEF and MarCent, a heavy burden for one commander, who in both capacities reported directly to General Schwarzkopf.[23]*

General Zinni has argued that especially in a major contingency, each function requires a separate staff, with a different focus.[24] General Hailston's chief of staff, Colonel Stephen W. Baird, believed the arrangement in Desert Storm had stressed the I MEF staff and forced General Boomer to divide his time between warfighting and Service component issues.[25] Having one commander responsible for "shaping, providing, and sustaining" Marine forces and another commander for warfighting would free the warfighter to focus on combat. The Service component commander, who would be senior, could forge a relationship with the commander-in-chief and protect the sanctity of the Marine air-ground task forces, resisting the understandable propensities of non-Marines to break task forces into their building blocks, splitting ground and air components apart and sending them to fight with their counterparts in the Army and the Air Force.[26] (General Hailston agreed with this point of view.) Speaking in late 2003, General James T. Conway added the commonsense point that it would have been difficult for him to command both MarCent and I MEF, since in one capacity he would be the equal of the CFLCC commander, and in the other, his subordinate.[27]

Even with the improved organization of the force, there was some Service rivalry. One notable point of contention was the "force cap" placed on the Marines while Task Force 58 was ashore—CentCom decreed

*Between 2001 and 2003, the words "combined" and "coalition" were used in the titles of these organizations to mean the same thing. While "joint" refers to U.S. commands with more than one service, "combined" or "Coalition" refers to commands that also include foreign elements. For the sake of simplicity and consistency, I will use coalition.

*Neither Gen Boomer nor Gen Hailston reported directly to Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC). However, there was a lively exchange of views and data between the CentCom theater and HQMC, especially the office of the Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations (PP&O). During 2002 and 2003, Gen Hailston and LtGen Emil R. Bedard of PP&O were in close contact, discussing and coordinating plans virtually on a daily basis.

that initially there could not be more than 1,000 Marines and sailors in Afghanistan in late 2001. Some Marines interpreted this as a gratuitous slap in the face, "Big Army" making sure the Marines did not steal the show, and, by extension, making it easier for the Army to assume the Marine mission in Afghanistan, a process that was well under way by mid-January 2002.[28] But the Marines complied and were still able to carry on with their mission.

Task Force 58 was released from CFLCC control on 3 February 2002.[29] Although small numbers of Marines stayed in country, either as individuals or as units, for quite some time, the 26th MEU(SOC) left Afghanistan on 13 February. This spelled the end of Task Force 58's engagement in that country. Now the nature of the task force's achievement was even clearer. Apart from validating some of the tenets of expeditionary maneuver warfare, it showed Marines, literally and figuratively, how far they had come from the traditional "two up and one back" mind-set that had characterized the war in Vietnam and, to a certain extent, Desert Storm, which had had some of the characteristics of an old-fashioned linear battlefield.[30]

Task Force 58's experience also showed Marines how far they had come since Desert Storm in another way. Despite the friction over matters like the force cap (some friction was inevitable), there had been nothing like the bad blood and the temper tantrums that are discernable beneath the surface of the memoirs of the Gulf War; in Afghanistan, and then in Iraq, senior participants almost uniformly reported that the level of cooperation was unparalleled, both among the Services as institutions and among their chiefs as individuals. To cite just one example, CFLCC's General McKiernan stated categorically that "there were no rifts" between the various commanders.[31]

There are a number of possible explanations for the relative good feeling, the general atmosphere of trust, among the Services after September 2001. These ranged from the maturing of joint routines at the combatant commands, to the exigencies of the situation, that is, the unifying effect of the events of 11 September, to the backgrounds and the personalities of the commanders. A number of controversial

A Marine crew chief guides a CH-46 Sea Knight of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 365 at Kandahar International Airport in Afghanistan. Squadron aircraft flew re-supply, long-range reconnaissance patrol, ground escort, armed interdiction, and heliborne assaults in search of Taliban and Al Qaeda forces.

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issues such as the employment of Marine air in the joint environment, which had been a serious point of contention during Desert Shield/Desert Storm, had more or less been resolved during the decade since the Gulf War. CentCom commanders like General Zinni, first and always a Marine but also something of an iconoclast and nothing if not a "joint" visionary, had created and exercised joint structures such as Joint Task Force Kuwait, with its provisions for alternating Marine and Army commanders. Similarly, Operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch, run for years by United States and allied air forces to enforce the no-fly zones in the top and bottom one-thirds of Iraq, were successful combined and joint operations.[32]

Analyzing the backgrounds of the participants in the Iraq War, historians Williamson Murray and Major General Robert Scales, USA (Retired), have made the comment that the officer corps was far better trained and educated in 2003 than it had been during the Gulf War, let alone Vietnam. The key here is the word "educated"; beginning in the 1980s, officers were not only well trained, able to perform battlefield tasks, but they could also think in "operational terms." "The new emphasis," Murray and Scales wrote in their excellent overview of the period, *The Iraq War*, "was on maneuver, deception, exploitation, and decentralized leadership."[33] In the Marine Corps the reform movement had started informally with meetings after hours at Quantico, sometimes over beer, but just as likely over coffee or sodas, and spread little by little to other bases. Many of the ideas that emerged were eventually enshrined in doctrine, particularly *FMFM 1: Warfighting*, during the commandancy of General Alfred M. Gray in the late 1980s. Not everyone became a maneuverist, but it is fair to say that by the end of the 1990s, virtually everyone was familiar with the term and had been influenced by it in some way.[34]

The personalities of the commanders, and how they meshed, were also part of the picture. General McKiernan commented that "the big strength in this campaign was the personalities of the various component commanders. . . . You can say a lot of that [inter-Service cooperation was possible] because of developments in joint doctrine and training . . . but a lot of it [was] . . . also in the chemistry between . . . the leaders."[35] General Franks, with his down-to-earth style, was known as an officer who listened to his subordinates. A strong proponent of military transformation, he was a commander who identified the desired "effects . . . and tasks and purpose, but [left] . . . the planning to the component commanders."[36] He had a long-standing "joint" reputation, having been the ArCent commander under Zinni. It had been a natural progression for him to take the commander's chair and continue the joint tradition. Even after becoming the commander, General Franks had stayed in touch with General Zinni, using him as an unofficial mentor and even trying, in late 2002, to use him as an official mentor for a CentCom exercise. (Zinni did not come to theater, because by then his blunt pronouncements against the coming war had made him *persona non grata* with the Pentagon.)[37] At MarCent, General Hailston had an unusually varied background, having served as an infantryman, an aviator (whose call sign was "Titan"), and a force service support group commander. He had relationships with other senior commanders, especially CFACC's Lieutenant General T. Michael Moseley, USAF, which went back many years. He also had a reputation for not suffering colonels gladly and for taking good care of his younger Marines, not necessarily bad traits to have in 2002 and 2003 (at least so long as you were not a colonel). The field historian assigned to his headquarters, Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Acosta, attested to the general's ability to ask penetrating questions across a broad range of subjects, and to keep supplies and equipment flowing to theater.[38]

Murray and Scales assert that General McKiernan, who was to become CFLCC commander in September 2002, "proved to be an inspired choice."[39] An armor officer who was quiet but compelling, McKiernan's background included joint and combined experience, in addition to senior Army commands. He, too, was not afraid of new ideas and wanted to find the best organization for the fight, as opposed to doing things the way they always had been done. He had what *Newsweek* was to call "a temperament as . . . even as the desert," which also made it easy for him to work with other Services.[40]

The officer who set the tone for virtually all Marines in theater was General James T. Conway. A graduate of Southeast Missouri State University, he was commissioned in 1970 and had had a successful career in the infantry. When away from the fleet, he served as the commanding officer of The Basic School and then as president of the Marine Corps University. He also served two tours on the joint staff in Washington. From 2000 to 2002, he was the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, and then from August to November 2002 he served as the deputy commanding general at MarCent, which gave him an opportunity to work closely with General Hailston on CentCom issues while he waited to take command of I MEF. This was the commandant's ini-

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LtGen James T. Conway, commanding general of I Marine Expeditionary Force, addresses the officers of Regimental Combat Team 7 at Camp Coyote, Kuwait. Gen Conway had charge of a battalion landing team during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm before assigned command of the 1st Marine Division and then I Marine Expeditionary Force.

tiative. General Jones wanted to maintain continuity on the West Coast and to make General Conway even better prepared for his next job, to command I MEF and to balance its equities against MarCent and CFLCC requirements.[41]*

Murray and Scales described General Conway as "big," he was well over six feet tall, "bluff, well-read, and well-educated," and concluded that he "represented all that was best about the new United States Marine Corps, which General Al Gray as the commandant had built up."[42] He was a popular commander, described as an officer and a gentleman who was good to work for and who took care of his troops.[43] He was nothing if not involved in what his subordinates were doing. For example, he had a policy of wanting to be briefed in person on unusual, high-risk evolutions, as a young British reconnaissance officer was to discover during the war when

*When asked how the right Marines, a virtual dream team, had come to serve in key billets in the CentCom area of operations in 2002 and 2003, the Commandant of the Marine Corps said it had been as much a matter of good long-term personnel policies as of any specific, short-term assignments. (Gen James L. Jones, Jr., intvw, 14Jun04 [MCHC, Quantico, VA])

he was whisked from his position in the desert in order to brief the I MEF commander, in person, on an upcoming operation. It was typical of General Conway to focus on the extraction plan; he wanted to be sure there was a plan to take care of the soldiers and Marines in the worst case.[44] Even months after the war, he remained acutely conscious of the casualties that had occurred during the campaign—able to recite numbers and remember individual cases.[45] He has described his own command style as "democratic," which meant he preferred to command by first listening to his subordinates and then outlining his intent. He knew when to give his subordinates free rein and when to intervene. A review of the journals kept by the field historian at I MEF headquarters during the Iraq War reveals that, like General Hailston, General Conway spent much of the time asking questions and gathering information. They also show that he was typically optimistic, slow to anger, and virtually unflappable, equal to any challenge, whether contemplating the possibility of a chemical attack or dealing with a difficult counterpart or subordinate, traits that he would need in Operation Iraqi Freedom.[46]

Chapter 2

Inside Our Own Loop: Joint Planning for War in Iraq

Operation Enduring Freedom set the stage for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The second operation was not a clear-cut sequel to the first; for military planners, there was no straight line from success in Afghanistan in the winter of 2001-2002 to a war in Iraq in 2003 to remove the dictator Saddam Hussein from power. But Enduring Freedom was in many ways the starting point for Iraqi Freedom.

Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) and Coalition Forces Maritime Component Command (CFMCC) were still very much in existence when the focus shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq early in 2002. The Marines in Task Force 58 who fought in Afghanistan between November 2001 and January 2002 had operated under both of these commands and had developed good relationships with them. If anything, General Franks was more convinced of the need for an organization like CFLCC in a war with Iraq. In Afghanistan there were few U.S. troops on the ground, but a war with Iraq could be a larger, more complex undertaking by far and most likely would be won or lost on the ground. Alongside CFLCC and CFMCC, Coalition Forces Air Component Command and Coalition Forces Special Operations Command remained very active commands that the Marines would engage.

Both for the individuals who went to Afghanistan and for the organizations that sent them, the experiences of Task Force 58 in Enduring Freedom set some of the specific conditions for war in Iraq. Integrated into a combined, joint operation that fused airpower, special operations, and information operations, the Marines had operated hundreds of miles from the beachhead, relying heavily on Marine airlift, especially by Sikorsky CH-53E Sea Stallion helicopters followed by Lockheed KC-130 Hercules cargo carriers. They had succeeded without a large staff, or a plan that was hundreds of pages long, relying instead on common sense, good liaison officers, and "hand con" (not a formal relationship like tactical control or operational control but one sealed with a handshake).

The focus began to shift to Iraq even before Task Force 58 left Afghanistan. In the wake of 11 September, the administration had looked to see if Iraq was behind the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon before deciding to fight in Afghanistan. But it seems that Iraq was never far from the administration's mind and that while overthrowing the Taliban and uprooting Al Qaeda were short-term objectives, Iraq, more specifically, removing the regime of Saddam Hussein, had always been a long-term objective. Military planners followed the administration's lead on both Iraq and Afghanistan.[47] In the fall of 2001, staff officers from Headquarters Marine Corps to Central Command (CentCom) to CFLCC were considering the possibility that U.S. forces could be called upon to invade Iraq. There were some preliminary planning directives, but even without them many Marines and Army officers simply assumed that Iraq would come after Afghanistan. CFLCC's Major General Henry W. Stratman, USA, spoke for many when he said that after 11 September the assumption was not whether, but when, the United States would go to war with Iraq.[48]

In January 2002, General Hailston, in his capacity as the Commanding General, Marine Forces Pacific, directed I MEF to focus its efforts on preparing for "contingencies" in the CentCom theater. "CG, MarForPac . . . decided to focus I MEF efforts on preparation for contingencies in the CentCom theater. I MEF's role in PacCom activities was minimized or assumed by III MEF and MarForPac" to the virtual exclusion of other activities.[49]

This was when I MEF's majors and lieutenant colonels, along with a few colonels, who make any large staff run earned their pay. They entered into what was for many of them the most intense period of their careers in the Marine Corps, one that would not let up for some 18 months. Even before they deployed from the United States, they came close to spending every waking minute working on the plan, often in windowless secure spaces. When they were not working in a vault, they might be traveling from one drab base to another for a conference or a war game. They no longer had any time for themselves, let alone their families or their "honey do" lists.

For the I MEF intelligence section, the focus on CentCom meant embarking on "a wide variety of activities, including presentation of many staff orientation and mission analysis briefings, . . . supporting estimates and plans, . . . development [of require-

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ments] . . . hosting visits from national and theater intelligence organizations (CIA, DIA, MCIA, CentCom, ArCent, and V Corps) and [making] liaison trips." For its part, I MEF's current operations section became involved in various exercises in the CentCom area of operations. In April, for example, it participated in the exercise "Lucky Sentinel," a combined/joint computer-assisted command post exercise designed to train and sustain the battle staff of Joint Task Force Kuwait. It was conducted "in conjunction with ArCent; CentAF; and the Kuwaiti military," good practice for the events that were about to unfold.

Similarly, I MEF's future operations section used exercises like "Desert Scimitar" and "Lucky Sentinel" to prepare for war in the Middle East, while the MEF plans section was involved in longer-range, high-level operational planning. In the subdued words of the I MEF command chronology, "G-5 directed most of its efforts . . . [to] . . . details [of] I MEF's slice of the USCincCent's plan in concert with the nation's strategic objectives."[50]

This was a dramatic understatement. For a few months, the plans section took the lead in the intense and exhausting task of laying the groundwork for Marines to participate in a war for Iraq. In January 2002, General Hagee sent one of his lead planners for Korea, Lieutenant Colonel George W. Smith, Jr., to Tampa with Colonel Jonathan G. Miclot, the plans officer at 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. Their mission was to represent MarCent, not just I MEF, on CentCom's long-range planning element.[51] This was a happy consequence of Marine staffing practices. In his MarCent capacity as a component commander, General Hailston made the decision to let I MEF, the warfighting command subordinate to him, play the leading role in operational planning.

The long-range planning element was small and run mostly by Army ground officers, who had been working in the same directorate as Major General Keith J. Stalder, an even-tempered Marine aviator who was the deputy J-3 at CentCom and would become the deputy commanding general of I MEF later in the year. Since late 2001, the focus of the planning element's much compartmented work had been Iraq, and the timeline was short—this was not theoretical planning for some unlikely contingency in the distant future. The word was that CentCom might need to be ready to fight as early as the spring of 2002; this could be a "come as you are" war. In that regard it would not be unlike the campaign in Afghanistan, which had been a relatively quick success.

Commissioned in 1968 through the Enlisted Commissioning Program, LtGen Earl B. Hailston went to flight school and served in a variety of aviation and ground assignments before assuming the multi-hatted position of Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific/Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Central Command/Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific/Commander. U.S. Marine Corps Bases, Pacific, on 10 August 2001.

Photo courtesy of Field History Branch

The vision that guided the planning was to win by creating "shock and awe" through multiple lines of operation putting simultaneous pressure on the enemy—from the air, from conventional ground operations, and from various kinds of special operations, to include "non-kinetic" operations and operations by proxies like the Kurds. There were three main groups in Iraq—the Shia majority, the ruling Sunni minority, and the Kurds. The Kurds lived a more or less autonomous existence in the northeast corner of the country and had large, well-armed militias. Neither the Kurds nor the Shia had much love for Saddam Hussein, who had suppressed them in unimaginably brutal ways. For Marines, "shock and awe" was something like the "combined arms effect," on a grand scale, of forcing the enemy into a series of dilemmas he could not resolve; if he turned to face one threat, he would make himself vulnerable to another threat. It was something like facing mortars and machine guns at the same time; was the infantry better off staying in fixed positions during a mortar attack, or getting out of its holes into a field of machine gun fire?

While often associated with the air offensive in what was not yet officially known as Operation Iraqi Freedom, "shock and awe" was more than a theory of air warfare. The concept has both a recent and a more distant past. In the recent past it can be traced to a book published by the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., in December 1996 by Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade titled *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, with contributions by retired Generals Charles A. Horner, USAF, and Frederick M. Franks, Jr., USA, both of Desert Shield/Desert Storm fame, and retired Admiral Leon A. Edney, who had been commander-in-chief at Atlantic Command. The authors' purpose was to offer an alternative to the strategy of overwhelming force—sometimes called the Powell Doctrine, on display in Desert Storm, by pointing to the potential of the many new technologies to achieve "rapid domi-

nance" that would paralyze the enemy's will to resist, ideally but not necessarily before any ground forces were committed. It is easy to see why this doctrine is especially attractive to the Air Force, as it suggests that airpower alone could be decisive.

The authors of *Shock and Awe* readily conceded that their theory was not entirely new, with antecedents in the World War II concept of "blitzkrieg" and various operations since. Iraq war historians Williamson Murray and Major General Robert Scales discuss how General Anthony Zinni and his Army counterparts used ideas like "rapid dominance" and "overmatching power" when they considered joint contingency plans against Saddam Hussein.[52] Zinni himself has commented that after Desert Storm, a more or less traditional war, he was convinced that the Marine Corps needed to learn to think along multiple lines of operation. Marines would also have to work better in the joint arena. These were, he said, the lessons he tried to inculcate in I MEF after he became its commanding general in 1994. He added the sage comment that, like many, he imagined at the time that he was on the cutting edge, but realized later that the winds of change were blowing in other places in the Marine Corps around the same time. Transformation is not a straightforward, top-down process.[53]

Looking back to 1989, Murray and Scales found an interesting precedent, a small war before Desert Storm that was almost like a laboratory experiment of the ideas that dominated planning in 2001 and 2002. This was Operation Just Cause in Panama: "Maneuver in Panama was nonlinear and focused on control of the whole operational area rather than on the sequential capture of key terrain and high ground characteristic of more traditional forms of maneuver."[54] Just Cause was complemented by new forms of technology such as laser-guided bombs that enabled pinpoint targeting, that were to improve markedly over the next 10 years, in turn enabling further strides in doctrine. Murray and Scales concluded that Just Cause had little effect on Desert Storm, which did not incorporate much of this kind of "shock and awe," and added that the U.S. military's lack of preparation for the postwar period in Panama had contributed to widespread looting and lawlessness after the fighting had stopped.[55]

Throughout 2002 and into 2003, the basic concept for a war of "shock and awe" against Saddam Hussein did not change. General Franks made sure of that. Nor did other threshold concepts change once they had been established. These had to do with the basic organization for combat, how the Marines would organize for the fight, who they would report to, and with basing the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing in theater. Smith and Miclot found that their counterparts in the long-range planning element were working from a scenario that had two Marine expeditionary brigades performing various missions, mostly to do with security, in southeast Iraq while the Army's V Corps carried the fight to the enemy in the north. Over the next 40 days, the two Marine planners worked patiently to lay down the Marine expeditionary force "marker"; the argument that the Marines should fight as one expeditionary force in Iraq, the whole force being greater than the sum of its parts, let alone two independent Marine expeditionary brigades.[56]

This took some doing. Although it was something they had always known and heard, Smith and Miclot learned again, firsthand, just how peculiar the concept of the Marine air-ground task force is to non-Marines; no other Service has anything quite like it. Many Marine and Army units of apparently comparable size are not in fact comparable; the Marine unit typically has more organic power, because it comes with its own air support. This is one of the factors that led to disconnects when joint planners were placing Army and Marine units on the board. As Lieutenant Colonel Smith put it, it was difficult to get into the Army's "comfort zone," to make his Army counterparts comfortable with the "MEF single battle" concept, but he felt that after 40 days of hard work, he and Miclot had succeeded.[57]

The other threshold issue they took on was "beddown" for the Marine aircraft wing, essentially a matter of forward basing. This may not sound like a particularly dramatic issue, but with the U.S. Air Force occupying ever more space on the air bases in Kuwait, it was important for the Marine Corps to stake claims to space for its aircraft near the front. Otherwise the wing would have had to look for bases farther afield, which would degrade its ability to get into the fight and especially to provide responsive close air support. Miclot worked hard and succeeded; Smith considers him one of the unsung heroes of the war for identifying, and resolving, the issue early on.[58]

On 12 February 2002, in Washington, Smith and Miclot back-briefed the trio of officers who held the key positions for shaping basic Marine Corps policy and "major muscle movements" in 2002 and 2003—Lieutenant Generals Hailston (in his MarCent capacity), Hagee (in his I MEF capacity), and Emil R. Bedard (the deputy commandant of the Marine Corps for Plans, Policies, and Operations (PP&O), basically

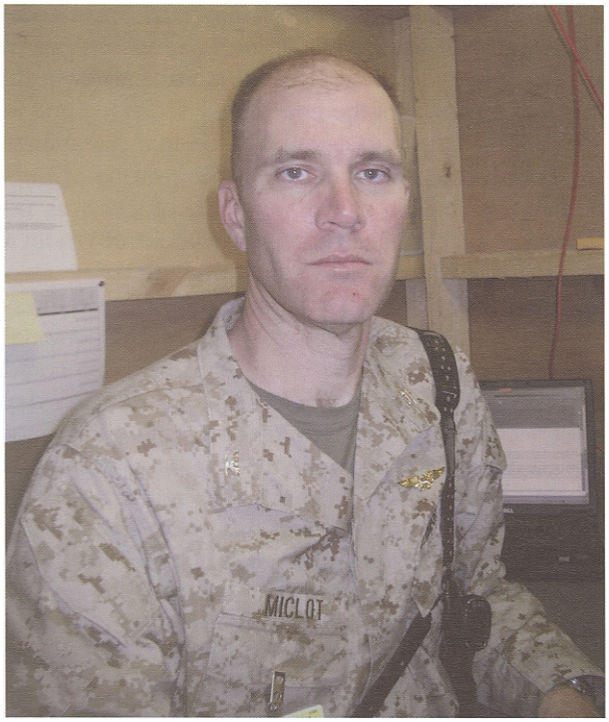

Photo courtesy of Col Charles J. Quilter II

An Iowa native, Col Jonathan G. Miclot was commissioned from the U.S. Naval Academy and then designated a naval flight officer in 1981. He commanded VMFA(AW)-225 before being assigned as plans officer, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing.

the commandant's current operations division). Smith and Miclot were gratified to find that the generals wholeheartedly supported their work on both the unity of the Marine air-ground task force and the bed-down issues, something that did not change for the life of the operation. Within a few months, General Hagee would become commandant and General Conway would take his place at I MEF; but at the top of the Marine Corps, the I MEF-MarCent-PP&O nexus remained the central forum for consultations and decisions about Iraq and certainly played a prominent role in the sourcing conference that took place later in February to come up with a preliminary troop list for Iraq. (The levels of involvement shifted somewhat over time. Initially, Bedard played the most prominent role. As the lay-down for Iraq started to gel, MarCent and I MEF played more prominent roles, while Bedard tended to monitor developments. Although under CentCom's operational control, MarCent also reported to Headquarters Marine Corps, generally to Bedard, on strictly Marine Corps business such as deciding which Marine units to deploy to CentCom or how to outfit them.)[59] Thanks to the state of technology for secure communications, the commanders and the planners were able to stay in very close touch throughout the process, and the senior officers who were read in on Iraq could develop and maintain arguably the best situational awareness in the history of warfare. They could find out almost anything they wanted to know.[60*]

It was Marine Corps doctrine that the Marine expeditionary force should not only fight as a Marine air-ground task force, but that it should also plan as an air-ground task force. Planners for the constituent parts of the task force should integrate their work. They should not work as stovepipes, waiting to interface at senior levels after plans were well advanced. Instead they needed to function as a network, at all levels, from the start.[**]

Officers of I MEF used the same approach in their work with other Services. In the interests of coordinated planning, Colonel Joseph D. Dowdy, and Lieutenant Colonel Smith, who was the I MEF plans officer at the time, reached out to their counterparts during the many planning conferences that took place over the next few months. These included sessions at Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois; V Corps headquarters at Heidelberg, Germany; and CFLCC headquarters at Camp Doha, Kuwait, not to mention the commanders' conferences chaired by CentCom on a regular basis. The Marines were generally able to establish and maintain good relationships with their counterparts, especially at the working level. Sometimes it even reached the point where planners identified more with one another than with their parent commands, sure sign that relationships had gelled.[61]

It was always assumed that I MEF would fight under CFLCC. When CFLCC had taken control of land operations in Afghanistan in November 2001, CentCom had charged it with the traditional Joint Task Force Kuwait missions of defending Kuwait and generally being prepared for war with Iraq. That had not changed in 2002, and from the start CFLCC had played the central role in planning for the ground war against Iraq and for I MEF's role in it.[62] The arrangement was that, exercising operational control, MarCent would flow I MEF to theater and provide for its sustainment, relying mostly on the Marine Logistics Command drawn largely from the 2d Force Serv-

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*While in Tampa, LtCol Smith was able to hold a secure telephone conversation with Gen Hagee virtually every day, briefing him on developments and receiving his guidance.

**This was one of the fundamentals of the Marine Corps planning process: "continuous planning requires continuous coordination laterally and between echelons as plans are adjusted and refined over time." (U.S. Marine Corps, *Planning* [Washington, D.C.: Department of Navy, 1997], p. 83)

ice Support Group for that purpose. But then MarCent would assign I MEF to CFLCC's tactical control for combat operations alongside the Army's V Corps. The result, General McKiernan commented later, would be the first time since the Korean War that there would be a combined "operational-level, land component command/warfighting headquarters."[63]

Like planning, educating other Services about the Marine air-ground task force and safeguarding its equities was a continuous process. It went on long after the initial lessons in Tampa in January and February 2002. Marines at many levels engaged their counterparts at CFLCC and other commands, finding ways to make the lessons stick without being resented by their "students." The process started at the top. From the highest levels on down, Marine commanders and planners stayed on message. General Hailston continued to defend I MEF's identity as an air-ground task force. While still I MEF commander, General Hagee did the same when meeting with General Mikolashek, who remained in command at CFLCC through the summer of 2002. Then, when General Conway was preparing to replace General Hagee as I MEF commander and General McKiernan became the new general on this particular block, Conway hosted McKiernan and his subordinates at Camp Pendleton. First the Marines presented the I MEF capabilities brief. Among other "lessons" about the air-ground task force, General Conway wanted to make sure his new boss understood that "our air" was also "his air," a concept General McKiernan came to embrace.[64] He also wanted to give his subordinates—now-Major General Mattis, who had become commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, and Major General James F. Amos, the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing commander, a chance to talk through issues with CFLCC planners. The specific issues were perhaps not as important as opening channels of communication among general officers at CFLCC and I MEF; the participants remember feeling that the meeting cleared the air. General McKiernan's view, that CFLCC was there to "shape" the fight by its subordinates, not to plan it, must have gone over well with the Marines.[65]

The generals set the tone for their respective commands, and much the same process happened at lower levels as subordinates worked their way through the many practical issues involved in joint operations. General McKiernan characterized the prevailing attitude throughout CentCom as: "Let us coordinate, and let us cross talk, and then come . . . together at a series of . . . conferences. . . . I would say that that was always done very well."[66] In addition to the exchanges between counterparts, most commands also made a point of exchanging competent liaison officers, just as General Mattis had done in Afghanistan. One of the important lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq seemed to be that commands understood the importance of finding strong officers to serve as liaison officers; liaison officer was no longer a suitable billet for an underachiever whom a commander wanted out of sight and mind.[67]

Technology helped the process along. Counterparts and liaison officers may have held personal meetings whenever they could, but they also could and did look each other in the eye almost every day over secure video-teleconferencing links—this happened before, during, and after combat. Virtually all of the generals in theater were regular and, it seemed, enthusiastic users of this technology. At the same time, there was a robust exchange of e-mails and discussions in chat rooms on the SIPRnet (the secure military internet system), where officers could also consult the drafts of one another's plans and work through revisions. In short, there were unparalleled opportunities for the secure coordination of operations, especially in peacetime; operational security did not have to be the obstacle to efficient planning it had been in virtually every other major war before Operation Iraqi Freedom. It was no longer as true that senior headquarters imposed operation plans and orders on subordinate commands. Looking at the process of planning for Iraq, a Fort Leavenworth study concluded that since networks in "the information-age . . . enable, . . . distributed, parallel planning, V Corps, I MEF, and the subordinate divisions were near-equal architects for the final plan."[68] This conclusion assumes that the subordinate commands had the requisite clearances to access highly classified files.

In retrospect, integrating with CFLCC appears to have been relatively easy compared to working with CFACC. Groups of Army officers, especially at CFLCC and in parts of V Corps, came to accept and even embrace the concept of the Marine air-ground task force as an organization with integrated ground, air, and support assets. Although there were nuances in the picture that make it difficult to generalize, it is safe to say that the same was never true to the same degree of CFACC, the Coalition air forces commanded by Lieutenant General Moseley, who was not only a functional and a component commander, but also one whose forces had been conducting operations in theater for quite some time, especially Operation Southern Watch. They were flying combat missions under his command while his counterparts

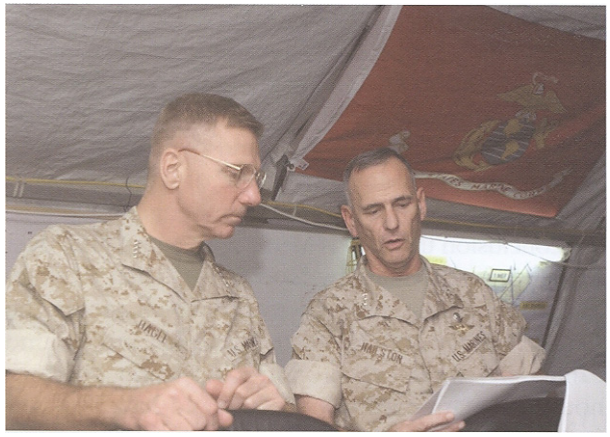

Photo courtesy of Field History Branch

Gen Michael W. Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps, receives a brief on current operations from LtGen Earl B. Hailston, Commanding General, Marine Forces, Central Command.

were still thinking about what they would bring to the fight if and when it occurred.

Before leaving CentCom, General Zinni had laid some of the groundwork for cooperation between CFACC and I MEF by instituting a standard operating procedure for joint fires, which addressed "battlefield coordination, direction, and procedures for . . . air and ground-based fires systems" and was ratified by all of the Service chiefs.[69] He had his Army and Marine Corps subordinates work out an arrangement for the employment of Marine air under Joint Task Force Kuwait, and established the general principle that Marine air would support Marine ground forces, offering any "excess" sorties to CFACC.[70] In 2002, while he was still at I MEF, General Hagee and General Moseley renewed the same general agreement about the employment of Marine air with General Moseley:

> Lieutenant General Moseley . . . , Lieutenant General Hagee . . . , and Lieutenant General Hailston . . . met in June . . . and agreed to make CFACC the air space control authority, with I MEF MACCS [Marine Air Command and Control System] controlling air in support of I MEF. I MEF would publish its own direct support air tasking order (DSATO) to task I MEF aircraft, which was to be included in CFACC's theater ATO [air tasking order]. When Lieutenant General Conway took command of I MEF from Lieutenant General Hagee, the arrangements and relationships did not change; Lieutenant General Moseley continued to endorse the principle of I MEF MACCS controlling air assets supporting the MAGTF [on the] ground.[71]

When interviewed in the spring of 2003 about cooperation with CFACC, Generals Hailston and Amos were upbeat about the subject. They reported general agreement with General Moseley on the role of Marine air in the looming conflict, one that was different from that in Desert Shield/Desert Storm when a fair chunk of Marine air had been split off from I MEF and worked for the equivalent of the CFACC.[72] As General Amos put it, he found General Moseley to be a commander who readily understood the utility of the Marine aircraft wing as a part of the Marine air-ground task force while asserting his own rights to the air space over the battlefield.[73]

The problem, once again, was finding a way to get into the joint comfort zone—to get things right at the working level, to focus not on general agreements but on specific details that would apply in 2003. The default setting at CFACC was to control all of the air space in the area of operations. The Air Force liked to control air space through the air tasking order, described as "the daily master plan . . . [which] listed all of the strikes, CAPs [combat air patrols], tanker missions, and other supporting functions for a 24-hour period."[74] Air tasking orders were prepared about 96 hours before their time of execution. Accustomed to decentralized planning, and interested primarily in supporting I MEF's scheme of maneuver, the Marine aviators had not changed overmuch from Desert Shield/Desert Storm, when they had been "deeply suspicious" of what they saw as an inflexible system that might not be able to respond to last-minute requests for support, that is, the Air Force system seemed to be better suited for strategic or operational offensives than for the kind of tactical uses that were the bread and butter of Marine air. In the end, in this new war the agreement among the generals was to "nest" Marine command and control under CFACC. There would be a Marine air tasking order within the CFACC tasking order; the primary mission for Marine air would be to support the I MEF scheme of maneuver; excess sorties would be made available to CFACC, and there would be provisions for the reverse to occur as well. Excess CFACC sorties often "volunteered" to fly Marine missions; they seemed to enjoy working within the Marine air control system.[75]

A related and very complex issue was the separation of what came to be known as "Air Day," the day the air offensive would begin, and "Ground Day," the day the ground offensive would begin. These terms were commonly abbreviated as "A-Day" and "G-Day." (In this war, there was an often-confusing mix of civilian and military acronyms whose meanings

were not entirely clear to everyone.) To summarize what was a lengthy and sometimes hard-fought set of transactions, CFACC thought the war should start with its house brand of "shock and awe," attacking carefully selected targets with precision munitions, some simultaneously, others in a particular sequence. The main targets were the air defense capabilities that had survived Operations Northern and Southern Watch, as well as leadership and command-and-control nodes. With their coverage of nearly two-thirds of Iraq, Northern and Southern Watch represented an early, ongoing, and effective suppression of enemy air defense campaign.

At times it seemed that CFACC thought the air offensive could win the war by itself; there was a precedent of sorts in Serbia when NATO air attacks in 1999 had, by themselves, brought about the desired result: "in every way that mattered, airpower won the fighting in Kosovo, while ground units served to consolidate that victory."[76] This fit with the view, held by many in Washington, that Saddam's regime was held together largely by the threat of force, and for that reason his support was weak and shallow. This was a variant on the "kick in the door and the house will collapse" train of thought, assiduously promoted by people like Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, that seemed to guide a lot of the planning for this war.[77]

It followed, for those who held this belief, that CFACC planning did not have to be as integrated as planning by other CentCom components and that CentCom should allow CFACC enough time to create its war-winning effects. That would be something on the order of 30 days, not too different from the 38 days in Desert Storm that had preceded the ground war; in that war, the two campaigns had not been integrated but sequential. Now, in 2002, CFACC wanted a boundary that put Baghdad under its control for those 30 days, as well as the use of Marine fixed-wing assets that, presumably, the Marine Corps would not need until the ground war started. This was not only an argument against synchronicity; it also undermined I MEF "single battle" doctrine. Simply put, the Marines did not want to break up the air-ground task force, even temporarily.

Unwilling to give up the benefits of synchronizing the air and ground campaigns, many Army and Marine officers consistently argued for a much shorter air offensive. Lieutenant Colonel Smith remembered that as early as late February 2002, the prevailing view at CentCom was that the offensive should last no more than 48 hours.[78] Within I MEF, General Amos continuously repeated that his first and most important priority was supporting the Marines on the ground. General Mattis was one of the leading proponents of synchronicity, making his arguments forcefully throughout the planning phase. He wanted almost no preliminary air attacks before the ground attack and for the air and ground offensives to start very close to the same time. One of the planners at division, Lieutenant Colonel Paul J. Kennedy, came to the conclusion that it was Mattis who won I MEF over to his way of thinking by "socializing" (that is, effectively promoting) this concept, which stood the CFACC concept on its head. If the air and ground campaigns were synchronous, or nearly synchronous, the Marine aircraft wing would have few airframes to spare for CFACC, because it would be busy supporting I MEF.[79]*

No matter who originated the idea, I MEF consistently argued for a much briefer air offensive in its dealings with CFLCC, which adopted much the same position, and made its arguments to other elements in the CentCom chain. These arguments became more compelling in late 2002 as CentCom focused more and more on the southern oil fields after concern for their preservation turned into a strategic imperative. In the end, one of the most telling arguments against a lengthy preliminary air offensive was that it would put Saddam Hussein on notice that the ground offensive was coming and would give him time to sabotage his own oil fields, as he had in the Kuwaiti oil fields during the Desert Storm air offensive. It was largely for that reason that in December 2002 and January 2003, I MEF and CFLCC joined forces to argue for no preliminary shaping whatsoever, which did not resonate with CFACC. The final prewar consensus was that the air offensive should be relatively short and that the two phases should be as closely integrated as possible.[80]

The commander of the British air component in Iraq, Air Vice Marshall Glenn L. Torpy offered a good summary of the factors at play in the final stages of the debate in early 2003, which suggests how difficult it was to close the gap between CFACC and the other components:

> As we developed our thinking . . . there was a shortening of that phase [the air phase] and it came down in the early part of . . . [2003] from approximately 16 days . . . to a matter of five days. . . . [T]hat was driven even closer together, as we got closer to the likelihood of

*LtCol Kennedy was right in so far as Gen Mattis was a very effective advocate for his ideas. However, it appears that others at I MEF and CentCom had reached the same conclusion on their own. (LtCol Paul J. Kennedy intvw, 6Nov03 [MCHC, Quantico, VA])

> the operation ['s] being executed, for three factors. . . . First of all, there was a growing realization that we needed to secure the southern oil fields as swiftly as possible to prevent any subsequent damage. . . . There was nervousness by the American land component and by General Franks over the vulnerability of having a very large land contingent in a fairly small area in Kuwait [waiting for the air campaign to end]. . . . General Franks felt that if he had the ability to synchronize the components together as comprehensively as possible then he would have the [best] chance of . . . getting the campaign over and done with as quickly as possible.[81]

In the days just before the war, the commanders appear to have agreed to shorten the air campaign even further. According to the Fort Leavenworth study, the final plan was for the gap between A-Day and G-Day to be 15 hours. This happened after "Colonel Kevin Benson, the CFLCC C-5 [with whom Marine planners had an excellent relationship] developed and forwarded to the CentCom staff a series of position papers advocating adjust [ments in] . . . the G-A Day sequence."[82*]

The dispute over the separation of A-Day and G-Day went hand in hand with a painful set of disputes over the time-phased force and deployment data (commonly known as TPFDD, closely related to the TPFDL, with the "L" standing for "List"), the computerized system for getting U.S. forces to a fight in good order. It could phase forces to match a plan, and make sure the support they needed would arrive at the right time. Especially in a small, single-Service contingency, this was the kind of rational process everyone was comfortable with. In large deployments the process was trickier; there was a finite amount of lift, especially airlift that the Services had to share. Most of these assets belong to Transportation Command. When the debate over the sequence of the campaign has not been settled, and when no one knows when the war will start, the result can be a three- or four-sided scramble for scarce resources. This is generally what happened between January and July 2002. No one had enough forces in theater at that point; there was not even a firm date by which

Photo Courtesy of Col George W. Smith, Jr.

A graduate of the University of North Carolina, LtCol George W. Smith, Jr., was commissioned in 1985. Following several staff and school assignments, he reported to headquarters I Marine Expeditionary Force in July 2000 where he served consecutively as a future operations planner and a regional plans officer.

everyone had to be ready to cross the line of departure. But there was strong and continuing pressure to be ready to flow forces to theater, which lent some urgency to the discussions about the deployment data. Believing they would start the fight, and having their own plan for that phase (which they had developed more or less on their own), CFACC planners argued that they should be first in line. But if CFACC won the deployment data argument, then it mattered less who won the argument about the separation of A-Day and G-Day, because the ground forces could not be in theater and ready to fight until CFACC had finished moving its forces. In other words, the danger was that the deployment data could drive the war plan, which was the reverse of what was supposed to happen, the deployment data was designed to be a tool for planners. We had, Lieutenant Colonel Smith concluded wryly, gotten inside our own "observation/orientation/decision/action" (OODA) loop.[83*]

There were additional complications to do with

*On 1 March, Gen James Conway commented that the air campaign was likely to be brief in order to achieve surprise, which implied a very short separation between A-Day and G-Day. This was consistent with the scenario for the 10 March 2003 I MEF rehearsal of concept drill, when General Conway reminded his staff not to "expect a return of A and G separated by multiple days."

*The OODA loop is a concept pioneered by U.S. Air Force Col John Boyd. Boyd's argument was that if you want to win an aerial dogfight, you will go through this loop faster than your enemy, that is you will get inside his OODA loop.