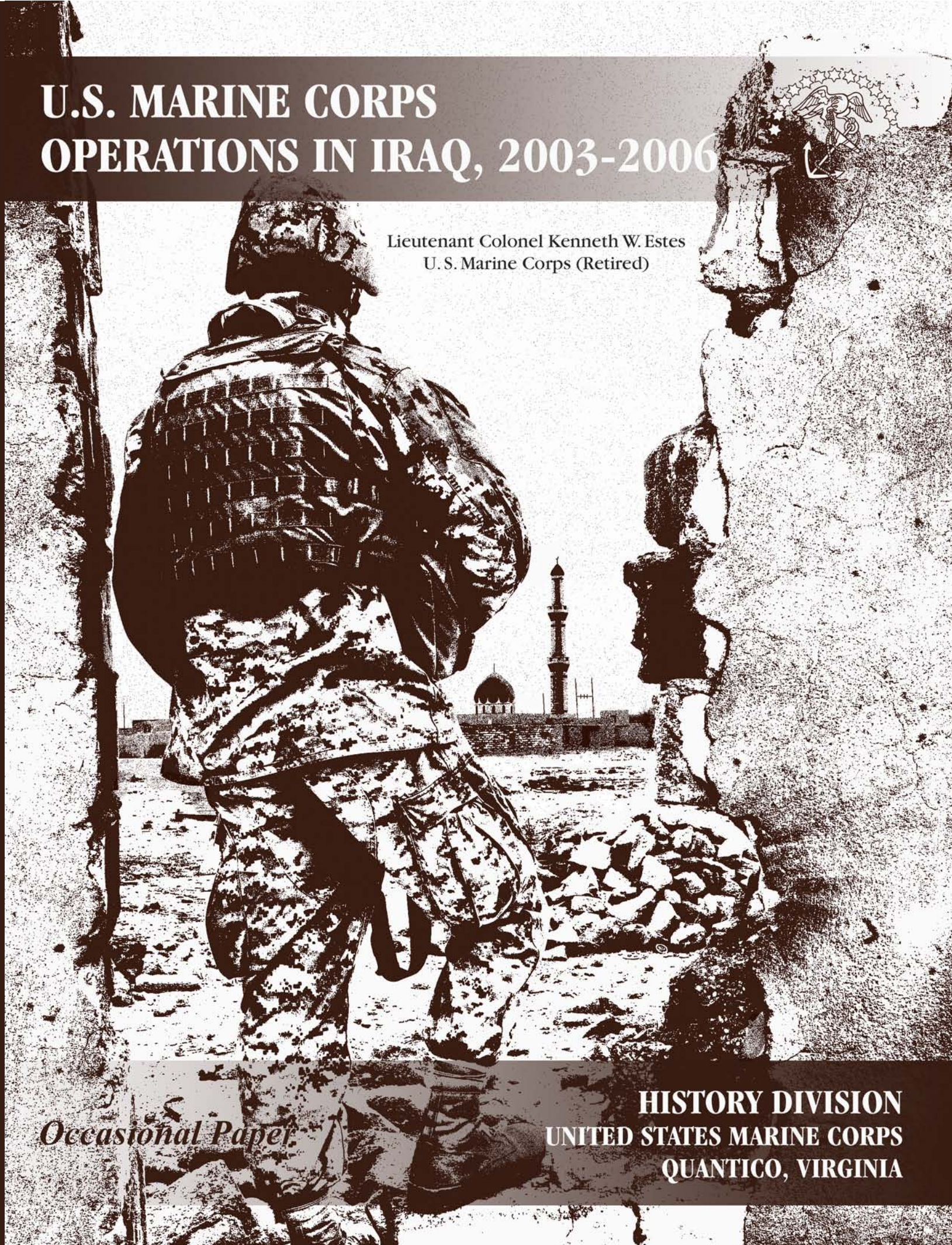
U.S. MARINE CORPS OPERATIONS IN IRAQ, 2003-2006

Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth W. Estes
U. S. Marine Corps (Retired)



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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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by
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U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

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Foreword

The History Division has undertaken the publication for limited distribution of various studies, theses, compilations, bibliographies, monographs, and memoirs as well as proceedings at selected workshops, seminars, symposia, and similar colloquia, which it considers to be of significant value for audiences interested in Marine Corps history. These "Occasional Papers," which are chosen for their intrinsic worth, must reflect structured research, present a contribution to historical knowledge not readily available in published sources, and reflect original content on the part of the author, compiler, or editor. It is the intent of the division that these occasional papers be distributed to select institutions such as service schools, official Department of Defense historical agencies, and directly concerned Marine Corps organizations, so the information contained therein will be available for study and exploitation.

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Director of Marine Corps History

Preface

This is a story about Marines and a tough mission: the Marines of I and II Marine Expeditionary Forces were deployed to Iraq during 2004–2006 and confronted a violent insurgency and a nation in chaos. Though the Marines came to fight—they did so admirably in al-Fallujah, ar-Ramadi, and other hot and dusty locales in al-Anbar Province—they also laid the foundation for a secure and stable Iraqi society. Though security and stabilization seemed improbable if not impossible in al-Anbar Province, the apparent intractable insurgency was beaten with gritty determination that Marines have always brought to the fight. Besides using warfighting skills, the Marines also employed their expertise in civil affairs to help rebuild a nation in disarray.

The military occupation of al-Anbar Province required patience, perseverance, and fortitude. The cities and towns were damaged, inhabitants demoralized, and little remained of civil authority. Hopes remained high that the occupation would be short–lived and that the Iraqis would pick themselves up and rebuild. However, those hopes died hard on the harsh realities of post-invasion Iraq. As the Marines took up new and unplanned responsibilities, insurgent violence continued and increased, generated by the national disarray of all social institutions. For the I and II Marine Expeditionary Forces, nation building and combat operations would proceed alongside one another for most of their service in Iraq.

A work of this kind necessarily depends on the help and advice of many people. The original concept of assigning this volume to an independent historian came from discussions in 2005 between then-Lieutenant General James N. Mattis, commanding the Marine Corps Combat Development Center, and Major General Donald R. Gardner (Ret), President of Marine Corps University. Major General Gardner launched the project and arranged for my appointment as a research fellow of his institution during 2006–08.

Officers and enlisted Marines of Inspector-Instructor, 4th Landing Support Battalion, Ft. Lewis, Washington, cheerfully provided office space and support for my research and writing. Their readiness to assist extended in many instances to their advice and valued explanations of current procedures and operational matters, including in several cases experiences in Iraq during the period treated by this work. In particular, I thank Lieutenant Colonel Richard C. Smith, Major Wesley E. Souza, Captain Gregory J. Chester, Captain Christopher J. Murphy, Sergeant Major Thomas Glembin, and Staff Sergeant M. E. Johnston.

The Marine Corps University Foundation and Marine Corps Heritage Foundation supported me with a combined fellowship in 2006–08, administered by Brigadier General Thomas V. Draude (Ret). The staff of the Archives Branch, Library of the Marine Corps, Gray Research Center at Quantico, principally Michael Miller, Director, and Dr. Jim Ginther, Manuscript Curator, facilitated my use of their document collection. Mr. Scott A. Allen assisted me in understanding some of the contributions of the Marine Corps Systems Command to the campaign under study.

At the Marine Corps History Division, I enjoyed the camaraderie and shared knowledge of Charles Neimeyer, Director; Colonel Richard Camp and Colonel Patricia D. Saint, Deputy Directors; Charles Melson, Chief Historian; Fred Allison, Oral Historian; and Master Gunnery Sergeant Robert A. Yarnall, historian. I received assistance from the Reference Section: Danny A. Crawford, Robert V. Aquilina, Lena M. Kaljot, Annette Amerman, Kara Newcomer, and Shelia Boyd. This work benefited from the editorial review of Colonel Charles A. Jones and the efforts of Julie H. Robert, History Division intern. The Editing and Design Section oversaw final production: Ken Williams, Greg Macheak, Wanda Renfrow, Vince Martinez, and Steve Hill, who was the primary designer on the project.

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U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)


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Part I: *The Campaign Against the Insurgency*

Chapter 1:
The Return to Iraq

The End of the 2003 Campaign

The long, hot summer of 2003 drew to a close for the Marine Corps forces remaining in Iraq. The brief offensive of March-April had become an unplanned occupation and peacekeeping campaign. Lieutenant General James T. Conway's I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) staff had announced the transition to "Post-hostility Operations" on 15 April, and the redeployment to a new operating area to the south of Baghdad ensued. The scope of Operation Iraqi Freedom shifted into security and stability operations, facilitating humanitarian assistance and restoring civilian rule. Furthermore, the Marine Corps presence in Iraq loomed more temporary than ever with the identification of follow-on military contingents of the loose Coalition organized by the United States and United Nations that would take over these duties upon their arrival in Iraq.

Major General James N. Mattis had set the tone for the stability and security operations by drastically cutting his 1st Marine Division troop list from some 23,000 to 8,000 Marines retaining only seven battalions of infantry and two light armored reconnaissance (LAR) battalions under a reduced division headquarters. These occupied seven key "governorates" or provinces and worked to reinstate local police and security functions and revive the municipal services and public utilities. The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (Major General James F. Amos) largely redeployed to the United States, leaving behind two detachments with 18 helicopters for support, and the Marine Logistics Command (Brigadier General Richard S. Kramlich) worked in Kuwait to reload materiel into ships and aircraft, supported the remaining units and redeployed itself, leaving a special purpose Marine air-ground task force under Brigadier General Ronald S. Coleman to end the Marine Corps presence in the theater.[1]

Lieutenant General Conway held a transfer of authority ceremony with the Polish Army commander of the Multinational Division Center–South on 3 September, and the rest of his Marines began their redeployment. A 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade command element briefly served as interim higher headquarters during the redeployment period. All was not well in the city of an-Najaf, however, and a further three weeks of patrolling and occasional fighting fell to 1st Battalion, 7th Marines before a turnover could be effected. This unit was the last Marine Corps battalion to return to the U.S. in 2003. The 1st Marine Division sustained no combat deaths during its stability and security operations campaign period. On 9 December 2003 Company C, 4th LAR Battalion returned to Salt Lake City, Utah, after three months in Iraq followed by a six-month Unit Deployment Program rotation in Japan, the last Marine Corps organization to reach home station.

Marines of the special purpose Marine air-ground task force continued its mission into November along with a few other small elements, such as Detachment B of the 4th Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, which supported the Multinational Division Center-South; 5th Platoon, Fleet Antiterrorist Security Team (FAST), providing security for the U.S. Embassy, Baghdad; and some 556 Marine Corps personnel remaining in Iraq and Kuwait. Before departing for the United States, Major General Mattis questioned Brigadier General Coleman about some of his equipment in the hands of the special purpose Marine air-ground task force. Major General Mattis thought he might need the equipment soon, and set 10 November 2003 as the date when the entire division's personnel and equipment would be combat ready.[2]

As the combat forces that conducted the original invasion and occupation phase left Iraq, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) arrived in the Persian Gulf and reported to the Fifth Fleet on 29 September. These periodic and overlapping Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments operated as part of the theater reserve for the Combatant Commander, U.S. Central Command, Army General John P. Abizaid, during the remainder of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In this case, the 13th MEU operated with the British-led Multinational Division-Southeast. Landing elements included 1st Battalion, 1st Marines at Kuwait Naval Base and Umm Qasr, the Marine Expeditionary Unit that conducted anti-smuggling and security missions on the Faw Peninsula during 11–25 October.

By this time, discussions in Washington D.C. had advanced to the stage that a U.S. force rotation plan developed, and planners at Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps began to assess another deployment to Iraq in addition to the demands of reforming and reconstituting the forces now returning from the 2003 campaign.

The staff of Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps estimated that providing such a force for the next Iraq rotation would delay the normal unit deployment cycle another year, disrupt the maritime prepositioned shipping reconstitution by again drawing essential equipment and drastically affect the Marine Corps personnel policy governing deployment length, reserve mobilization, resumption of "stop-loss" actions and cause intangible effects on retention in both active and reserve components.[3]

Fielding I MEF for combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom caused considerable disruptions in the forces and the supporting establishment of the Marine Corps during 2002–03. The Corps mobilized approximately 22,000 reservists by 1 May 2003 and still retained over 10,500 on duty in mid-October. A planned maximum of 3,000 would remain on active duty after March 2004 for augmentation tasks by continued call-up and demobilization of reservists. Active duty end strength had also climbed because of "stop-loss" and "stop-move" manpower directives, reaching a peak of 179,630 in July 2003, but it then subsided to 177,756 at the end of September and presumably would return to the authorized 175,000 by March 2004.

Maintaining routine deployments to Okinawa had required moving several battalions and aircraft squadrons from Operation Iraqi Freedom to the United States and then to Okinawa with 90 days or less at home station. These measures, and the extended deployment of other battalions and one reserve infantry battalion, would restore the planned 'normal' unit deployment cycle to Okinawa by 2005.

Of equal concern to headquarters was the need to reconstitute the floating equipment pools carried in the three maritime prepositioned ship squadrons that had all been used as part of the strategic deployment of I MEF to Kuwait at the end of 2002. The forecast estimated the basic reconstitution of the three squadrons by March 2004. The staff identified further challenges in replacing aviation ordnance, antitank missiles, and overcoming the depot overhaul backlog, but the larger question remained that of supporting the next Marine Corps contingent in Iraq.

The Continuing Campaign in Iraq

With the apparent need to redeploy Marines to Iraq, General Abizaid had to determine the forces, based upon his assessment of the security situation in Iraq. The shortfall in Coalition troops meant that the U.S. would have to replace one or two Army divisions in March 2004. Although the final decision would not be taken until the end of the year, the estimate of the Joint Staff forecasted the need for three to six battalions each from the Army and Marine Corps. The Commandant, General Michael W. Hagee, decided to plan for the deployment of a Marine division built around six infantry battalions with commensurate aviation and logistics support.

General Hagee and his staff saw a key issue in the period of deployment and how it would affect the rest of the Corps. A seven-month deployment would permit much more flexibility in meeting global requirements while maintaining unit cohesion. He resolved to take this proposal to the Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld.[4]

On 5 November 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld announced officially that Marine Corps units would return to Iraq as part of the U.S. troop rotation. The first 20,000 Marines and sailors of the Camp Pendleton I MEF were expected to replace the Army's 82d Airborne Division by February 2004. The deployment was expected to last seven-months with another 20,000-strong Marine force replacing them after that for another seven-months.[5]

General Hagee's decision and planning guidance of 27 November settled the future of Marine Corps deployments to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Marine Forces, Central Command would be provided with a reduced Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) for operations in Iraq. In addition to its command element, a reduced Marine division with nine infantry battalions would meet the Joint Staff and Combatant Commander, U.S. Central Command requirement and would be accompanied by an aircraft wing and force service support group, both reduced and tailored for the smaller ground combat element envisioned.

The key elements of General Hagee's guidance reflected the earlier concerns over the reconstitution of Marine Corps forces in the aftermath of the 2003 campaign. A seven-month unit rotation poli-

cy was the cornerstone of the planning guidance. Although the Army and other services planned their deployments to Iraq for a 13-month cycle, General Hagee wanted to maintain the by-now customary deployment of six to seven months that had the best chance of preserving the continuing operations of the Corps in its global commitments: the forward deployed III MEF in Japan and the Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments from the east and went coast organizations to the Mediterranean and western Pacific.

General Hagee authorized the Marine Forces Central Command planners to draw as required from the scheduled unit deployments to III MEF (except for the 31st MEU) for its force list. The preservation of the Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments continued to meet global requirements, although the Marine Expeditionary Units had already served in combat when detailed by the Combatant Commander, U.S. Central Command. To meet materiel concerns, General Hagee's guidance requested the maximum use of in-theater turnover of equipment between rotating units and acquiring Army equipment used in the 82d Airborne Division and 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment area of operations not common to Marine Corps unit tables of equipment, such as new counter-battery radars, uparmored wheeled vehicles and various other items. Finally, General Hagee authorized the issue of equipment stored on Okinawa and with the maritime prepositioned shipping squadrons, with exception of the first maritime prepositioned ship squadron that had been reconstituted: Maritime Prepositioned Squadron 3, based in the Marianas.

Obviously, the intended demobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve would prove temporary. Further deactivations continued past 17 December even as 3d Battalion, 24th Marines activated. But the activation of an infantry battalion as well as other units added over 3,000 reservists to the active force, not counting individual augmentations, by the time the 2002–03 activations had been demobilized by March 2004.[6]

Problems in Iraq 2003–04

Although the planning process by the United States for the invasion of Iraq had exceeded a year, very little planning for Phase IVB (post-hostilities) existed by the time 1st Marine Division assumed its responsibilities south of Baghdad in 2003. Instead, most authorities assumed that the Iraqis would replace its government with new leaders and that intact governmental bureaucracies would return to work and assist immediately in the recovery effort. After the combat phase had ended, however, U.S. and Coalition forces saw a gravely deteriorated Iraq. The forces in theater had focused on the offensive operations in conducting the Iraq campaign. The questions of military government and reconstruction efforts had to be left to other organizations that presumably would assume responsibility for this effort after combat had concluded. The rapid termination of formal combat left only the combat forces in theater. Thus, the occupiers of Iraq in April 2003 faced several harsh realities.

The Army's V Corps headquarters converted to Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7) and now began exercising command and control over a multi-national force eventually drawing contingents and representatives from over thirty countries. Its responsibilities extended over all Iraq, and it reported directly to the new Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The CPA was the newly formed occupation authority established by the U.S. government to oversee the establishment of a new Iraqi government. From this combination of agencies, a new Iraq, with reformed political institutions, rebuilt infrastructure, and a re-energized society was supposed to emerge.

Events would prove the Army's first planning effort too optimistic and limited. Assuming a steady improvement in general conditions in Iraq, CTF-7's initial campaign plan of June 2003 considered that the security situation would see decreased opposition to U.S. forces. The CPA, the highest U.S. political agency in the country, would presumably revive native institutions and governmental bodies at local and national levels. The ongoing U.S. military actions would destroy surviving paramilitary forces, and support for former regime loyalists, such as Ba'athist leaders, would decrease as they were captured, tried, or killed. The presumed improvement of basic services and the transfer of Iraqi sovereignty to an interim government would undercut the opposition of radical anti-western religious groups and potential violence between factions in the country. Above all, it assumed that Iraqi institutions, which had survived the combat phase as well as the final years of the Hussein regime were capable of performing their usual functions and security efforts. The end of combat would also bring

economic recovery and permit the repairing of damaged infrastructure, thus promoting a newly emerging democratic government and discrediting anti-western factions.

The campaign plan called for destroying the remaining enemy irregular forces and installing Iraqi Civil Defense Corps forces during July 2003. At the same time, an Iraqi Army would begin to form, public services would resume functioning, and U.S. military forces could free manpower for new initiatives. These last actions would include beginning a program in August for training the new Iraqi Army as well as neutralizing subversives or terrorists and defeating remaining criminal gangs. Protecting the first local elections would encourage transitions to local authority, permitting the removal of U.S. forces from urban areas. The Army planned to move out of the cities into consolidated forward operating bases in late September and to be ready to conduct combat operations, assist or otherwise reinforce Iraqi security forces, and even expand the divisional zones of responsibilities as organizations such as the airborne units and 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment began to redeploy to home stations. The "end state" under this plan foresaw killing or detaining all Ba'athist party members, paramilitary force commanders and structure, criminal elements, and defeating any terrorist or other type of threat to the Iraqi government. The plan expected that the Iraqis would provide military forces, a capable police force, and establish an interim government with a new army in training. A single U.S. light infantry division would suffice to replace the multi-division occupation force of the previous six months.

As the initial assumptions proved incorrect and a multi-faceted Iraqi insurgency began to develop, a new U.S. campaign plan emerged in August. In the new plan, the commander, Combined Joint Task Force 7, Army Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, USA, stated his mission was simultaneously conducting combat operations and stability and security operations as well as preparing to attack adjacent sectors to support missions ordered by higher headquarters. Combat operations were designed to destroy enemy forces, to establish a secure environment, while stability and security operations were designed to support the establishment of Iraqi sovereignty.

In addition, the Army now planned to train and to equip the Iraqi security forces, including police, civil defense, facility protection services, and the new Iraqi Army. A humanitarian assistance program to prevent unnecessary hardship on the population of Iraq worked together with efforts to restore essential services to the communities. The protection of key sites, such as water, power, and sewage plants also contributed to general security and recovery. The Army saw the need to protect its own lines of communications and to synchronize its operations with higher political and military headquarters in Iraq. The vast number of unexploded and cached munitions and arms required extensive searches throughout the country.

Significant new features of the Combined Joint Task Force Seven campaign plan included continued combat operations because the enemy now demonstrated increasing resiliency. Instead of being able to eradicate enemy resistance and bring security to the area of operations, Combined Joint Task Force Seven now recognized the long-term nature of the current struggle and proposed to defeat the former regime forces, to neutralize extremist groups, and to reduce crime by 50 percent. To accomplish these goals, it would establish, equip, and train a large security force to replace the Iraqi security forces; municipal police; battalions of Iraqi Civil Defense Corps; and thousands of Facilities Protection Service guards. A large array of public works projects, funded by a variety of programs as well as conventional civil affairs programs, would assist in restoring economic prosperity to Iraq and maintaining a sustainable quality of life, especially in the supply of power, fuel, water, and sanitation services. The reopening of Baghdad International Airport and introducing a new currency were considered major benchmarks. Finally, Combined Joint Task Force Seven assisted at all levels of government to install viable and fair neighborhood, district, and city governing councils.

The initial deployment for combat, under Operation Iraqi Freedom, would likely last a full year, with a relief by the U.S. and Coalition forces anticipated sometime in the spring of 2004. Before relief could occur, however, the Army brigades that had fought in the major combat operations before the occupation phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom required earlier return to their posts to meet the desired 365-day maximum period away from those posts. This return meant that the 82d Airborne Division, 101st Air Assault Division, and

3d Armored Cavalry Regiment would have to depart early in the relief cycle.

Since the collapse of formal resistance by Iraq on 1 May, the former regime's forces had continued to mount attacks on Iraqis and Coalition forces. Extremists, such as local fundamentalist paramilitary and militia groups joined by newly arrived international terrorist groups, posed a lesser threat. Individual and organized criminal activities had appeared even before the occupation of Iraq began. Under a concept of "an adapting enemy," the campaign plan foresaw an opposition capable of changing tactics and targets to avoid U.S. actions and adjusting to counteract the improving local security measures. Actions against the former regime forces and the reduction of criminal activities to manageable proportions, however, could bear fruit by the beginning of 2004. The assumption was that only extremist groups, the most unpredictable enemy, would remain likely opponents by the time of the turnover to the 2004 relief forces. Until then, the most likely enemy actions would come in the form of isolated, random, and individual attacks with occasional primitively organized or combined attacks. Less likely, but much more dangerous, would be the enemy mounting an organized, well-targeted, and highly lethal attack. In addition, the potential for the enemy to disrupt political reconstruction of the country with political assassinations was well recognized.

The end result, proposed in the August campaign plan, was a safe and secure environment gained by a much more vigorous level of U.S. activities. With former regime forces eliminated and crime curtailed by Iraqi police and security forces, the final threat of extremists would be handled by increased vigilance of a large police, Facilities Protection Service, and Iraqi Civil Defense Corps force. Extremism would also lose its power and appeal with a marked improvement in quality of life, a growing economy, and political stability brought to the country and its capital city. The improved stability and self-reliance of the civilian government and local security forces would a greater reduction in U.S. forces such that incoming Marine and Army divisions could occupy military facilities under construction in Iraq.[7]

The Force Takes Shape

The I MEF and 1st Marine Division operational planning teams worked on the force structure, framed the mission, and formulated tasks and task organizations from late September through 19 October 2003 and then identified units to be provided to the Coalition by mid-December. The I MEF command element would require its usual detachments of civil affairs, intelligence, force reconnaissance, communications, radio, air-naval gunfire liaison, and Army psychological operations units, all gathered under the administration of the I MEF Headquarters Group. The 1st Marine Division organized its combat power around two reinforced infantry regiments or Regimental Combat Teams (RCT), each with three infantry battalions (a light armored reconnaissance (LAR) battalion was the third battalion in one regiment), a combat engineer company, and a combat service support detachment. The division also had an artillery battalion transformed into a provisional military police unit, a tank company, and an assault amphibian company. The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) planned to employ a single aircraft group with no fixed wing aircraft, (except for tanker and liaison airplane detachments), but six helicopter squadrons: three medium lift squadrons, one heavy lift squadron, and two light-attack squadrons. An unmanned aerial vehicle squadron and an air defense battalion also accompanied the group for air control and ground support. The 1st Force Service Support Group (Forward) organized separate support groups for the eastern and western sectors to support two regiments of the division, allocating remaining support into a brigade service support group for the rest of the force. An engineer contingent included a naval mobile construction battalion (the "Seabees"), three engineer and engineer support companies, and several companies of military police.

The members of the entire I MEF had returned to home stations in 2003, experienced in combat, and stability and security operations. Inevitably, many units had to be disbanded because of transfers and expired terms of service. Replacements had to be obtained, prepared to assume their assignments, and be trained in the valuable lessons learned in the 2003 campaign. For the veterans, combat debriefs and warrior transition briefs overseas continued into an organized post-combat transition in the United States. Training schedules, family support, and maintenance programs were designed to maximize leave, to retain cohesion, and to preserve combat readiness.

Before the 1st Marine Division departed Kuwait, each of its units had to inspect and inventory equipment, opening repair orders, and listing shortages such that replacement items and repair parts would be available upon arrival at home stations. The Division recuperated at its California home bases but toiled anew to refurbish its materiel and to prepare its personnel for operations anywhere.

By 1 October 2003, all but the last two units of 1st Marine Division that had returned from Iraq reported a full mission capable status—the highest readiness rating. By 1 December, the last two battalions that had been delayed in Iraq until September were combat ready, and on 5 January 2004, the division was rated fully mission capable. At a cost of $79.9 million, extensive planning and much effort, the division was prepared for immediate deployment. However, the 2d Marine Division still had 25–30 percent of its equipment deployed and faced numerous deadlines for maintenance of armored vehicles, artillery, and medium trucks. Only gradually did it improve its readiness to mostly mission capable by year's end.[8]

The 1st Force Service Support Group reorganized in November 2003 into the "expeditionary template" organization long under study in the Marine Corps. This measure sought to change the combat service support echelon of Marine Corps forces from the traditional garrison units that had to be reorganized for each deployment according to ad hoc conditions into a permanent organizations with designated commanders and staffs, exercising command and control both in garrison and when deployed. Intended for a nine-month "proof of concept" period, Brigadier General Kramlich ordered the creation of Combat Service Support Group 11 (CSSG-11) as a combat support group led by the commander of the transportation support battalion, and CSSG-15 as a general support group led by the commander of the supply battalion. This program later evolved into the redesignation of the force service support group to a Marine Logistics Group (MLG) in November 2005.[9]

The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing began returning to home stations in July 2003 and was engaged in routine training and operations by the end of the month. The return of Medium Helicopter Squadron 165 on 1 August represented the return of its last aircraft unit except for small detachments remaining to support the I MEF stability and security operations campaign. The reloading of aviation equipment aboard the maritime prepositioned shipping posed the biggest challenge, and reloading the eleven ships at al-Shuyaiba, Kuwait lasted until November. In a typical activity, teams scoured several sites in Iraq to recover expeditionary airfield components, principally AM-2 matting, that had remained unaccounted for but was later discovered. A three-day convoy of 47 vehicles covered 900 miles to recover $1.2 million in matting. On September 12, the bulk of wing personnel that had remained in Iraq returned to their California stations.[10]

The Mission Defined

During October, the Joint Staff decided that the Marine Corps would not relieve the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul. Instead, the Marines relieved the 82d Airborne Division, which formally became the I MEF mission for Operation Iraqi Freedom II. Located in al-Anbar and northern Babil Provinces—the heart of the Sunni Triangle and the anti-Coalition insurgency west of Baghdad—this area of operations posed challenges unlike those of the initial I MEF stability and security operations campaign. The Northern Babil area was familiar to Marines as the northern part of the I MEF area of operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom I and a key nexus of the Shi'ite and Sunni majorities in Iraq. The I MEF and division operations planning team now studied the rest of the area of operations intensely, paying particular attention to terrorist infiltration routes, termed "rat lines," extending from Syria to the major cities of al-Fallujah and ar-Ramadi.

In contrast to the low level of insurgency and crime in the rest of Iraq, al-Anbar Province presented an active insurgent infiltration route, sanctuary, and training ground and a latent flash point. The original U.S. offensive through this area during Operation Iraqi Freedom I had bypassed most population centers and focused on enveloping Baghdad to the east. Accordingly, most elements of the former regime loyalists that constituted the initial uprising against Coalition forces—veterans of the Republican Guard, Iraqi Intelligence Service and Ba'ath Party—remained relatively intact as organizations. After the initial combat operations ended, a single armored cavalry regiment patrolled a vast area the size of North Carolina. Such a weak presence squandered the war's gains and allowed an excellent enemy sanctuary

to flourish. The Sunni population in this area had lost its preeminent social and political standing after the Hussein regime fell. Although most of the population did not actively work against the Coalition forces, many did render support to the former regime loyalist movements.

The geographical isolation of al-Anbar Province, juxtaposed to the extensive Iraqi borders with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria, provided potential cross-border sanctuary and support for the insurgency. Age-old smuggling routes, tribal cross-border associations, and active Syrian support provided the insurgents a steady supply of money and sanctuaries. The Ba'ath political connection with Syria facilitated the insurgency. Radical elements desiring entry could infiltrate through a system of safe houses, counterfeit document providers, training areas, and routes that lay within the area of operations.

The insurgents had a ready source of munitions and arms; vast stocks existed in the area. Army sources identified 96 known munitions sites and indicated innumerable uncharted ones. A large portion of Iraq's arms industry was centered in the area—particularly in al-Ameriyah, Mahmudiyah and Iskandariyah. Although some localities had arms shortages and the price of weapons increased by Coalition actions, the enemy had few supply problems for its commonplace weapons: AK-47 rifles, explosives, ammunition, mortars, and rocket propelled grenades (RPG).

The Army's Task Force Baghdad conducted Operation Longstreet (26 Aug–9 Sep 2003) in al-Anbar and northern Babil Provinces, which revealed key sanctuaries and infiltration routes that likely fed the insurgencies throughout Iraq. Consequently, the U.S. Central Command combatant commander planned for even larger forces; an Army brigade combat team would join the 1st Marine Division. Additional battalions of infantry entered the division troop list, as did a small boat detachment and a requirement for counter battery radars.[11]

In his 12 December 2003 report to General Abizaid, Lieutenant General Conway sent his final force list for the Operation Iraqi Freedom II deployment, although the rotation units for the second six month period had yet to be identified.[12] (For detailed task organization, see Appendix G.)

This unique organization initially contained no artillery, except for that organic to the Army's 1st Brigade. Marine Corps and Army infantry were cross-attached, with 2d Battalion, 4th Marines joining the Brigade and the Army's 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry attached to Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1). The Marine Corps infantry contingent had grown in barely a month from the original planning level to a total of eight infantry battalions, one reconnaissance battalion, and one LAR battalion. The Army brigade contributed three more battalions, including an armor battalion partly reformed as vehicle-mounted infantry but retaining some tank strength. This task organization was augmented, near the time of embarkation, with artillery batteries A and E, 11th Marines. These two batteries arrived on 28 February 2004 and drew eighteen howitzers from the prepositioning ships supporting the deployment. Counterbattery fires against indirect fire attacks from the insurgents became the initial mission for these two batteries. Later, when needs became more urgent, the equipment aboard the maritime prepositioned shipping would permit very rapid reinforcement of the Marine division.[13]

In all, the I MEF contingent provided much more combat power than the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment and two brigades of the 82d Airborne Division that had secured al-Anbar Province to date. Lieutenant General Conway had no illusions about the changed circumstances of the new deployment to Iraq of I MEF, but he regarded the innate strengths of his organization as adequate.

I MEF Assesses the Stakes

The 2003 stability and security operations campaign had validated much of the improvised Marine Corps actions, demonstrating that the historical Marine Corps response to counterinsurgency operations remained valid. Among the strong points revealed in that experience, Lieutenant General Conway cited the most noteworthy aspects as:

- Stability operations were initiated immediately. Marines demonstrated the mental and physical ability to shift rapidly from combat to stability operations. The MEF was engaged in security and stability operations outside Basrah only a week after crossing the line of departure. These operations were occurring in the south even as combat operations continued in the north outside Baghdad.

• Focus on children. Whenever possible the MEF tried to move quickly to accomplish any project that benefited Iraqi children (mine unexploded ordnance awareness, construction and repair of playgrounds and schools, and Operation Soccer Ball). The belief was that the quickest way to win support from the adults was to improve the quality of life for their children.

• Iraqi participation in setting priorities for reconstruction. In the MEF zone, the Iraqis were allowed to set the priority for reconstruction projects. This gave them a sense of having a stake in their own future and confidence in American concern for their welfare.

• Boots on the ground. The culture of the Marine Corps as an infantry force with strong small unit leadership functioned well in southern Iraq. I MEF deployed a significant infantry capability. Marines left their tanks, tracks, and trucks, and walked. They patrolled the streets to be seen by the locals. Their presence reassured Iraqis looking for a safe and secure environment. Their leaders grew to understand local citizens, both good and bad. Iraqis developed a sense of ownership and responsibility for their areas. A "trust relationship" thus formed among the Marines and the Iraqis.

• Iraqi Police interface with Military Police and Reaction Force Methodology. The work done with the local police forces, which worked hand in hand with the military police, allowed I MEF to leave the built up areas and towns. The Marine quick reaction forces always stood ready to provide "oncall" support, but such support was seldom necessary. The Iraqis in the I MEF area of operations soon began to police themselves. They prevented looting, destroyed improvised explosive devices, and in some cases conducted raids on criminals and former regime loyalists in their areas.

• Battalion Commander Authority. Battalion commanders exercised total authority in their areas of responsibility. Battalions worked together, remained in their own areas, and were uniformly successful.

• Shi'a Population. The fact that the Shi'a formed the majority of the population in much of the I MEF area of operations in 2003 proved significant. Harshly oppressed by the former regime, they demonstrated more sympathy for the Coalition than their Sunni neighbors to the north, and Marines conducted themselves in a manner to preserve good will with the Shi'as.

• Managing levels of violence. Within the I MEF area of operations Marines worked to manage the levels of violence. If fired upon, Marines achieved immediate fire superiority. The I MEF human exploitation teams constantly worked to provide information, which was then combined with other information to form a useful intelligence picture. When sufficient intelligence allowed targeting, Marines quickly killed or captured those who resisted while avoiding any group reprisals or indiscriminate actions that would have created ill will by the local population toward the Marines.

• An Inside-Out Approach. The initial effort was the built up areas, towns, and cities. After a stable environment was achieved, the effort shifted to the less populated areas.

• Non-Doctrinal Methods. The I MEF employed flexible methods. Frequently, no doctrine governed particular problems Marines faced. In each of the five provinces the approach differed, and the province commanders adapted to their unique situation.[14]

I MEF planners had to ask Headquarters Marine Corps and other agencies for assistance in certain matters. The MEF lacked sufficient numbers of translators, civil affairs experts, military police, explosives disposal experts, and specialized communications personnel for this or other deployments. Stability and security operations demanded increased numbers of vehicles of all types, yet the MEF lacked funding for maintenance and facilities that more equipment would require.

• Force Protection. Force protection continued to be essential in this operation as in all previous operations. The new generation of personal protective equipment required additional components formerly intended only for frontline troops but were now required for every member of the force. These included the small arms protective inserts plates and additional panels designed

for the Interceptor system of tactical vests. Combat and stability and security operations in industrial areas posed unusual chemical and biological hazards, and the necessary materiel currently on hand was found only in the Chemical and Biological Incident Reaction Force. Parallel to the personal protection category, almost every unarmored vehicle of the force now required some level of hardening and armoring against improvised explosive devices, rockets, and other weapons already used by insurgents. The aircraft being deployed in 2004 required a new generation of "survivability" equipment only lately developed and not yet scheduled for installation. These requirements had challenged leaders and planners before the 2003 campaign and had been resolved by urgent actions within HQMC and supporting establishment of the Marine Corps. In most cases, urgent action would bring results again.

Lieutenant General Conway personally described the significant elements of the upcoming campaign in a presentation of 18 January 2004 to the Marine Corps Association Ground Dinner. As summarized below, Lieutenant General Conway asserted that the leadership had to remember several factors:[15]

- The 2003 I MEF situation in the south would differ from the current situation in that the population in the new area of operations would largely be Sunni. Therefore, an important part of the MEF approach would involve finding a way to mitigate the perceived political losses of the Sunni population.
- In keeping with the MEF's successful experience from 2003, the I MEF operational approach would focus on the Iraqi people—providing security and a better quality of life for the population and preparing the Iraqi people to govern themselves.
- The I MEF operational approach would be based on three major lines of operation: security and stability operations, information operations, and civil affairs. The tasks for these are as follows:
- Security and Stability: eliminate destabilizing elements, establish training programs for Iraqi security forces, and focus on populated areas.
- Information Operations: develop an integrated and aggressive information operations campaign promoting Iraqi confidence in our forces and establish effective means of disseminating information.
- Civil Affairs: identifying and securing funding and resources for civil affairs initiatives; planning and preparing for the transition from Coalition Provisional Authority to Iraqi sovereignty; reducing unemployment; establishing local government teams including political, religious, and tribal leaders; and identifying projects that have immediate and measurable effects on Iraqi quality of life.
- Success will be defined by the extent to which the Iraqi people can assume responsibility for their own security. Goals include self-governance in al-Anbar and in north Babil Provinces, a stable economy, and a successful transition of responsibilities to the Iraqi people.

The failure of any of these elements would pose increasing difficulties and dangers for the Coalition forces and the Iraqi population.

CHAPTER 2:
The Deployment

The planners of I MEF and subordinate units worked on the force deployment in November 2003 while the troop list was being identified, and then began in December to develop the details of the strategic movement of all units thus identified. In addition to the forces under I MEF control, several additional units deployed for duty with CJTF-7: two bridge companies drawn from II MEF and Marine Reserve Forces, and a detachment of light attack helicopters to operate out of Balad Air Base. Two Navy surgical companies deployed as well to Kuwait, operating under control of Commander, Marine Forces Central Command.[16]

As in previous campaigns in the Persian Gulf, the Marine Corps forces, deploying for the 2004 campaign in Iraq, shipped their equipment and a relatively small number of personnel via Navy and military sealift shipping while the bulk of personnel and some cargo traveled via strategic airlift. Only two Navy ships took part in this phase, each a highly capable amphibious assault ship of the latest class: USS *Bataan* (LHD 5) from the Atlantic Fleet and USS *Boxer* (LHD 4) from the Pacific Fleet. Fifty-five helicopters, deemed immediately necessary for the relief in place of the Army aviation of 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, were loaded onto these ships. The remaining 59 helicopters, in various states of disassembly, were shipped in the military sealift ships (24 helicopters) and strategic airlift (35 helicopters). USS Boxer and USS Bataan sailed on 14 and 23 January 2004 from their ports of embarkation, and during 18 January–28 February, ten Military Sealift Command ships sailed from their ports, all taking approximately a month for the transit. Additional equipment for I MEF, principally vehicles drawn from maritime prepositioned ships MV 1stLt Baldomero Lopez, MV Pvt Franklin J. Phillips, and MV PFC William B. Baugh, awaited the arrival of the troops in Kuwait. These ships landed during 10 February–5 March and comprised the lead elements and main body of the I MEF forces. Though small numbers of personnel continued to arrive in Kuwait through 13 March, the main effort was preparing the relief in place of 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, planned for 20 March, and the 82d Airborne Division, planned for 4 April.[17]

Assembling the force in bases and camps in Kuwait proved as complex as the previous deployment of I MEF to the theater. The early 2004 relief in place for U.S. forces saw 12 Army brigades and two Marine Corps regiments replacing 17 Army brigades, most of which used the Kuwait expeditionary camps and training sites for three months as the sites for the relief in place. An early problem was the minimum requirement for 7500 bed spaces at Camp Udari to support the 1st Marine Division through the standard joint processing known as "Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration of forces (RSOI)." Reduced to 3500 beds at Udari, I MEF staff found 1000 additional beds each at Camps Victory and New York, but the remaining shortfall could only be filled by moving two regiments into camps, training areas, and on to the border assembly areas. In all, I MEF used six camps, three ports, and two air facilities during its RSOI phase.

After all Marines assembled in their assigned units and were issued equipment, they went to the range area to test fire crew-served weapons and systems, unloaded from shipping and storage, and to conduct final battle training. The convoys were dispatched in sequence by the 1st Marine Division, which also performed security functions for most convoys of the I MEF headquarters group and the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. A three-day training period provided detailed preparation for safe and secure convoys. The convoy commanders formed, loaded, armed, and rehearsed their convoys for the first day and a half under the coordination of the division G-3 staff. On the afternoon of the second day, each commander received the latest route and intelligence briefings, conducted a certification briefing for the division G-4, and received the assigned departure and convoy clearance information. For the final 24 hours, the convoy remained under a safety stand-down calculated to ensure rested personnel and well-prepared equipment for the single-day movement required into destinations in most of the area of operations.

In addition to the convoys, intra-theater air transportation lifted selected units and equipment from Ali al-Salem Air Base to the several air facilities in the new area of operations. The newly arrived six KC-130F Hercules refueler-transport aircraft of 3d Marine Aircraft Wing supported this lift as well as internal missions of the wing.[18]

The I MEF orders detailed the movement process:[19]

While the I MEF headquarters group established garrison at Camp Fallujah in the so-called "MEK"* forward operating base, the division command post was located in Forward Operating Base Champion (soon renamed Camp Blue Diamond for the 1st Marine Division symbol) of Headquarters, 82d Airborne Division at Ramadi, the wing was located at al-Asad Air Base, and the service support group was located at Camp Taqqaddum airfield, south of al-Fallujah.[20]

The initial ground deployment into Iraq saw RCT-7 occupy al-Asad Air Base and deploy its units in the western half of the I MEF area of operations, while RCT-1 occupied Camp Fallujah, taking responsibility for the easternmost section of the area. The Army's 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division remained at Ramadi with additional responsibilities for the vast and underpopulated area stretching south to the Saudi Arabia frontier, later called the area of operation—Manassas.

The relief in place outlined in I MEF orders sought to replace Army units sequentially, from the smaller units up until the major units agreed to the final transfer of authority. This process also took effect from west to east, as RCT-1 and 3d MAW first relieved the Army 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment of the huge western section of area of operations as well as airspace management responsibilities handled by the its air cavalry squadron. Then 2d Battalion, 4th Marines reported to the Army 1st Brigade and its operational control, followed by the relief of 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne by RCT-1.

To execute relief in place with 82d Airborne Division and to simultaneously maintain the common security and stabilization mission, leaders and troops at all levels carried out essential orientation and operations with their counterparts. These operations consisted of the so-called "right seat, left seat' rides in which incoming I MEF leaders and troops first patrolled with and operated as assistants to the 82d Airborne personnel, then exchanged roles and took over the operations with 82d Airborne personnel still in place to provide assistance and advice. Upon mutual agreement, each unit at successive levels then transferred the responsibility and authority for the district or sector. Before such transfer of authority occurred, the incoming Marine Corps units assumed security of all vital infrastructure and institutions in their assigned sectors, made introductions to local leaders and Coalition authority and non-governmental organization leaders, assumed supervision of local infrastructure projects, and assumed responsibilities for equipment and supplies on hand, and continued the ongoing process of collecting and disposing of weapons, munitions caches, and unexploded ordnance.

In each case, the transfers of authority occurred well before the deadlines. Lieutenant General Conway had recognized the need for an accelerated relief of Army units deployed in Iraq and had promised all due speed: "I MEF understands the intent to conduct transfer of authority at earliest possible date and will comply." The early dispatch of RCT-7 from Camp Udari paid off, as it completed its relief of 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment on 15 March instead of the forecasted 20 March. As part of that transfer of authority, 3d MAW assumed responsibility for airspace management and aviation support for the area of operations. Major General Mattis assumed responsibility for ground operations in area of operations "West," soon renamed area of operations "Atlanta" in Marine Corps orders and plans, on 21 March from Major General Swannack, commander of the 82d Airborne Division. The 1st Force Service Support Group relieved the 82d Airborne Division Support Command on 22 March. The 3d Brigade, 82d Division remained under the operational control of Major General Mattis until RCT-1 relieved it on 28 March, seven days ahead of schedule.

Though the Marines of I MEF lived up to Lieutenant General Conway's expectations, al-An-

*Camp MEK name note: throughout official and unofficial materials, one encounters the term Camp MEK as an alternate name for Camp Fallujah. Although not official, Camp MEK ranks as the most commonly used name for that facility, thus requiring explanation. MEK stands for Mujahedeen-e Khalq or "Peoples Mujahedeen." It originally served as an Iraqi military base supporting foreign fighters from Iran opposing the Iranian clerical regime. Several of these bases existed in Iraq, but this one east of Fallujah was renamed "Forward Operating Base Ste.-Mere-Eglise" by the occupying 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division. The more convenient name "the MEK" continued in use in conversation and correspondence. On 25 March, the name was changed by Lieutenant General Conway to Camp Fallujah, but, "the MEK" continued predominantly in use.[21]

Concept of Operations

On order, I MEF units will conduct onward movement from Kuwait to forward operating bases in Iraq via self-move, contracted move, common user land transport assets, and intra-theater air assets. Units will commence intra-theater air onward movement on or about 23 Feb, and ground onward movement on or about 26 Feb. Units will convoy via main service routes Tampa and Jackson to initially link up with 82d Airborne Division movement control cell at Convoy Service Center Scania. Units will be directed from Scania to secondary link up with 82d Airborne Division teams at the intersection of route Tampa with area of operations West. From secondary link up point units will be either physically guided to forward operating bases by mobile 82d Airborne Division teams or directed along routes manned By 82d Airborne Division traffic control point teams. Units using Intra-theater air will fly from Ali al Salem Air Base, Kuwait to al-Asad Air Base, Iraq. From al-Asad units will conduct final ground movement via organic transportation to respective forward operating bases. 3d Marine Aircraft Wing aviation platforms not coded for direct flight to al-Asad Air Base will fly from designated surface points of departure to Camp Udari before proceeding to al-Asad air base (if necessary using designated U.S. Army refueling sites). Upon arrival in area of operations West, I MEF units will be under tactical control of 82d Airborne Division and conduct a sequential relief in place of 82d Airborne Division units in western Iraq. RCT-7 and supporting combat service support and aviation support units will relieve 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment not later than 20 March 2004. Remaining I MEF units will complete respective reliefs of 82d Airborne Division units not later than 04 April 2004. The transfer of authority for area of operations West From CG 82d Airborne Division to CG I MEF will occur not later than 04 April 2004. The transfer of authority is conditions based. CG I MEF conditions for the transfer of authority are listed in the coordinating instructions.

bar Province lived up to its reputation as a tough area of operations, and as such, Marines conducted combat operations for several days before the transfers of authority took place. The 1st Marine Division suffered 11 casualties by 14 March, and 3d Marine Aircraft Wing received its first rocket attack at al-Asad Air Base on 18 March, killing one Marine and wounding three. An improvised explosive device explosion killed a second Marine on the 25th. Both Wing Marines were from Support Squadron 374. The aircraft wing had lost only 18 killed in all of Operation Iraqi Freedom 1, already marking this campaign as a wholly different experience.[22]

The planning by I MEF before returning to Iraq essentially sought to build on what had been widely assumed was a successful period of stability and security operations by the 82d Airborne and 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. In particular, the MEF plan hinged on a strong "first 60 days" plan as the best method to maintain and continue progress toward a secure and independent Iraq.[23]

The "first 60 days" plan showed that Marine planners anticipated conflict between I MEF forces and local insurgent groups. What were not recognized until later were the determination and resilience of the insurgency.

Although the Marines newly arrived in al-Anbar considered themselves better prepared and organized for the stability and security operations missions than in the 2003 campaign, the Marine Corps equipment needs had increased. The brief period of occupation duty in mid-2003 allowed no time for incorporating new technologies and engineering into the force. By 2004, however, the experiences of U.S. and Coalition forces had generated a comprehensive set of new equipment requirements.

Aircraft survivability problems dated from the initial combat phase of the 2003 campaign and represented ongoing modernization system installation, but the completion schedule anticipated for installing most of these systems did not cover the initial deployment of aircraft with 3d Marine Aircraft Wing in early 2004. The special schedule developed for the "Aircraft Survivability Upgrade" resulted in lightweight armor kits and a ramp-mounted machine gun installed in the 24 Sikorsky CH-53E Sea Stallion heavy lift helicop-

ters by mid-April. The 36 Boeing-Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight medium helicopters received lightweight armor kits and infrared jammer (IR) upgrades beginning in July and April, respectively. The six KC-130F Hercules refueler-transports also received their IR jammer upgrades in April. Much more time would be required, however, to deploy the highly desired AAR-47(2) missile warning set and ALE-47 countermeasures dispenser into the light attack squadrons. Only the larger aircraft deployed initially with these capabilities.[24]

The hope that special equipment needed for the I MEF 2004 campaign could be obtained from units departing Iraq fell far short of expectations despite a U.S. Central Command directive to leave all "uparmored" high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles ("Humvee" models M1114, M1116 and M1109) and all tactical vehicles fitted with bolt-on armor or ballistic doors. The 82d Airborne Division turned over 83 uparmored Humvees, but the MEF requirement was 250. Of the highly desired Warlock jammers used to counter improvised explosive devices, only 25 could be gained from CJTF-7 sources; the Marine Corps required 61 for this deployment.[25]

As in the case of the 2003 campaign, the supporting establishment of the Marine Corps, chiefly Marine Corps Systems Command, employed rapid acquisition under the Urgent Universal Need Statement (UUNS) process. In contrast to the 2003 campaign, the 2004 material needs of the forces differed remarkably in scope and cost. Commanders of forces assigned for the 2004 campaign received instructions in November 2003 to request material required under UUNS to the Commanding General, I MEF, for consolidation and forwarding. Ultimately, the Marine Requirements Oversight Council reviewed the requests and recommended actions to the Commandant. The initial requests before the 2004 deployment totaled approximately $170 million, in comparison to approximately $100 million provided for the entire 2003 campaign.

The requirement for uparmored Humvees took immediate priority. The Marine Corps Logistics Command produced steel doors for delivery to the deploying units until more permanent solutions could be approved and acquired via joint service and Marine Corps specific programs to produce armor kits and new production vehicles. As I MEF arrived in Iraq, the 2004 UUNS list (and number) of approved items already included the following:

Item	Number
Marine Expeditionary Force combat operations center	1
Medium-level vehicle hardening:	
Door protection	3,049
Underbody protection	3,638
Ballistic glass	2,704
Temporary steel plating	2,144
Position locating systems:	
Blue force tracker	100
EPLRS with M-DACT	50
Combat identification devices:	
Glo tapes	40,000
Phoenix Jr. strobe lights	5,000
Thermal combat imaging panels	2,163
Dust abatement systems	6
Night vision devices	882
PRC-148 radios	1,294
Advanced combat optic gun sights	3,724
M240G/TOW dual mount	97
Tropospheric satellite support radios	22
Medium tactical vehicle replacement-MTVR center seats	325
Checkpoint force protection kits	50
PRC-150	34
Personal role radios	1,487
"Dragon Eye" unmanned aerial vehicle	35
Handheld translation devices	300
Satellite-on-the-move capability	110
Mobile generator for forward resuscitative surgery system	4
PRC-150 remotes	48
PAS-13 thermal sights	855
Vehicle barrier nets	50
Lightweight body armor	1,080
"Sophie" thermal binoculars	20
22 Kw generators	17
Vehicular mounts for PRC-150	36
Explosive ordnance disposal capabilities:	
Protective suits	60
PSS-14 detectors	74
Percussion actuated nonelectric disruptors	15
Large package X-ray apparatus	7
Blast tents	15
Blast rings	15

Marking foam	500
Robot capability	15
AN/PAQ-4C infrared night sights	182
Data distribution system upgrade	20
Large LVS trailer capability	20
Ditching machine	4
Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company communications suites	4
Battlefield tire changing systems	2
Technical control facility	2
Automated deep operation coordination system servers and laptops	
2d MAW group-level combat operations center	5
KIV-7 encryption devices	7
PRC-117F radios	22
Deployable rapid assembly shelters for satellite terminal	10
MTVR trailers	20
Semiautomatic sniper rifle	18
Tactical photo reproduction capability	4
Bed netting	25,000
Data distribution system servers	16
Test stand	1
Bridge erection boat trailer	17
Lightweight all-terrain vehicles	53

In addition to compiling the initial requirements, Systems Command deployed liaison teams to the I MEF staff to assess new requirements and to accelerate the UUNS process.[26]

The tandem requirements of body armor (human) and armor kits for utility vehicles became more pressing in both military and political arenas after combat continued in 2003 after the "end of major combat operations" but as the Iraqi insurgency gained momentum. Armoring a fleet of utility vehicles never intended for use in close combat was a requirement new to the logistics system, and the system's response proved predictably slow as casualties increased. Likewise, distribution of the new Interceptor armor system to the troops was only partially complete at the time of the 2003 invasion, and priorities of issue (I.e., to combat units) left large numbers of combat units with the older pattern of armor vests. Moreover, defective quality control and the delays in providing upgrades to Interceptor components (heavier insert plates and additional side and shoulder protection) exacerbated the political uproar. Although much publicity about inferior or the lack of body armor came from political opponents of the war, the American government and military also underestimated the scope and ferocity of the insurgency and the personal protection that fighting insurgents would require. The military laboratories and systems commands responded with designs encompassing almost total protection for vehicles and persons alike.

The "hardness" or armor of Humvees remained a critical problem for all U.S. troops, including Marines as three different levels of protection appeared in the uparmored Humvees and only one offered adequate protection against the improvised explosive devices employed by the enemy. As a result, some units procured locally fabricated steel plates to augment the minimal protection offered by the unarmored Humvee. So scarce were the uparmored Humvees that Marines began to improvise simple, additional protection, such as hanging bags containing Kevlar plates salvaged from vests and vehicles on the exterior of the otherwise thinly constructed doors of their Humvees, thus making their vehicles into "Hillbilly Hummers."

Personal body armor included two types during the initial stages of the 2003-04 campaign. The superior Interceptor System, used by front-line troops, gradually replaced the older vests used by Marines during 1st MEF's 2004 deployment: the older vests were the Personnel Armor System Ground Troops (PASGT) vest that had replaced the obsolete vinyl and ballistic plate combination of the older M-1969 Fragmentation Protective Body Armor. The PASGT ballistic filler consists of 13 plies of treated (water repellent) aramid Kevlar 29 fabric and improved the M-1969's protection against fragments.

The Interceptor Multi-Threat Body Armor System comprised two components: the outer tactical vest and the small arms protective inserts, or "SAPI" plates. This system features removable throat and groin protectors, as well as front and back removable SAPI plates. The system protects from 7.62mm rounds, the round primarily used in insurgent weapons of the AK series. The system weighs 16.4 pounds: each of the two inserts weighs 4 pounds, and the outer tactical vest weighs 8.4 pounds. The Kevlar weave of the outer tactical vest stops a 9mm bullet. In addition, the strapping and Velcro fasteners of the Interceptor permit attaching personal equipment. The SAPI plates are ceramic. The 2003 Armor Protection Enhancement System added sections to pro-

tect the neck, arms, and groin. The later Deltoid Extension protected the sides of the rib cage and shoulders but added pounds, provided less ventilation, and limited body movement.

As the over 20,000 Marines and sailors of I MEF filled their new positions for the 2004 campaign, equipped as well as the hurried measures and changing military environment permitted, the age-old problem remained: Who was the enemy; where was he; and what were his intentions?

CHAPTER 3

Operations in al-Anbar Province

The timing of the relief of Army units in al-Anbar Province dictated the order in which the Marines of I MEF assumed their positions. The vast expanse of western Iraq where the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment patrolled was the farthest from the Marine units assembling in Kuwait during February. Fortunately, the zone also contained the al-Asad Air Base that would host the majority of the aviation combat element of the force. Locating RCT-7 at the air base facilitated the rapid turnover with the Army cavalrymen and also ensured air-ground coordination and a shared responsibility for local defense of the base and its immediate surroundings. The advance party of RCT-7 moved to al-Asad Air Base during 24–28 February by air and ground transportation, but the main convoys departed Kuwait during 2–4 March.

Initial Deployment of 1st MEF

Colonel Craig Tucker, commanding RCT-7, deployed his maneuver battalions throughout the newly designated Area Of Operations Denver during the first two weeks of March to cover several population centers as well as known infiltration routes enemy forces used from the Syrian frontier to the interior of Iraq. The headquarters of 2d Battalion, 7th Marines located at the air base, and the line companies went to Camp Hit at the nearby city of that name. One line company then deployed to the more distant Camp Korean Village, at ar-Rutbah, from which the borders with Jordan and Syria could be observed. Camp al-Qaim became the base of 3d Battalion, 7th Marines shared with 1st LAR Battalion, which split its line companies between there and Camp Korean Village. After a brief stay at al-Asad Air Base, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines moved to Camp Hadithah and Patrol Base Rawah, northwest of the Hadithah Dam. The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company was based at Camp al-Qaim, with a small detachment remaining at al-Asad Air Base.[27]

Major General Amos deployed his 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) to five facilities to provide four aviation functions (aerial reconnaissance, assault support, command and control of aircraft and missiles, and offensive air support) throughout area of operations Atlanta. Elements of Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3, Marine Aircraft Group 16, Wing Support Group 37 and Air Control Group 38 were based at al-Asad Air Base with forward air support elements at al-Taqaddum Air Base, al-Qaim, Mudaysis, and Camp Korean Village. al-Asad Air Base had two medium helicopter squadrons; one and one-half heavy helicopter squadrons; one light attack helicopter squadron; the tanker-transport detachment; and the tactical air control center. Al Taqaddum hosted the other medium helicopter squadron and part of the light attack squadron. The three other sites hosted a medevac helicopter detachment, and assault support and attack helicopter detachments were placed there to meet tactical needs.

Support for the aviation element built up rapidly. Over 462 tons of aviation ordnance was moved to 3d Marine Aircraft Wing by Air Force C-130s and Marine KC-130s. A hundred tons of aviation equipment was dispersed to the al-Taqaddum Air Base, al-Qaim, and Korean Village sites to support forward arming and refueling activities. Maintenance and spare part supplying began immediately, and an engine pool for the aircraft was established with the assistance of depot support from Naval Air Facility, Sigonella, Italy. Upon completing of the transfer of authority with 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing reverted temporarily to the operational control of the Commanding General, 82d Airborne Division and provided aviation command and control in the area of operations airspace below 3,000 feet for him until he relinquished control to the commander, 1st Marine Division, after which the I MEF task organization and procedures governed. Upon taking responsibility for area Atlanta, the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing acted as the responsible agency for air command and control from ground level to 11,500 feet above ground level for the entire I MEF area of operations.

The 1st Force Service Support Group provided Combat Service Support Battalions (CSSB) 1 and 7 of Combat Service Support Group 11 (CSSG-11) for the direct support of the two regiments of the 1st Marine Division and based the bulk of its units and resources at Camp al-Taqaddum. Combat Service Support Group 11 also provided direct support as required to the Army's 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, which had 2d Battalion, 4th Marines under its operational control at ar-Ramadi. Brigadier General Kramlich employed CSSG-15 as the general sup-

port provider at Camp al-Taqaddum and Brigade Service Support Group 1 functioned as his landing force support party in Kuwait until returning in late March to California after completing its Kuwait mission. Upon arrival at Camp al-Taqaddum, the group received vital reinforcements from 3d Battalion, 24th Marines for local security, and on March 20 the Army's 120th Engineer Battalion (heavy) reported for operations, thus providing myriad support ranging from fortifying the camp to disposing of enemy ordnance.

At the same time, 1st Marine Division completed its movement from Kuwait from the command post established in ar-Ramadi as noted above, where the Army's 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, patrolled the area of operations Topeka. Colonel Arthur W. "Buck" Conner Jr., U.S. Army, deployed his 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, and 2d Battalion, 4th Marines at ar-Ramadi, where he also held his Paladin-equipped (M109A6) 155mm self-propelled artillery battalion, the 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery. He operated 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, out of Hibbinaya, halfway between ar-Ramadi and al-Fallujah. Battery I of 3d Battalion, 11th Marines converted to military police duty, operating from a camp at Madaysis from which the Saudi Arabia border crossing at Ar Ar could be monitored. A MEF order later designated this zone area of operations Manassas. Last to move into its base in Iraq, Regimental Combat Team-1 occupied Camp Fallujah, sending battalions to cover its area of operations Raleigh assignments.

Colonel John A. Toolan, commanding 1st Marines detailed 2d Battalion, 1st Marines to Camp Baharia, just east of al-Fallujah, and 1st Battalion, 5th Marines to Camp Abu Ghraib, west of the town of that name and the infamous military prison. He further covered the sector in North Babil Province with 2d Battalion, 2d Marines at Mahmudiya and with the Army's 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, 10th Mountain Division, at Camp Iskandariya. The 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, less one company assigned to RCT-7, also was based at al-Fallujah but oriented its actions throughout the area of operations. As if operations in al-Fallujah were not demanding enough, it should be observed that the relatively compact area of operations Raleigh lay in the shadow of Baghdad itself, and continuing operations were necessary to stop against the enemy "rocket belt" seeking to disrupt Baghdad international airport; to stop frequent attacks against Abu Ghraib Prison; and in the North Babil sector, to protect the security of Iraqi national highways 8 and 9, designated main service routes Tampa and Jackson, respectively, on which was transported the bulk of logistics support from Kuwait to Baghdad and northern Iraq. The Camp Dogwood logistics support area of the Army, located 40 kilometers southwest of Baghdad, also required local security support for its garrison.[28]

Major General Mattis set the tone for the new campaign with a forthright message to his command:

Letter to All Hands,

> We are going back into the brawl. We will be relieving the magnificent soldiers fighting under the 82d Airborne Division, whose hard won successes in the Sunni Triangle have opened opportunities for us to exploit.
>
> For the last year, the 82d Airborne has been operating against the heart of the enemy's resistance. It's appropriate that we relieve them: When it's time to move a piano, Marines don't pick up the piano bench—we move the piano. So this is the right place for Marines in this fight, where we can carry on the legacy of Chesty Puller in the Banana Wars in the same sort of complex environment that he knew in his early years. Shoulder to shoulder with our comrades in the Army, Coalition Forces and maturing Iraqi Security Forces, we are going to destroy the enemy with precise firepower while diminishing the conditions that create diversarial relationships between us and the Iraqi people.
>
> This is going to be hard, dangerous work. It is going to require patient, persistent presence. Using our individual initiative, courage, moral judgment and battle skills, we will build on the 82d Airborne victories. Our country is counting on us even as our enemies watch and calculate, hoping that America does not have warriors strong enough to withstand discomfort and danger. You, my fine young men, are going to prove the enemy wrong—dead wrong. You will demonstrate the same uncompromising spirit that has always caused the enemy to fear America's Marines.
>
> The enemy will try to manipulate you into hating all Iraqis. Do not allow the enemy that victory. With strong discipline, solid faith, unwavering alertness, and undiminished chivalry to the innocent, we will carry

out this mission. Remember, I have added, "First, do no harm" to our passwords of "No Better Friend, No Worse Enemy." Keep your honor clean as we gain information about the enemy from the Iraqi people. Then, armed with that information and working in conjunction with fledgling Iraqi Security Forces, we will move precisely against the enemy elements and crush them without harming the innocent.

This is our test-our Guadalcanal, our Chosin Reservoir, our Hue City. Fight with a happy heart and keep faith in your comrades and your unit. We must be under no illusions about the nature of the enemy and the dangers that lie ahead. Stay alert, take it all in stride, remain sturdy, and share your courage with each other and the world. You are going to write history, my fine young sailors and Marines so write it well.

Semper Fidelis,
J.N. Mattis,
Major General, U.S. Marines

At this point, the Marine Corps had deployed some 24,500 men and women to Iraq, approximately 24,300 under I MEF, drawn from Atlantic and Pacific bases, augmented by 5,500 Navy construction and Army troops. Approximately 3,900 Marines and sailors of Marine Corps Reserve organizations were serving on active duty with approximately 80 percent of them deployed to Iraq. Another 1,900 individual augmentees from the Reserves served throughout the Marine Corps.

Al-Anbar Province

The capital of al-Anbar Province, ar-Ramadi, hosts the "governorate" for the estimated 1.33 million people who live inside the 53,208 square mile area of the province. Although al-Anbar Province ranks as the largest province in Iraq (32 percent of total area), it remains the most sparsely populated (4.9 percent). With desert comprising the majority of the land in the province, most of the population resides near Baghdad and along the Euphrates River, which cuts through the northern part of the province. Most inhabitants of the province are Arabs and Sunni Muslim. The province shares its borders with Jordan and Syria in the west and Saudi Arabia in the south.

The Tigris and Euphrates bring life to one of the harshest environments in the world. The region's subtropical temperatures range, on average, from 90–115 degrees Fahrenheit in summer to fewer than 50 degrees Fahrenheit in winter. The Euphrates River flows diagonally from the north to the southeast, passing through six of the seven districts of al-Anbar: al-Qaim; Anah; Hadithah; Hit; ar-Ramadi; and al-Fallujah. A seventh district, ar-Rutbah, administers the bulk of the governorate's area, encompassing the large desert area in the southwest. The western Desert, an extension of the Syrian Desert, rises to elevations above 1,600 feet. Further south, the Southwestern Desert of Iraq (al-Hajarah) contains a complex array of rocky desert, wadis, ridges, and depressions. Mount 'Unayzah ('Unazah) at the intersection of the borders of Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, reaches the height of 3,119 feet.

The Euphrates River enters Iraq from Syria and cuts deep and permanent beds in rock between limestone escarpments. The reservoir formed by the Hadithah Dam submerged the ancient town of Anah and dozens of smaller settlements as well as a major part of the agricultural base of the middle Euphrates. Below Hit, the river widens and irrigation potential increases. Just south of the river below ar-Ramadi lie the lakes called al-Habbaniyah and al-Milh, filled with Euphrates water by canal. Lake al-Tharthar lies north of the river, and canals bring waters from the Tigris River to the lake. Down-

Table 3-1. Marine Corps Forces In Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II—April 2004[29]

I MEF (fwd), Kuwait	116
I MEF (Fwd), Iraq	29,579
I MEF (Fwd), Qatar	13
2d Medical Battalion, Kuwait	161
Fox Vehicle Detachment, Kuwait	12
Total I MEF (Fwd) assigned forces	29,881
U.S. Navy (22d NCR) and Army (1st Brigade)	(5,565)
Total I MEF (Fwd) Marine Corps forces	24,316
1st FAST Company (-), Baghdad	116
Detachment B, 4th Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company	33
Element, MarForCent, Bahrain	6
Marine Corps Element, Land Component Command, Arifjan, Kuwait	3
National Intelligence Support	15
Other	14
Total U.S. Marine Corps	24,508

Table 3-2. I Marine Expeditionary Force Combat Power (on hand/ready)–April 2004[30]

Aviation					
AH-1W	UH-1N	CH-46E	CH-53E	KC-130F	RQ-2B Pioneer drone
34/25	18/13	34/27	24/19	6/5	8/7
74%	72%	79%	79%	83%	88%

Ground (USMC)					
HMMWV (antitank)	HMMWV Hardback	Amphibious Assault Vehicle	Light Armored Vehicle	Tank M1A1	Howitzer M198
103/94	403/365	39/37	118/89	16/16	18/18
91%	90%	95%	75%	100%	100%

Ground (Army)				
Tank M1/A1/A2	Bradley Fighting Vehicle M2/A1/A2	HMMWV M1064	Howitzer, M109A6	Scout HMMWV
14/13	30/28	8/7	6/6	128/124
93%	93%	88%	100%	97%

river from ar-Ramadi one encounters all the main controlled-irrigation canals, as well as most of the pumping stations. About 140 miles from ar-Ramadi the river splits into two branches, al-Hillah and al-Hindiyyah. The al-Hindiyyah branch forms the main channel and provides irrigation for rice crops. The al-Hillah branch, separated among numerous canals, provides irrigation to the east and south.

The current organization of Iraq's provinces took shape in 1920, when the British divided Ottoman Iraq into ten separate divisions called Liwas, largely based on ethnic and geographic lines or centered around major urban areas. The province of al-Anbar likely derived from the al-Dulaym Liwa.

Al-Anbar Province is a large but sparsely inhabited province, lacking significant natural resources, and as such, made it a minor factor in Iraq's internal affairs during the tumultuous period of post-monarchy rule. From the Republican period of 1958–68 through the Ba'athist rule that followed, Iraqi politics continued to be characterized by the system of political patronage backed by military force and supported by an internal security apparatus. As time passed, this system became further ingrained as it was handed down from the "Free Officers'" rule of 1958 to the Nationalist government of 1963 and culminating in Ba'athist rule in 1968. This system culminated in its worst form under the dictator Saddam Hussein in 1979.

Little is published about the relationship of al-Anbar Province's local government with its population at large, but it was unlikely to be significantly different from the problems that beset the rest of the nation. Al-Anbar Province, especially ar-Ramadi and al-Fallujah, reflects the strong tribal and religious traditions of the inhabitants. Allegedly, Saddam Hussein was constantly wary of the volatile nature of the area. Most of the inhabitants of the province are Sunni Muslims from the Dulaim tribe. The rule of law became increasingly sporadic as the tools of governance—civic law, taxes, and the judiciary—became tools for the existing regime to maintain control. Iraq's rulers would alternately support or isolate the tribes of Iraq without regard for the provincial governorates if such patronage helped the regime control the populace. Even Islamic Law fell when the government's courtship of the mullahs ended due to fear of extremism.

Iraq's oil wealth enhanced the ability of the ruling clique to bypass these government institutions. The revenue generated by oil deepened the system of patronage, as funds were controlled by the central figures of the regime who funneled money and public works to those loyal to them. Tax revenue, already tainted by corruption, became secondary to oil wealth. Sunnis, who comprised the majority of the population in Al-Anbar Province, benefited the most from this system of patronage. In any case, the regime took more interest in population centers closer to Baghdad, leaving most of the province untouched.

Such conditions weakened government power in the face of the centralized power exerted by the elites. The Baghdad regime, when convenient, ignored al-Anbar Province's existing laws on taxation or judicial power. Crippled by persistent corruption, undercut by deal-making between the ruling regime and tribal sheikhs, and monitored by an ever present, heavy-handed security apparatus, the civic institutions of the province fell into disrepair until the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in April 2003.

Al-Anbar Province stood rife with insurgent and criminal activity at the time 1st MEF took up its security and stabilization task, and its major cit-

ies of ar-Ramadi and al-Fallujah continued as seats of Sunni anti-Coalition resistance. Amid this hostile environment, the Coalition had labored to deliver on its promises to restore security, essential services, government, and a viable economy to the people of al-Anbar Province, but had only limited resources to apply to its appalling situation.[31]

The Opposition and Varied Threats

The threat to U.S. forces and their operations remaining after the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime consisted of isolated pockets of disorganized military resistance; a large criminal element, which heavily infested major cities because of their release from prisons on the eve of the war; and emerging subversives or insurrectionist movements. The earliest classification of a post-hostilities threat group was that of Former Regime Loyalists (FRL). These included Ba'ath Party members, former Iraqi soldiers, and remnants of the Fedayeen Saddam, a radical paramilitary group loosely recruited into the Iraqi defense establishment. Extremist groups were also classified in the beginning, including Wahhabi Islamic extremists, the Iraqi Islamic Party, and various pro-regime tribes. Extremist groups could be augmented by outside groups, including international terrorists interested in exploiting the unrest and possible U.S. vulnerabilities.

Former Regime Loyalists continued efforts to reorganize under various groupings to force the withdrawal of Coalition forces and to regain power within Iraq. The FRL operated among several cities within the Sunni Triangle from ar-Ramadi in the west to Baghdad in the east and north to Mosul. The U.S. and Coalition bureaucracy later coined successive terms according to the political climate—Anti-Coalition Forces and Anti-Iraqi Forces were favorites of political figures loath to acknowledge the existence of a genuine Iraqi insurgency against U.S. and allied forces.

Former Regime Loyalist forces proved well armed. Although initially poorly trained, they became capable of lethal attacks against the Coalition forces and Iraqis who sided with them. The intelligence services considered the FRL forces as compatible with other groups, such as foreign fighters, transnational terrorists, pro-Saddam tribes, radical Kurdish factions, and Islamic extremists throughout Iraq. Former Regime Loyalist elements continuously attempted to gain favor in militant Sunni neighborhoods throughout Iraq. They used private homes to conduct meetings and cache their weapons. During the initial period of its occupation of Iraq, the Combined Joint Task Force Seven staff considered Ba'athist leadership cadres and FRL forces as the primary threat to Coalition operations. They probably were responsible for the majority of ambushes against "soft" targets, such as convoys, and symbolic centers of the interim government, such as police stations and council meeting locations.

Sunni extremists continued to attack Coalition forces to force the Coalition's withdrawal to establish a religious fundamentalist state. Their operating area conformed largely to the Sunni Triangle. These groups reportedly consorted with foreign fighters crossing the Syrian borders to areas within Iraq.

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI; a Shi'ite political party and armed militia) took advantage of the security vacuum to increase its presence and influence throughout Iraq. However, The goal of SCIRI (a non-secular but independent state run by Iraqis) probably reduced its traditional support from Iran. In addition, the collapse of the Ba'athist regime advanced, throughout Iraq, the relative influence of Ayatollah Sistani and other important clerics of the key Shi'ite holy cities of an-Najaf and Karbala. The renewed emphasis on an-Najaf as a center of the Shi'a religion—the largest in Iraq—countered the former influence of Iranian clerics seeking to fill the void, thus causing undoubted friction between among Shi'ite elements.

The Badr Corps, the military arm of SCIRI, retained much stronger ties to Tehran and it continued openly anti-Coalition demonstrations. The Badr Corps' followers in Iran reportedly crossed into Iraq with Iranian intelligence agents within their organization. They were considered likely to have placed arms stockpiles in the Shi'a sections of Baghdad and other cities to the south. SCIRI later changed the name of its militia to the Badr Organization, connoting a more peaceful and political emphasis, but it remained a significant military presence in Iraqi public life.

Religious organizations, while not directly rising against U.S. and Coalition forces, remained vital sources of support for the insurrection and other forms of opposition to them. The Howza (religious seminaries teaching Islamic theory and law once banned under Saddam) had three key elements for the Shi'a: (1) the premier religious school in the Shi'a religion located in an-Najaf; (2) a body of leaders that guided the direction and conduct of the Shi'a religion; and (3) the mutually shared goals

of all Shi'as. All Shi'a based organizations opposing the Coalition forces had some affiliation with the Howza, including the SCIRI, Badr Corps, and the Iranian Dawa Party. Several persons claimed to speak on behalf of the Howza, such as the influential religious leader Muqtada al Sadr, son of a murdered Shi'ite cleric, and Ayatollah Sistani.

Wahhabists are a Saudi Arabian-oriented, radical religious organization that preaches non-tolerance of infidels, jihad or holy war against Coalition forces, and martyrdom in the name of these goals. The focus of Wahhabist influence remained with the Sunni tribes in the vicinity of al-Fallujah with some support among their co-religionists within Baghdad. Baghdad Sunni and Ba'ath party members typically remained more secular in thought than Wahhabists but they would occasionally cooperate as a matter of convenience. U.S. and Coalition forces identified elements of several recognized terrorist organizations in Iraq, and these groups may have received support from the former regime. Some of the Islamic extremist organizations suspected in the enemy ranks included al-Qaeda, Ansar al-Islam, Hezbollah, and Wahhabi extremists.

Marines Establish Their Presence: Security Operations in March 2004

As of 20 March 2004, exactly one year after the 1st Marine Division first crossed the line of departure into Iraq, the division had returned and relieved the 82d Airborne Division in al-Anbar and Northern Babil Provinces. Regimental Combat Team-7 went into action first because of its 15 March transfer of authority with the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment. Its patrols and limited offensive actions ranged far, and the 1st LAR Battalion reportedly put the equivalent of 2.5 years of peacetime use on its light armored vehicles of the General Motors-Canada LAV series during its first month of operations. Almost immediately, security remained illusive and resistance continued against U.S. and Coalition forces in the region. The first casualties in the division came from an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated on 6 March against a vehicle in the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines sector, injuring two Marines.

Two days later, Marines launched their first offensive action of the year when 3d Battalion, 7th Marines and 1st Squadron, 3d ACR conducted a cordon and search of a house in Husaybah. More sobering was the discovery reported by RCT-7 of a series of 10 improvised launchers and 60 57mm aerial rockets arrayed around Camp Korean Village. This level of threat had not been seen before in area of operations (AO) Denver. An unexpected incident occurred on 15 March when Syrian border guards fired with small arms on Marines of Company L, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines near the Husaybah border crossing point. The Marines responded with rifles, heavy and light machine guns, and a TOW antitank missile shot. One Marine was wounded while three Syrian border posts were damaged or destroyed and casualties inflicted. Investigations by local Iraqi guards proved that the Syrians had opened fire first and that neither side had crossed the frontier at any point.

The regiment executed operations across AO Denver that focused on identifying and capturing enemy mortar men, explosive device planters, and foreign fighters. Colonel Tucker's primary task remained to interdict the infiltration of foreign fighters joining the Iraqi insurgent effort by using the so-called "ratlines" from the porous Syrian border and the "white wadi" emerging from the border with Saudi Arabia. In the vital security area around al-Asad Air Base, RCT-7 executed a coordinated raid using special operations personnel with Marines of the al-Asad garrison to capture suspected insurgents conducting rocket attacks on the base. The 21 March movement of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines into Rawah to establish a forward operating base also began a new presence effort north of the Euphrates River to destroy key insurgent command and control networks in AO Denver. Both mounted and dismounted patrols by joint U.S.-Iraqi teams reinforced border security and sought to deny emplacment and detonation of explosive devices along various routes. As examples of typical cases, the regiment reported on 19 March that a patrol from 3d Battalion, 7th Marines stopped and seized a vehicle containing several grenades, RPG-type rockets, launchers, and machine gun ammunition. Three of the six suspects fled the vehicle, and three were detained. On 22 March, Marines from the same battalion again stopped a single vehicle for violating curfew, and the search of the vehicle uncovered one U.S. identification card, a cellular phone, two handheld global positioning devices, and a mortar firing table printed in Arabic. Two individuals were arrested and brought to Camp al-Qaim for further questioning, where they provided intelligence for a follow-on cordon and knock mission that brought no further discoveries. In Rawah, the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines conducted patrols with local police and began its campaign to secure

the town. Far to the southwest in AO Denver, Marines of 2d Battalion, 7th conducted joint dismounted security patrols with the Rutbah Iraqi Civil Defense Corps Company serving there. The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company tracked high value insurgent targets and planned raids, maintained border observation, and deployed snipers as required. All units produced information operations aimed at calming and reassuring the local populace and spreading the fruits of civil affairs projects and other assistance programs. In this manner, the regiment executed the division commander's intention of dual track operations to kill insurgents and to help support the Iraqi people.

During this first partial month of operations (5–31 March) in AO Denver, RCT-7 experienced 24 mine or IED attacks, found 73 other devices before they could be detonated, received 27 indirect fire attacks, and 26 direct-fire attacks. Four Marines died in action and 51 were wounded in this introduction to the new area.[32]

The 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division continued to center on ar-Ramadi as its main effort, bolstered considerably by the welcome attachments of 2d Battalion, 4th Marines and the provisional military police battalion formed by 3d Battalion, 11th Marines. In addition, the relief of the brigade's 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry by RCT-1 permitted what Colonel Conner termed ". . . saturation of the Khalidiyah and Habbaniyah battle space for the first time since arrival in theater." The brigade's eastern boundary with RCT-1 moved to the western bank of the Thar Thar canal with RCT-1 assuming responsibility for the battle space north of the Euphrates near Saqlawiyah. The military police company attached from the 4th Marine Division to 3d Battalion, 11th Marines operated the detention facility in ar-Ramadi and made its first detainee transfer on 24 March, transporting 15 detainees to Camp Fallujah. The unit had an explosive device explode as it transited, producing no casualties, but the subsequent search of a house in the vicinity led to the capture of four rifles, electrical switches, and a large pile of wire. The brigade had two other such devices explode in its sector the same day. One of these explosions injured two Marines and the other targeted an Army M1A1 tank. The search of the area by 1st Battalion, 34th Armor led to the killing of two insurgents, one of whom had an AK-47 rifle and a detonating device. Such events continued across the operations areas, taxing the men and women of each regiment or brigade to remain vigilant and ready for action.

Other 1st Brigade operations included security sweeps against surface-to-air missile teams operating around al-Taqaddum, convoy escort for units passing between the two Marine regiment sectors, and covering the withdrawal of the last elements of 82d Airborne Division to Balad Air Base, north of Baghdad. Continuing operations in ar-Ramadi included sweeps, check points, raids and watching for highly-placed leaders of the insurgency.[33]

The movement of RCT-1 from Kuwait took place during 14–21 March, and the regimental commanders and staff began work with the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division at Camp Fallujah to effect the "right seat, left seat" turnovers at all levels. During this process, Colonel Toolan received operational control of the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry from the 1st Brigade's Colonel Connor. Along with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines the soldiers would cover the North Babil area of responsibility of the regiment and the 1st Marine Division. The external security responsibility for the Abu Ghraib Prison fell to 1st Battalion, 5th Marines and Colonel Toolan's other two battalions operated outside of al-Fallujah to isolate it from infiltration: 2d Battalion, 1st Marines covering the north and east, while 1st Reconnaissance Battalion covered the southern sectors. The unenviable mission for the Marines and soldiers of RCT-1 consisted of stabilizing a large area that included the most volatile town in the notorious "Sunni Triangle."

The enemy situation in al-Fallujah revealed itself from the very beginning. On 18 March, insurgents attacked the RCT-1 and 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division command groups in al-Fallujah along Highway 10, which crosses al-Fallujah in the middle, running east-west. They also ambushed a special operations unit on 25 March while it also transited al-Fallujah on Highway 10, followed by yet another ambush 15 hours later of a Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 convoy attempting to drive through al-Fallujah on Highway 10 at the cloverleaf intersection with Highway 1, which runs north-south on the eastern side of the city. Colonel Toolan ordered 2d Battalion, 1st Marines to secure the cloverleaf and the northeast portion of the city adjacent to Highway 1. At dawn on the twenty-sixth, one rifle company of 2d Battalion, 1st Marines seized control of the cloverleaf. Traffic was stopped and diverted around al-Fallujah, and E and F Companies entered the northeast portion of the city.

The insurgents responded to the approach of the companies by attacking. Insurgents sprang coordinated mortar and small arms ambushes throughout the day against the Marines and the two companies engaged in numerous firefights. On 27 March, at the request of the city council, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines pulled its forces from that portion of the city but retained surveillance over the cloverleaf. The next day, the battalion reoccupied the intersection, remaining in place through the end of the month to prevent further attacks on convoys.

Under these less than auspicious circumstances, the transfer of authority with the 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, and that of the two divisions as well, took place on the 28th at Camp Fallujah. During that week, insurgents struck Camp Fallujah with indirect fire 23, 25, 27–29, and 31 March. The Abu Ghraib Prison received the same treatment for three days. On the 30th a force service support group convoy was ambushed near al-Fallujah. On a more positive note, a patrol from 1st Reconnaissance Battalion found a cache of 300 mortar rounds southwest of al-Fallujah on 31 March. As difficult as these early experiences in AO Atlanta had been for the 1st Marine Division and its supporting aviation and service contingents, hopes remained high that a sustained and determined Marine Corps presence could bring improved conditions to this tortured province.[34]

Among the many technological advantages Marines exploited in this campaign was the much improved intelligence capability that had been developed over two decades of effort. The 2003 campaign in Iraq had seen the baptism of fire for the Marine Corps intelligence battalion formed in the MEF headquarters group under normal organization. Accordingly, the 2nd Intelligence Battalion established its Tactical Fusion Center with the division command post at Camp Blue Diamond and proceeded to operate intelligence cells as low as the company level in the ensuing campaign. The Tactical Fusion Center combined in a single place the intelligence from higher echelons of national and military intelligence services with the intelligence from the many sources of local Marine Corps and Army units. As the campaign unfolded, human exploitation teams and signal intelligence teams operated down to the company level in providing intelligence. Overall, the positioning of the Tactical Fusion Center adjacent to the divisional operations center provided situational awareness unprecedented even by standards of the 2003 accomplishments.[35]

Major General Mattis signaled his appreciation of the situation near the end of March. Colonel Tucker's RCT-7 had successfully positioned units to interdict the primary "ratline." Concurrently, Colonel Toolan's RCT-1 had moved aggressively against the enemy center of gravity in al-Fallujah, while Colonel Conner's 1st Brigade preempted any insurgent force efforts to disrupt the al-Anbar authorities. The Marines wanted to increase human intelligence, fused with all sources, to create opportunities for targeted strikes against the insurgent networks.

Major General Mattis saw in the opposition a combination of classical insurgent tactics and terrorist activities, and these had increased during the turnover. Not only were the more plentiful road convoys attacked, but also violence in urban and rural areas across the province increased. Increased patrol activity into areas not normally covered had produced attacks by both IEDs and direct fire. In no case, however, did the insurgents demonstrate any interest in assaulting the new arrivals. Instead, they had fallen from any steady Marine infantry pressure and return fire.

Major General Mattis urged his division onward.

> Demonstrate respect to the Iraqi people, especially when you don't feel like it. As the mission continues, we will experience setbacks and frustrations. In many cases our efforts will seem unappreciated by those we are trying the hardest to help. It is then that small unit leaders step up and are counted. Keep your soldiers, sailors and Marines focused on the mission and resistant to adversarial relationships with the Iraqi people . . . We obey the Geneva Convention even while the enemy does not. We will destroy the enemy without losing our humanity.[36]

The opening of the I MEF stability and security operations campaign in March ended with an insurgent ambush that left four U.S. security contractors killed and mutilated on the Highway 10 bridge in west-central al-Fallujah, prompting U.S. offensive actions in reprisal. The initial campaign plan for stability and security operations would give way to full-spectrum combat operations for Marines and soldiers in Iraq and not exclusively in the I MEF zone.

CHAPTER 4:

First al-Fallujah Battle and its Aftermath

The 1st Marine Division inherited a very dangerous situation in al-Fallujah from the 82d Airborne Division and had developed a measured, phased approach: kinetic operations combined with focused information operations and civil affairs actions to show the Fallujans both the carrot and the stick—something they already understood well. This planning was encompassed in a division order called al-Fallujah Opening Gambit and was prepared for RCT-1 to execute as the situation warranted. Despite these and other measures, events overcame the situation and led to a much different operation than the division could have ever anticipated.[37]

The offensive actions carried out by RCT-1 on 25–27 March at the northeastern sector of the city succeeded in taking control of the Cloverleaf and sending a message to the people of al-Fallujah that the Marines were there to stay. While setting back the civil affairs process in al-Fallujah, Marines felt they were dealing, effectively, with the situation—but soon, events overtook perceptions.

Operation Vigilant Resolve (3–30 April 2004)

On 31 March insurgents ambushed four armed security contractors from the firm Blackwater USA, riding in two unmarked all-terrain vehicles. The four Americans died amid a volley of hand grenades, and the mob that gathered began to desecrate the bodies, setting them afire, and hanging two of them inverted from the nearby Old Bridge over the Euphrates River. World media broadcast the hanging bodies, and the American and western public saw what was for it very shocking video footage of charred and almost unrecognizable bodies while the residents of the city cheered and danced to celebrate the deaths. What was less known was the cooperation of local Iraqis who helped the Marines of 2d Battalion, 1st Marines recover the remains of three victims that night and the fourth on the following day.

After a series of conferences with the White House and the Secretary of Defense, Lieutenant General Sanchez directed immediate military action. On April 1, Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, U.S. Army, his deputy director of operations, promised an "overwhelming" response to the Blackwater deaths, stating "We will pacify that city." In the midst of calls for vengeance including options of destroying what little critical infrastructure remained in the city, both Lieutenant General Conway and Major General Mattis cautioned against rash action, and in the division's daily report, his assistant division commander, Brigadier General John F. Kelly, strove to temper the call for immediate offensive action:[38]

> As we review the actions in Fallujah yesterday, the murder of four private security personnel in the most brutal way, we are convinced that this act was spontaneous mob action. Under the wrong circumstances this could have taken place in any city in Iraq. We must avoid the temptation to strike out in retribution. In the only 10 days we have been here we have engaged the "good" and the bad in Fallujah everyday, and have casualties to show for our efforts. We must remember that the citizens and officials of Fallujah were already gathering up and delivering what was left of three victims before asked to do so, and continue in their efforts to collect up what they can of the dismembered remnants of the fourth. We have a well thought out campaign plan that considers the Fallujah problem across its very complicated spectrum. This plan most certainly includes kinetic action, but going overly kinetic at this juncture plays into the hands of the opposition in exactly the way they assume we will. This is why they shoot and throw hand grenades out of crowds, to bait us into overreaction. The insurgents did not plan this crime, it dropped into their lap. We should not fall victim to their hopes for a vengeful response. To react to this provocation, as heinous as it is, will likely negate the efforts the 82d ABD paid for in blood, and complicate our campaign plan which we have not yet been given the opportunity to implement. Counterinsurgency forces have learned many times in the past that the desire to demonstrate force and resolve has long term and generally negative implications, and destabilize rather than stabilize the environment.

Lieutenant General Sanchez' headquarters ordered Combat Operations to Re-establish Freedom of Maneuver in al-Fallujah on 1 April which ordered immediate offensive action in al-Fallujah. At I MEF, Lieutenant General Conway subsequently directed Major General Mattis to establish 12 checkpoints around the city using local Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and police personnel to prevent any movement into or out of the city by younger males. The Iraqi paramilitary personnel, who at this time were still estimated to be reliable, manned seven of the checkpoints positioned as inner cordons, and Marines of Lieutenant Colonel Gregg P. Olson's 2d Battalion, 1st Marines and Lieutenant Colonel Brennan T. Byrne's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines set up five outer checkpoints to complete the ring around the city. As this was occurring, the two Marine battalions began moving significant combat power to the northeast corner of the city.

On 3 April, Lieutenant General Sanchez issued his order for Operation Vigilant Resolve, aimed at denying insurgent sanctuary in al-Fallujah and arresting those responsible for the Blackwater atrocity. The two Marine battalions moved into positions around the eastern and northern portion of al-Fallujah to seal the outer cordon of al-Fallujah. The Marines and Iraqi paramilitary personnel continued to receive fire on their position and the "friendly" Iraqis soon left their positions. Their abandonment of their posts brought the dispatch to al-Fallujah of the 36th Commando Battalion, a specially trained unit augmented and mentored by the U.S. Army's Special Forces to fight alongside American troops. This unit would acquit itself well in combat during the weeks ahead. In his commander's comments of 3 April, Major General Mattis raised the difficulties of conducting offensive operations in al-Fallujah:[39]

> My intent is to then enter the city from two directions, which will draw fire from guerillas and put us in a position to exploit our own well considered and conditions based operation. There are over 250,000 inhabitants in the city, the vast majority of whom have no particular love for the Coalition, but are also not insurgents. From a moral, ethical, legal, and military perspective, we will fight smart: We do not have to be loved at the end of the day, this is a goal that is no longer achievable in Fallujah, but we must avoid turning more young men into terrorists. We will also avoid doing what the insurgents, terrorists, and foreign fighters, and "Arab Street" all expect, and that is the thoughtless application of excessive force as if to strike out in retribution for the murders.

Major General Mattis and his division staff planned decisive operations to bring al-Fallujah under control while simultaneously maintaining the counterinsurgency operations in nearby ar-Ramadi and the rest of al-Anbar and North Babil Provinces to prevent conceding any advantage to the insurgents. His orders called for a four-phase operation by Colonel Toolan's 1st Marines:[40]

Phase I: RCT-1 would begin sustained operations in al-Fallujah beginning 0100 on 5 April with a tight cordon of the city using two battalion task forces in blocking positions and traffic control points on all motorized avenues of approach. This stage included raids against the photography shop that printed the murder photos and against regimental high value targets.

Phase II: Continuous raids would attack targets inside the city from firm bases established within northern and southern al-Fallujah. The information operations messages for the operation would be projected, thanking the local population for cooperation, and for the information they provided leading to death or capture of insurgent forces and informing citizens of measures necessary to protect themselves and families from harm.

Phases III and IV: At moments of local commanders' choosing, RCT-1 would then attack to seize various hostile sectors in the city, integrating and eventually turning operations over to Iraqi security forces.

Colonel Toolan ordered his two battalions and supporting troops (the regiment's supporting tank and assault amphibian company and artillery battery) into their battle positions in the early morning hours of 5 April. The 1st Reconnaissance Battalion swept to the north and east of the city against insurgent teams seeking to fire mortar rounds and rockets into Marine positions. Company D, 1st LAR Battalion moved north to cover Highway E1, the main artery in use to the west. Marines of Company B, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion and Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 74

constructed a berm around southern al-Fallujah, further isolating the battle area.

As Captain Kyle Stoddard's Company F, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines occupied its battle position, insurgents engaged his 2d Platoon and combat engineer detachment with RPG-type rocket launchers and small arms fire. An Air Force AC-130U gunship checked on station and coordinated with the battalion for fire support. When the AC-130 had stopped firing, the Jolan district fronting the battalion lay ablaze and the enemy threat had disappeared.

With 2d Battalion, 2d Marines blocking any escape to the south of al-Fallujah, the assault of the city commenced on 6 April with 2d Battalion, 1st Marines attacking into the northwest corner of the city, the Jolan District, while 1st Battalion, 5th Marines attacked west from its positions south of the cloverleaf, into the industrial Sin'a District. Major General Mattis planned to pinch the insurgents from two directions, adding a steadily increasing pressure to their defensive dilemma. The fighting in late March had determined that the enemy lacked the resolve and the fighting skill to stop advancing Marine rifle units. A progressive advance into the city would exploit insurgent weaknesses and lead to their wholesale collapse.

The entry into the city proceeded consistent with Colonel Toolan's judgment as to the enemy posture. The moves from north and southeast into the city each night drew immediate fire from insurgents, revealing their locations, thus allowing the Marines to destroy them. The Marine battalions attempted to integrate Iraqi Civil Defense Corps troops into the blocking positions and New Iraqi Army units into Marine battalions as rapidly as possible. Marine commanders, Coalition authority representatives, and civil affairs officers advised the civil, tribal, and religious leaders of the city about the situation. These locals predicted dire consequences if the Coalition continued to move into the city. But the Coalition's response to the city's leaders was that their predictions lacked credibility, and that the city leaders bore major responsibility for the present conditions in al-Fallujah. The information operation campaign used public service announcements, handbills, and notifications to the mayor, city council, sheiks, and police. These announcements stated that a curfew would be imposed and enforced between 1900–0600.

As operations ensued, Major General Mattis signaled his concern about the I MEF southern boundary, where the parallel al-Sadr revolt in Baghdad and provinces to the south threatened I MEF communications to the south and east. Elements of al-Sadr's militia (also termed the Mahdi Army) moved astride the Euphrates near al-Musayyib on the Karbala-Baghdad highway. Iraqi police managed to restore order, but the uprising remained a serious portent of the future. By 6 April, the inadequacy of Iraqi paramilitary forces could no longer be denied. Most of the 2,000 Iraqi soldiers and police theoretically deployed to support the 1st Marine Division had deserted as soon as, or even before, the fighting began. The 2d Battalion, New Iraqi Army, for instance, took fire while convoying from Baghdad on 5 April and refused to go into action with some 38 percent disappearing at once. Many of these Iraqi soldiers reportedly entered insurgent ranks. Only the 36th Iraqi Commando Battalion (400 troops with 17 U.S. Special Forces advisors) stayed the course, working alongside 2d Battalion, 1st Marines in Jolan. The 506th Battalion of the Civil Defense Corps proved unsteady but useful at manning exterior checkpoints, but no other Iraqi soldiers served in this action. The 505th Battalion, for instance, never reported for operations.

Major General Mattis decided to order in an infantry battalion from the 7th Marines and denounced the Iraqi security force program on 6 April.

> A primary goal of our planning to date has been to "put an Iraqi face" on security functions as quickly as possible. With three weeks on the ground, reporting and experience has indicated that all Iraqi civil security organizations—police, Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and border force—are generally riddled with corruption, a lack of will, and are widely infiltrated by anti-Coalition agents. In one case we have reporting that an entire unit located in Fallujah has deserted and gone over to the insurgent side. Their treachery has certainly cost us killed and wounded.
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> There are a number of explanations for this turn of events, not the least of which is that until now the forces have been little more than a jobs program. We are only now asking them to man their posts, to step up

and be counted, and it would seem many are either voting with their feet—or their allegiance.

Starting on 7 April, RCT-1 attacked continuously for 48 hours, killing and routing those insurgents who had stayed to fight. Fighting at times was at close range, no more than 25 meters at best. The Marines continued to push. The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines moved through the southeastern district sectors of the city proper and controlled 1,500 meters of Highway 10 west of the cloverleaf. The 2d Battalion, 1st Marines continued attacking in its corner of the city, expanding to the south and west. A mosque gave special resistance to 1st Battalion, 5th Marines with small arms and rocket launcher (RPG) fire, leading to a coordinated assault to seize it, killing one insurgent and taking three prisoner. Route E1 remained open for Coalition traffic to the north of the city. Late on 7 April, the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines began to move from al-Asad Air Base to al-Fallujah, where it would join RCT-1 for the fight by the following afternoon.[41]

Marines fought in full-scale urban combat for almost six days for the first time since 2003. The insurgents proved to be an adaptive force, using small three-to-five man teams, shoot-and-run tactics, and sniper fire revealing some skill. They also used indiscriminate mortar, artillery rocket, and handheld rocket launcher fire at a safe distance from Marine positions. They showed organized battle order, command and control using cellular phones, pigeons, and visual signals. Cached weapons and equipment in numerous locations throughout the city allowed them freedom of maneuver. Marines saw numerous cases of civilian observers cueing insurgents to the movements of Marines thus exploiting the rules of engagement under which Coalition troops fought. In any case, after Marines achieved superior firepower, insurgents retreated and attempted to blend with the civilian populace, allowing them to fight another day.[42]

Supporting arms proved essential even when Marines engaged in close quarters combat. Lieutenant Colonel Olson characterized it as ". . . wave after wave of close air support aircraft: Air Force F-16C, and AC-130, Marine AH-1W Cobras and UH-1N handled the mission load." Throughout the entire month of April Captain Brad S. Pennella's Battery A, 1st Battalion, 11th Marines shot 30 counter-fire missions against insurgent mortar and artillery rocket positions and fired 14 missions to support the infantry. In addition, Company C, 1st Tank Battalion (Captain Michael D. Skaggs) attached a platoon to each infantry battalion in direct support. Repeatedly, under steady RPG and small arms fire, the M1A1 tanks rolled into enemy territory and demolished enemy personnel and equipment.[43]

Combat in al-Fallujah demonstrated many unusual characteristics. Residences make up most of its over 50,000 buildings except in the industrial Sina'a District. The brick or concrete homes typically are one or two stories high, with flat roofs, enclosed courtyards and perimeter walls. While some neighborhoods have a normal grid pattern, the Jolan District revealed twisted alleyways and jumbled streets, repeated to an extent in the industrial southeast.

The narrow streets and walled enclosures channelized attacking Marine rifle squads, but the enemy engaged in little street fighting, preferring to hole up and fight from ambush inside the houses themselves. By doing so, they avoided exposure to Marines placed in overwatch, observation, and sniper positions. The walls of the typical house resisted grenade fragments, making it possible to clear each room individually. The windows typically were barred; doors, gates, and even internal barricades were reinforced with some type of reinforcement material, making some houses miniature forts, requiring multiple shots of multipurpose assault weapons, rockets, and tank guns to breach or reduce.

The houses offered multiple entry and exit points at the front, kitchen and side or rear, enabling insurgents to move easily through the residential areas. Their tactics frequently relied upon arms caches in many houses, enabling them to move unarmed between houses in the guise of innocent civilians, then set up in ambush of the Marines. After they were inside, Marines usually found the same layout: the front door opened to a small entryway with twin doors leading into two sitting rooms. Beyond these one encountered interior doors opening to the central hallway, where all first floor rooms led. In that hallway stood the typical stairwell to the second floor, containing more rooms and an exterior stairwell to the rooftop.[44]

The increased security focus and operational tempo in the division's zone fostered an additional operational planning effort to develop

shaping operations in and around al-Fallujah to support the main effort. The intelligence analysis identified three key cities harboring and supporting enemy activities: Saqlawiyah, Karmah, and Jurf as-Sakhr. The staff made plans for combined operations in these cities. With Colonel Toolan and his staff best focused on the city of al-Fallujah, Major General Mattis activated the division's alternate command group "Bravo." Led by Brigadier General Kelly, "Division Bravo" moved to North Babil province and assumed command of the two infantry battalions there. These two battalions would play a key role in establishing a secure environment for the ongoing Arba'een pilgrimage, which brought hundreds of thousands of Shi'a faithful into Karbala. Some operational planning teamwork later occurred to conduct a relief in place by the Army's 1st Armored Division, which was by then beginning to engage in operations to the south of Baghdad.[45]

As Marines poised and repositioned for further operations on 9 April, orders arrived from Lieutenant General Sanchez to cease all offensive operations in al-Fallujah. The Coalition Provisional Authority, headed by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, had prevailed upon General Abazaid to order a cease-fire at the behest of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) in Baghdad. Politics brought RCT-1's momentum to a stop. Marines received the order to cease offensive operations with some disbelief. The reason for the halt was to allow IGC council representatives the opportunity to negotiate the enemy's surrender.

An uncertain siege continued for three weeks. The arrival of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines on the eighth saw it employed immediately in a new zone of attack oriented southwest from the northeast corner of al-Fallujah. As it took up the main effort, the other two battalions continued to move and to reduce insurgent pockets of resistance. The enemy fired rockets and mortars from the city center but had by then lost all of its initial defensive positions. The insurgents remaining within the city limits tried to use the cease-fire to their advantage to no surprise for the Marines of the assault battalions. Colonel Toolan tightened the cordon on the city to prevent either reinforcement or exfiltration of the insurgents. The 36th Commando Battalion continued to fight alongside the Marines and continued to distinguish itself as the sole Iraqi unit that had proven itself in combat. The 505th Battalion manned checkpoints under supervision on the outskirts of the city.

Captain Jason E. Smith had led his Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines through some of the heaviest fighting in the industrial area during the formal offensive operation. He returned to the offensive again on 13 April. The insurgents surrounded the attached 3d Platoon, Company A, which lost an assault amphibious vehicle and took several casualties. Leading the rescue effort, Captain Smith guided his convoy toward the smoke of the burning vehicle and then dismounted, racing to the first vehicles to lead his Marines to the trapped platoon. With total disregard for enemy fire, he coordinated attacks on the insurgents and returned fire himself. Organizing a defensive perimeter and evacuating casualties, he supervised the recovery of the disabled tracked vehicle and coordinated the withdrawal as part of the rear guard.[46]

Representatives from I MEF, the Coalition authority, and Iraqi organizations began to negotiate with the insurgents, but little progress was made. Marines had to defend themselves from repeated insurgent violations of the ceasefire. On 25 April, both Lieutenant General Conway and Major General Mattis met with former Iraqi Army generals to discuss the possible formation of a military unit in al-Fallujah. This unit came to be called the "Fallujah Brigade." By 28 April the Fallujah Brigade had begun assembling and on the 30th, a turnover led to the phased movement of the 1st Marine Division out of al-Fallujah. For Lieutenant General Conway, the unusual negotiating opportunity given a field commander allowed a least bad solution to an insoluble dilemma: the 1st Marine Division no longer had authority to continue the assault and to clear the city, plus it lacked the manpower and other resources to manage a prolonged siege of the city. The negotiations produced the Fallujah Brigade, which gained the quick approval of the military chain of command. Ambassador Bremer protested but in the end he had called for the ceasefire and by the end of April even more serious problems developed.[47]

Insurgency in al-Anbar Province April 2004

The 1st Marine Division fought its 1st Battle of al-Fallujah well but with considerable interference. The ensuing days saw a widespread rising of violence and opposition to occupying forces,

Table 4-1: Ground Combat Turnover, July-October 2004

Initial Deployment	Replacement Unit	Area of Operations	Transfer of Authority
3d Bn, 4th Mar	1st Bn, 8th Mar	Denver	14 July
1st Bn, 5th Mar	3d Bn, 1st Mar	Raleigh	17 July
2d Bn, 7th Mar	1st Bn, 23d Mar	Denver	18 September
3d Bn, 7th Mar	1st Bn, 7th Mar	Denver	22 September
2d Bn, 1st Mar	3d Bn, 5th Mar	Raleigh	8 October
2d Bn, 2d Mar	2d Bn, 24th Mar	Raleigh	11 October
2d Bn, 4th Mar	2d Bn, 5th Mar	Topeka	26 September
3d Bn, 11th Mar	2d Bn, 11th Mar	Topeka	29 September
3d Bn, 24th Mar	2d Bn, 10th Mar	Taqaddum AB	4 October
1st LAR Bn	3d LAR Bn	Topeka	16 September
1st Recon Bn (-)	2d Recon Bn (-)	Raleigh	27 September

in some instances reflecting the rising temperatures and the public's frustration with the squalid conditions in the city. In other cases, violence was planned by anti-Coalition factions and insurgents. In al-Anbar Province, insurgent groups rallied to support their brethren remaining behind in the city, spurred by the al-Fallujah insurgent and foreign fighter leaders who escaped in the first days of April. But another crisis overshadowed the difficulties of soldiers and Marines in that province, one with great political impact.

The relatively young but influential Muqtada al-Sadr, scion of a Shi'a clerical dynasty, enjoyed increasing power and popularity after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime. Having served as a symbol of Shi'a resistance to the former regime, he continued as a resistance leader by opposing the U.S. and Coalition occupation of Iraq. In 2003 he formed a militia, which became known variously as the Sadr Militia or the Mahdi Army, and announced a shadow Shi'a government in al-Kufah, where he intended to establish government ministries. Al-Sadr continued to pose obstacles to the Coalition Provisional Authority's plans for a transition to Iraqi self-rule via the Governing Council, and on 5 April 2004, Coalition authorities closed his newspaper and called for the leader's arrest on various charges. At the same time, thousands of Iraqis in Baghdad (he was the de facto ruler of the Sadr City section of Baghdad) and the Shi'a cities of al-Kut, Karbala, ad-Diwaniyah and an-Najaf took to the streets to support al-Sadr, while al-Sadr's militia seized government buildings and police stations in a major uprising and challenge to the Coalition Provisional Authority.

All out war returned to Baghdad. For the first time in a year, tank cannon and 25mm chain gun firing resounded through the streets of the city. The 1st Armored Division halted its redeployment movements on 6 April, having turned over the garrison mission to the 1st Cavalry Division. Lieutenant General Sanchez issued orders to 1st Armored Division to deploy combat units south of Baghdad with warnings of further actions to come. He further ordered Operation Resolute Sword on 7 April to govern further actions against the Mahdi Army.

> The Mahdi Army is declared to be a hostile force; Coalition forces are authorized to engage and destroy the Mahdi Army based

Table 4-2: Aviation Turnover, August-September 2004

Initial Deployment	Replacement	Base	Relief in Place
HMH-466	HMH-361	al-Asad	2 September
HMLA-775	HMLA-367	al-Asad	7 September
VMGR-352/234	VMGR-352/452	Taqaddum	7 September
HMLA-167	HMLA-169	al-Asad	23 August
HMM-261	HMM-365	al-Asad	27 August
HMM-161	HMM-268	Taqaddum	8 September
HMM-764	HMM-774	al-Asad	19 September
VMA-214	VMFA(AW)-242	al-Asad	17 August
VMU-2	VMU-1	Taqaddum	14 August

> solely upon their status as members of the Mahdi Army. There is no requirement for members of Mahdi Army to commit a hostile act or demonstrate hostile intent before they can be engaged. Muqtada al-Sadr is the leader of Mahdi Army. Positive identification of Mahdi Army targets must be acquired prior to engagement.[48]

With the dispatch of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines to RCT-1 and the al-Fallujah battle, Major General Mattis sensed that the division had reached the end of its resources, yet he suspected that an emerging danger to the east and south remained with the al Sadr Revolt.[49]

> The current tempo and widespread enemy surge across our operations area has this division stretched. We are moving aggressively against the enemy across our zone but there are enemy forces operating in areas where we have no forces and the Iraqi security forces are impotent. We lack sufficient forces to fully address the enemy in the area north of Camp Fallujah (vicinity of al Karma), Jurf al Sukr, Northern Babil and the rocket belt south of Fallujah and Abu Ghraib prison. We will address those enemies once we free up forces so we can destroy their sanctuaries. Additional forces to command and control the Northern Babil fight, a regiment headquarters, a tank company (personnel only), and one USMC infantry battalion have been requested by separate correspondence.

In northern Babil Province, two U.S. battalions under the 1st Marine Division sought to maintain the flux of events between the al-Fallujah and al-Sadr uprisings. The 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, focused on securing routes for the Arba'een pilgrimage of the Shi'a. This required ambushing insurgents setting explosive devices, mounting patrols along routes in the zone, and supporting the traffic control points manned by the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. When feasible, patrols of 1st Reconnaissance Battalion moved in from its usual areas south of al-Fallujah to counter insurgent indirect fire and booby trap teams.

While escorting a convoy into al-Anbar Province, the reconnaissance battalion's 2d Platoon, Company B, ran into a well-concealed and fortified ambush position southwest of al-Fallujah. When Captain Brent L. Morel, the platoon commander, saw his lead vehicle smashed by a rocket, he ordered his other two vehicles to flank the insurgent position. As insurgent mortar and machine gun fire increased, he led an assault across an open field and up a ten-foot berm into firing positions from which the reconnaissance Marines eliminated 10 insurgents at close range and forced the others to flee. Continuing the assault against the other insurgents who continued to pin down the convoy, Captain Morel received a fatal burst of automatic weapons fire. Leadership then fell to team leader Sergeant Willie L. Copeland III, who continued the assault by fire with his five Marines while shielding and attempting to save the life of his captain. Under the cover of hand grenades, they withdrew to safety with Captain Morel's body. In the same action, Sergeant Lendro F. Baptista led his three-man team against more insurgent positions, single-handedly killing four of them at close range while directing fire against several others. He then personally covered the withdrawal of the team to safety with his own firing.

In AO Topeka, the soldiers and Marines with the Army's 1st Brigade fought feverishly against insurgents rallying to support the al-Fallujah fighting. Fighting in Ramadi reached a new level of intensity, with 6 April being the worst day, when 12 Marines of 2d Battalion, 4th Marines died in an urban firefight against insurgents operating in small groups that initially attacked the Government Center. The battalion succeeded in defending the government buildings, assisting in extracting Coalition authority officials and pushing the attackers into the eastern side of the city.

At 1048 on 6 April, Company G received small arms and rocket launcher (RPG) fire in the al-Malaab District. The patrol, pursuing the attackers, cordoned off the buildings in the area; small arms fire erupted from on them. Two squads engaged the enemy, and the battalion sent its quick reaction force. At approximately 1145 Company G received more fire and at 1205 was pinned down in a house. The quick reaction force moved to the area in support but was engaged by enemy as well, one block east of Company G. Captain Christopher J. Bronzi, the company commander, led his Marines in the ensuing 24 hours of action, personally destroying several enemy fighting positions and repeatedly exposing himself to small

arms and grenades as he rallied them and eliminated numerous insurgents. At one point on the sixth, he led a fire team into a fire-swept street to recover the body of a fallen Marine.

At this time the battalion received notice from 1st Marine Division that three mosques in the area had called for "Jihad." At approximately 1330 an explosive device was reported in Company E's sector, on the eastern outskirts of the city, and while cordoning off the area it too received small arms fire. At approximately the same time just to the east one of the battalion's sniper teams, set up near the Euphrates River, was attacked by 12–15 men. At approximately 1400 a Company E patrol was ambushed. A quick reaction force was dispatched to reinforce the patrol when it engaged with the enemy still further to the east of the city. This quick reaction force had two Humvees hit and its platoon commander critically wounded. Under heavy machine gun and rocket fire, Corporal Eric M. Smith, a squad leader, assumed command of the platoon and led the Marines 50 meters across open ground, where they set up in a few fighting holes placed along Route 10. Smith then ran back across the field to evacuate his platoon commander and the platoon's weapons. Employing machine guns from the platoon's seven-ton truck, Corporal Smith led a counterattack against the insurgent force and relieved another squad that had been pinned down. When an Army mechanized infantry platoon arrived, Smith coordinated the evacuation of casualties and withdrew the platoon to the company command post.

The battalion determined that fighters came into Ramadi on motorcycles and in pickup trucks, met at a central location (likely the soccer field), and informed the town's people that they were going to attack U.S. forces that day. On the spot interrogation revealed the insurgents forced residents out of their homes as the insurgents prepared to engage the Americans. When the fighting subsided, the insurgents made a planned withdrawal on motorcycles and possibly in boats on the Euphrates back to their base camps.[50]

The launching of Operation Vigilant Resolve clearly ignited festering insurgent cells that had planned incursions of these types. Having stirred up a hornet's nest across the al-Anbar Province, the Coalition forces found themselves extended perilously beyond any tolerable limits. The insurgents established ambushes, roadblocks, emplaced explosive devices, and fired all kinds of weapons indirectly at Coalition forces. As part of the insurgent's effort to cut lines of communications, they moved against key bridges, including the Thar Thar Bridge over the canal of the same name.

In addition to the surprising mobility and strength of the insurgents, they displayed an excellent grasp of information operations. Their propaganda reached television and radio stations, appeared on the internet, and coursed through the streets by word of mouth. Some groups distributed fliers and videos alleging Coalition atrocities and insurgent successes. Arab satellite news programming, especially the ubiquitous Al Jazeera, highlighted the "excessive force" of the Marines and soldiers of 1st Marine Division, making allusions to the Israeli actions in Palestine as further denunciation. With no western press embedded with I MEF forces and the streets too dangerous for independent reporting, the media battlefield fell to the insurgents.

The Iraqi Governing Council caved in to pressures within and without its chambers. Three of its members resigned in protest, and five others threatened the same. Mr. Bremer met with the Council on 8 April and received the opinions of the Sunni members that Operation Vigilant Resolve amounted to "collective punishment" and that even more massive demonstrations of resistance and opposition were in the offing. Mr. Bremer was already under pressure to deal with the al-Sadr revolt, the British had criticized him for his heavy-handed approach in al-Fallujah. He also knew that the Abu Ghraib Prison scandals were about to become public knowledge. Thus, he probably decided to cut his losses. For him, the larger objective of returning sovereignty to the Iraqis by 30 June probably took precedence.

These were dark hours for the U.S. and Coalition position in Iraq, and the political-military direction of the campaign demonstrated considerable weakness and discord. The "transfer of sovereignty" did occur for Mr. Bremer, who advanced it two days to forestall further difficulties, and he departed Iraq minutes after the ceremony. But the idea of sovereignty had little meaning in Iraqi streets. Still ahead lay several months of fighting and many casualties to restore a semblance of order in Iraq. The lessons were hard, but Marines would again visit al-Fallujah, which they knew from the moment the battle was terminated on 30

April. Nominally, I MEF reported 27 U.S. killed in action and over 90 wounded in the First al-Fallujah Battle, but Army and Marine Corps casualties, in related incidents in Ramadi and the area surrounding al-Fallujah, were just beginning to show the extent of their activities. In April, the 1st Marine Division alone suffered 48 Marines two soldiers and one Navy corpsman killed in action, with the wounded in action totaling 412 Marines 43 soldiers and 21 sailors. Little information exists on casualties for the few Iraqi forces fighting with the Coalition. Enemy losses can never be known, but are estimated by some intelligence sources as 800 Iraqis killed, which undoubtedly included noncombatants.

7th Marines Counterstrike in Operation Ripper Sweep (14 April–1 May 2004)

Thwarted in their efforts to eradicate the insurgents from al-Fallujah, Lieutenant General Conway and Major General Mattis turned to the many instances of insurgency in the surrounding areas of the province. The Army 1st Brigade worked unceasingly to maintain a semblance of order in ar-Ramadi, using the full panoply of raids, cordons, and various types of patrolling and ambush actions. In the western province, RCT-7 continued to interdict the ratlines (insurgent transportation routes) as before the al-Fallujah incidents, also raiding suspected insurgent cells across the Euphrates valley between al-Qaim and Rawah.

Beginning on 10 April, Major General Mattis' staff began to work with Colonel Tucker's RCT-7 to develop a plan to move a key part of the RCT into AO Raleigh to relieve RCT-1 of further distractions outside al-Fallujah and to deal with the incipient insurgent activities in the towns and countryside surrounding al-Fallujah. Colonel Tucker had his staff devise a plan to free sufficient combat power from the camps and duties in western al-Anbar Province and to move it with the regimental tactical command post to positions in the east of AO Atlanta.

The resulting plan juggled missions of many units of the entire I MEF. The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing would have to assume responsibility for security of Camp Korean Village to free the 1st LAR Battalion, leaving the border crossings Trebil and Wallid uncovered (the crossings remained closed for most of the month during the al-Fallujah crisis). The Azerbaijani company stationed at Camp Hadithah Dam would be reinforced with only a detachment from 3d Battalion, 4th Marines and a small craft company. The Taqaddum security battalion, 3d Battalion, 24th Marines replaced 2d Battalion, 7th Marines at Camp Hit. At Camp al-Qaim, only 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines remained to counter insurgents at the Syrian border zone. The Haditha Dam and Hit zone formerly occupied by 2d Battalion, 7th Marines was covered by Task Force Walsh (Major Bennett W. Walsh—who commanded the 1st Small Craft Company) consisting of L Company, 3d Battalion, 24th Marines Company C, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, the 1st Small Craft Company, a platoon left by 1st LAR Battalion, a platoon of military police, detachments of volunteers, and the Azerbaijani company. The regiment's executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel John D. Gamboa, took command of what became known as "RCT-7 West" at the main command post during the regiment's offensive foray around al-Fallujah. As part of this offensive, Major General Mattis assigned Colonel Tucker an additional mission of clearing the right bank of the Euphrates along Route 10 as far as the peninsula west of al-Fallujah, closed for several days because of explosive devices and ambushes.

The force taken by Colonel Tucker on this operation consisted of his tactical command group, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines 1st LAR Battalion, 3rd Platoon, Company C, 1st Tank Battalion (attached at the time the al-Fallujah battle began), Battery E, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines and a platoon from 1st Force Reconnaissance Company.

Major General Mattis clarified his plan on 13 April:

> The division is stretched thin with the route security mission coupled with the Fallujah cordon. These missions tie down a significant portion of our maneuver assets and the sooner we receive direction about the anticipated resolution of Fallujah negotiations, the better. While accepting a short term risk in the west permits us to move against several enemy sanctuaries and dominated areas in area Raleigh, RCT-7 must return to the western operating area in approximately seven to ten days or we will face setbacks along the rat lines that may negate our successes further east. Limiting defensive route security missions and maintaining the cordon around Fallujah for as short a period as possible are tactical imper-

atives; we need to return to the offensive as rapidly as possible.[51]

As the task force organized by Colonel Tucker began to assemble at al-Asad Air Base, the situation continued to deteriorate as the division reported on the 13th: ". . . the two companies of effective Iraqi Civil Defense Corps from the 507th Battalion have essentially quit."

The division's order of the day for the fourteenth set out the mission for RCT-7, and Colonel Tucker issued his orders for Operation Ripper Sweep, to be conducted in three initial phases:

> At al-Asad: rearm, refit, refuel and rehearse in preparation for upcoming operation in support of the division's efforts at Fallujah. Depart al-Asad at 1400 on 15 April for area Raleigh. At 0600, 16 April, commence the attack astride the main routes from Taqqadum, clearing the insurgents from the southwest of Fallujah through al-Amirah. Continuing on order to clear Jurf as Sakhr, preparing for further operations in the security zone of RCT-1.[52]

At 0600 on 16 April, the Ripper Sweep forces began the offensive with 1st LAR Battalion attacking southeast where a blocking position was established to support the follow-on clearance in zone by 2d Battalion, 7th Marines between Taqqadum and Fallujah. Insurgent resistance remained minimal. The only notable contact during the clearance occurred when 1st LAR units were engaged by small arms from a fuel truck while south of Fallujah. The Marines suspected a vehicular bomb and destroyed the truck with 25mm cannon fire, wounding both occupants, who received immediate medical evacuation. At 1300 on 18 April, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines and 1st LAR Battalion continued the attack into the center of al-Amiriyah town, covered overhead by Air Force F-16 Falcon fighter bombers and Marine Corps AH-1W Cobra attack helicopters. Instead of resistance by the residents of al-Amiriyah, the reaction to the Marines who entered in their armored vehicles was warm. Intelligence had reported the town was a sanctuary for insurgents. Colonel Tucker said of the local's reaction to the Marines "it was like liberating France." The picture began to develop that the "bow-wave" caused by the overwhelming offensive capability of the task force had driven insurgent elements out of the entire zone well before the Marines arrived. Among several detainees the task force captured eight ranking person on the RCT-1 high value target list.

The division commander reacted positively to the restoration of free movement from Taqqadum into and south of Fallujah, linking with the main surface communications to Kuwait. He ordered RCT-7 to continue movement as far as Jurf as Sak, linking with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines at its Euphrates bridge. Brigadier General Kelly's Division Bravo group had extended that battalion in the vicinity to cover any move by al Sadr militiamen toward the division's flank. Major General Mattis signaled the following:

> Following RCT-7's actions this week, we will be driving the tempo throughout most of area Atlanta. RCT-7 will then return to the west and reestablish its dominance. The relief in place with 1st Armored Division in North Babil, freeing up two battalions, and the arrival of additional tank and assault amphibious vehicle companies will enable us to maintain the momentum we are now developing in the east. More importantly, we will have the forces necessary to exploit our success with persistent presence in key areas. It will soon be clear that Blue Diamond is the dominant tribe in the al-Anbar Province.[53]

Colonel Tucker's task force spent a day at Camp al-Taqqadum and Camp Fallujah conducting maintenance and preparing to continue with Operation Ripper Sweep. At 0400 hours on 22 April the force took its offensive to the left bank of the Euphrates against al-Karmah, discovered by 3d Battalion 4th Marines as an insurgent base after the initial Fallujah "cease-fire." Once again, 1st LAR Battalion led the offensive, followed by 2d Battalion, 7th Marines. In a street-by-street search and clear operation the two battalions again encountered no insurgents but found numerous weapons caches and fifty-seven explosive devices. On 24 April the force moved to Camp Fallujah, while some rifle companies remained in al Karmah and continued operations until the end of the month.

Because of actions taken by both RCT-1 and the Army 1st Brigade in isolating and support-

ing the RCT-7 task force in its attack, the al-Karmah action amounted to a division-level fight, an uncommon event except for the Fallujah battles of 2004. On the 20th, the division transferred responsibility for Northern Babel to the 1st Armored Division, then in the middle of its campaign against the al-Sadr uprising in the Karbala-Najaf-Kut region. The Division Bravo command group returned to the division, and the two battalions, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines and 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, reverted to RCT-1 and 1st Brigade, respectively, as welcome reinforcements for their actions around Fallujah and Ramadi. The 2d Battalion, 2d Marines formally relieved Colonel Tucker's RCT-7 of its mission at al-Karmah on 25 April. The next day, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines moved back to AO Denver to reestablish its presence in Hit and Hadditha.

Although Operation Ripper Sweep officially terminated at this point, the task force remained at Camp Fallujah until 1 May, while Colonel Tucker and his staff planned a cordon of Fallujah in anticipation of a renewed attack by RCT-1 to destroy remaining insurgent forces in the city. With the decision instead to support the "Fallujah Brigade," Major General Mattis put any such operations on hold. On 1 May, the remaining RCT-7 forces departed Camp Fallujah and returned to al-Asad and Camps al-Qaim and Korean Village in al-Anbar Province for resumption of stability and security operations. Western al-Anbar Province had not remained quiet during the regiment's foray around Fallujah. Task Force Walsh worked hard in its economy of force mission in the Hit-Hadithah zone, and the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines (the sole infantry battalion remaining in AO Denver) encountered considerable action in Husaybah and al-Qaim throughout the month.

The ambitious sweep by 7th Marines around Fallujah found few insurgents, but succeeded in restoring the tactical initiative to the 1st Marine Division and in opening the land communications routes, scattering any insurgents who planned ambushes or of joining their brothers in Fallujah.[54]

Restoring Balance in al-Anbar Province

The festering problem of Fallujah would have to await its solution until after the U.S. forces had accomplished their unit rotations in mid-2004. The U.S. Army completed its final relief of units still remaining from the initial 2003 invasion and occupation period when the 1st Armored Division and 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment fought the al-Sadr revolt to a standstill in al-Kut, Karbala, and an-Najaf. The 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, also awaited its relief in September by the incoming 2d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division, in early September. For the Marines of I MEF, the arrival of relief battalions and squadrons, planned for August and September, had arrived in the form of the reinforcements requested by Major General Mattis. Company B, 1st Tank Battalion joined the Fallujah cordon on 25 April, and Company B, 3d AAV Battalion joined RCT-7 at al-Asad Air Base on 13 May.

For the time being, the combat forces of I MEF concentrated on the continuing security and stability operations, keeping the routes clear, and then turning to the major problem of training more reliable Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi security forces had failed to fight effectively in too many instances, not only in the I MEF sectors but also in face of the al-Sadr revolt, where over 1,000 of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps at Karbala and an-Najaf had deserted. The construction of the "India Base" near Camp Fallujah for Iraqi forces allowed RCT-1 to begin training in earnest. On 5 June, it opened to the initial class of Iraqi Civil Defense Corps under the direction of the regimental operations staff. The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps later converted to the Iraqi National Guard at the end of June and upon the turnover of sovereignty to the Iraqi interim government. In addition, the regiment undertook the training of the new Showani Special Forces, establishing a camp for their initial training at Camp Fallujah under the direction of Company A, 3d Assault Amphibian Vehicle Battalion. In July the 1st Marine Division convened two-week courses for National Guard officers and non-commissioned officers at Camp Ramadi, using embedded Army and Marine Corps non-commissioned officers to mentor and to train them.

In area Raleigh, RCT-1 ran constant patrols of the main supply routes thanks to its reinforcement by the Army 112th Military Police Battalion from I MEF operational control. As the last of RCT-7 units departed in early May, Colonel Toolan divided the area into three sectors. The 2d Battalion, 1st Marines oriented its efforts to the northwest of Fallujah along Route E1 and town of Saqlawiyah. From Camp Abu Ghraib, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines oriented north of Fallujah to-

ward al-Karmah, and 2d Battalion, 2d Marines established a presence to the south of Camp Fallujah to the Euphrates River. Engineers removed the Marine defensive positions in the southern and northern edges of the city, now in the hands of the Fallujah Brigade and the Iraqi National Guard. As the Marine battalions expanded their presence in the surrounding villages, they began to mount combat patrols to attack insurgents attempting ambushes, laying explosive devices, or setting up rocket or mortar attacks.

No end came to the insurgent challenges at Fallujah. On 24 June, they launched coordinated attacks on Route E1 and Traffic Control Point 1. The fighting began early in the morning and lasted throughout the day. Marines of Company G, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines defended effectively with a variety of direct fire weapons and air support. Fixed and rotary wing close air support orbited under control of the control point as the typical "escalation of force" continued. Tank cannon fired on buildings that continued to engage while a section of helicopters engaged other targets. A section of AV-8B Harrier attack aircraft circled overhead, another element of the reinforcements ordered to I MEF in the aftermath of the April Fallujah battle.

A volley of handheld rockets damaged one of the AH-1W attack helicopters, which then autorotated into friendly positions. Multiple Harrier sections dropped laser-guided bombs on buildings from which insurgents continued to engage the Marine positions. As the day continued, the fighting eventually subsided as Iraqi security forces eventually responded and established control in the area.

The luxury of concentrating on the Fallujah situation now faded for Colonel Toolan's regiment, however. The initial suppression of the al-Sadr revolt allowed the Army to resume the redeployment of 1st Armored Division back to home stations, and the responsibility for Northern Babil once again reverted to I MEF beginning 27 June. Marines of 2d Battalion, 2d Marines returned to their base camp at Mahumdiyah. The soldiers of 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, returned to Colonel Toolan's control and their operating base "FOB Chosin" near Iskandariyah. The RCT-1 area of operations doubled and the need for more forces, including Iraqi units, became more apparent.[55]

In the west, RCT-7 reestablished its presence in the main population centers of area Denver. Although the improvised dispositions managed to keep the Hadithah-Hit zone fairly stable, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines fought several fierce actions in and around al-Qaim and Husaybah, the contentious border town. Insurgents tried several ambushes of Marine reconnaissance and security probes, and explosive devises detonated daily against Marine patrols. Finally a series of pitched fights led to the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Matthew A. Lopez, personally leading a task force in a two day spontaneous assault and clearing operation of Husaybah using two of his rifle companies, the weapons company, and a detachment of 1st Force Reconnaissance Company to cordon and sweep the town. The fighting intensified and battalion mortars and helicopter close air support added to the firepower that killed an estimated 120 insurgents amid considerable mayhem. For the embattled Marines of that western border city garrison, the return of the regiment proved most welcome.

A newly constructed operations center greeted Colonel Tucker upon his return to al-Asad Air Base. On 7 May, 220 combat replacements arrived at the base for the 1st Marine Division, an indicator of the changed circumstances of occupation duty in al-Anbar Province. With the return of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines from its duty with RCT-1, beginning on 13 May the regiment could begin the planning of new initiatives. From this planning emerged the operation "Rawah II."

The 1st LAR Battalion moved on 1 June into blocking positions to the north of Rawah. The main effort unit, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines staged at Haditha Dam for movement by road to the objective while its L Company waited at al-Asad Air Base for helicopter lift into the area. The supporting unit, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines closed the borders and provided blocking forces. Twenty-four aircraft flew in support over the small town, which Marines had not "visited" for over five weeks. An EC-130 "Compass Call" electronic warfare aircraft first over flew the town to predetonate explosive devices, followed by an electronic snooper EP-3 Orion. As the LAR battalion units moved south toward Rawah, multiple sections of AV-8Bs orbited for surveillance and on call close air support. Finally, an AC-130 checked in for support as the main effort surged out of Haditha toward Rawah. Company L boarded its CH-53Es at al-Asad Air Base to be inserted at four different blocking positions simultaneously under cover of a section of

AH-1Ws. An addition section stood on the ground in ready alert. Two CH-46Es carried the RCT-7 reserve platoon, intended to land as Airborne Vehicle Check Points to catch insurgents. Although RCT-7 had scheduled an EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare aircraft to jam and perform electronic surveillance, it did not appear because of aircraft carrier difficulties.[56]

This raid netted six of the top 25 high value target persons on RCT-7 lists while the companies of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines remained in the town exploiting the success of the operation. The operation proved the last for this battalion; its relief unit, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines began the turnover process on 29 June, the first of the mid-deployment rotations.

Major General Mattis had detailed the outline of these operations at the time the Fallujah situation came to a standstill:

> Following recent offensive operations the enemy has fallen back and resorted to small scale actions intended to inflict maximum casualties on our forces with minimal risk to his own. The key to maintaining the initiative is patient, persistent presence throughout the zone. This is best accomplished by dismounted troops aggressively patrolling their area of operations, gaining information from the populace and ambushing the enemy on his own ground. Episodic vehicular forays from our firm bases do nothing more than reveal our intentions, make us easy targets and incur severe handicaps. When he is weak, as he is now, he will implant improvised explosive devices along the main service routes in periods of darkness in our absence to strike our convoys. When he comes out to operate like this—we must be in ambush to meet and kill him. Through intelligence preparation of the battlefield, that identifies his likely avenues of approach and likely improvised explosive device sites, we must anticipate his next operation. We must think, move and adapt faster than he can and less overtly than we have to date. When we can keep the enemy at bay in an area, we must exploit the opportunity we have to conduct more aggressive civil military operations and reinvigorate our programs to select trustworthy members for training the Iraqi security forces.[57]

The 11th, 24th, and 31st Marine Expeditionary Units Deploy to Iraq

Part of the solution to the challenges I MEF encountered in the expansion of its battle zone to the east came in the timely appearance of three Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) from the U.S. A combination of early sorties and extended deployments made these important reinforcements available from July 2004 through the end of 2004. On 4 May, the 24th MEU (Colonel R. J. Johnson) received its alert to prepare to deploy to Iraq during 15 June 2004–15 February 2005, instead of its planned 17 August 2004–17 February 2005 period. By deleting its "special operations capable" exercises and certification, the unit accelerated its preparations, loaded equipment aboard USS Kearsarge (LHD-3) and USNS Charleston (T-LKA-113) in early June and began its airlift to Kuwait on 26 June, while the ground combat element, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines (reinforced), completed the required predeployment training before beginning its airlift on 3 July. Assembling in Kuwait during early July, Colonel Johnson's organization reported to 1st Marine Division for operations on 24 July and accepted responsibility for Northern Babil province from RCT-1 on 1 August. Johnson took operational control of 2d Battalion, 2d Marines relieved the Army's 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry with his own 1st Battalion, 2d Marines and began security and stabilization operations on the essential main service route south of Baghdad while asserting a continuous presence in several key towns. His aviation combat element, Medium Helicopter Squadron 263, only had its normal inventory CH-46E aircraft aboard USS Kearsarge, and upon arrival at Taqqadum drew additional light attack and heavy lift helicopters from 3d Marine Aircraft Wing resources.[58]

The acceleration of Colonel Anthony M. Haslam's 11th MEU(SOC) in its deployment came after it had completed its special operations capable certification, and it departed San Diego on 27 May 2004 instead of the planned departure date of 17 June. It embarked aboard three ships of Amphibious Squadron 5 as part of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, commanded by Brigadier General Joseph V. Medina.

The initial assignment for 11th MEU was the smoldering city of an-Najaf. After unloading from its shipping at Kuwait, Colonel Haslam sent his aviation element, Medium Helicopter Squadron

166, to al-Asad Air Base, while awaiting the preparation of forward operating facilities at the main 11th MEU camp, Forward Operating Base Duke. The 1st Battalion, 4th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel John L. Mayer) and its attachments used Forward Operating Base Hotel, a mere three kilometers north of the city's center, whereas Duke stood 20 kilometers north of the city. The Marines and sailors of 11th MEU began to move into an-Najaf Province from Kuwait on 16 July and on 31 July relieved a small battalion task force "Dragon" of the 1st Infantry Division, having reported for operations to Major General Andrzej Ekiert, Polish Army commanding the Multinational Division Center-South on 21 July. At this point, the 2,165 Marines and sailors of Colonel Haslam's command held sole responsibility for the 16,000 square miles of the provinces of an-Najaf and Qadisiyah (capital: ad-Diwaniyah). In effect, Marines had returned to their old area of operations south of those they had occupied in mid-2003.

The nominal mission received from Major General Ekiert consisted of conducting "offensive operations to defeat remaining non-compliant forces and neutralize destabilizing influences in an-Najaf Province" and to create a secure environment, supported by the usual stability and humanitarian operations. In effect, 11th MEU shouldered the responsibility of mopping up the al-Sadr Revolt remnants continuing to resist in the inner city in the aftermath of the departure of major U.S. Army forces that had destroyed most of the "Mahdi Army" militia of al-Sadr during May and June.

In an-Najaf, the al-Sadr Militia had overwhelmed the Iraqi security forces and local international military forces of Major General Ekiert quickly and occupied key positions, including the governor's compound, and the two highly significant Shi'a religious sites, Kufa Mosque and the Imam Ali Shrine. Successive attacks by part of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, and elements of 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in April and May recovered most of the city except for exclusion zones of one kilometer established around the two Shi'a holy sites, including the Old City and cemetery adjacent to the Imam Ali Shrine. The governor announced on 4 June that the Iraqi security forces would take responsibility for the exclusion zones, but the Mahdi Militia never laid down arms nor left the holy sites. Upon departing on 17 June, the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment staff estimated that about 100 "hard core" fighters remained in each zone, along with an undetermined number of untrained insurgents.

Colonel Haslam reported on the day he took responsibility for the scene that "I anticipate aggressive surveillance and incidents from Mahdi Militia in the near term to test our reactions and resolve. The 11th MEU (SOC) stands at the ready."[60]

New outbreaks of fighting soon dispelled any illusion that simply training local security forces and backing them up could accomplish the mission. Most of Lieutenant Colonel Mayer's battalion fought an inconclusive engagement with the Mahdi Militia around the cemetery and governor's complex on 5-6 August, supported by attack helicopters and at night covered by an AC-130 Spectre aircraft. Lieutenant General Metz assigned an Army cavalry squadron to reinforce the 11th MEU after the first day and 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, reported to Colonel Haslam on 7 August with the 1st Company, 227th Aviation Battalion's AH-56A Apache attack helicopters in direct support.

On 9 August, Iraqi and U.S. military leaders met at the governor's compound to discuss future operations. This group included an-Najaf Governor Arufi, Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, General George Casey, Lieutenant General Thomas F. Metz, Lieutenant General Conway and his I MEF deputy commander Brigadier General Dennis J. Hejlik. As a result, Lieutenant General Metz transferred the responsibility for the area to Lieutenant General Conway and assigned another Army squadron to Colonel Haslam's control from his Task Force Baghdad, the 1st Cavalry Division. After a brief interlude of fruitless negotiations between Allawi and al-Sadr's representatives, the Iraqi government finally authorized military force to settle the insurgency in an-Najaf.[61]

With Brigadier General Hejlik overseeing the process with a small staff, Colonel Haslam received his reinforcements and planned the battle yet to come. As the reinforcements arrived, they applied a steady pressure against the al-Sadr militiamen with raids, probes, and skirmishes designed to determine their positions and exhaust their resources. The Iraqi National Guard 404th Battalion already operated under Colonel Haslam's control since the 31 July transfer of authority as the local garrison. The additional unit from 1st Cavalry Division reported to him on 10

August: the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. The 36th Commando Battalion, veterans of the Fallujah battle, joined on 13 August and the 2d and 4th Battalions, 1st Iraq Army Brigade arrived during the operation, remaining under the tactical control of I MEF. Several units of special operations forces operated in and around the city as well.

The final attack into the al-Sadr center of resistance came with Colonel Haslam's order of 16 August for a three-phase operation by U.S. and Iraqi forces to ". . . clear Imam Ali Mosque Complex to defeat Mahdi Militia and capture or kill Muqtada al-Sadr to facilitate the return of the Imam Ali Mosque to proper Iraqi authorities." The phases consisted of the following:

Phase I: Shaping operations. The two cavalry squadrons (1st Squadron 5th Cavalry; 2nd Squadron, 7th Cavalry) launch limited attacks to occupy the cemetery and the old city zone south of the Medina. The 1st Battalion, 4th Marines attacks in the vicinity of Kufah and the remaining area of Najaf.

Phase II: Penetration operations. The cavalry squadrons fix the insurgents from the north and southeast while Lieutenant Colonel Mayer's battalion push through from the northwest to encircle the shrine, bringing the 36th Commando Battalion in assault amphibians in trace to its final assault position.

Phase III: Decisive operations. The 36th Commando troops assault and secure the shrine, which is then occupied and secured by follow-on troops of the 1st Iraq Army Brigade.

After a final 22 August confirmation briefing to Lieutenant Generals Metz and Conway and the Iraqi defense minister, the attack began. Beginning late the night of 24 August, Marines and cavalrymen battled through the streets and buildings through the following day, culminating with Marines encircling the Shrine at a distance of 100 meters by the end of the 25th. Amid heavy fighting, the issue never came into doubt. Under fire support from artillery, mortars, attack helicopters and AC-130 aircraft, the infantry, tanks, and other fighting vehicles cleared all opposition. For the next 24 hours, while the Iraqi Commandos prepared to capture the shrine, mostly sniper engagements occurred in the area.

But the al-Sadr Militia had suffered terrible losses and resistance ended. The occupants of the Imam Ali Shrine had no hope of escape; their supporters fell back, broken and depleted. In the end, the face-saving intervention of Grand Ayatollah Sistani eliminated the need to assault the shine and to continue the action against the Kufah Mosque. He brokered a truce on behalf of the Iraqi Government on 27 August. The Mahdi Militia agreed to surrender its weapons and to leave the Old City, the Imam Ali Shrine in particular. In addition, the militia agreed to relinquish the entire Najaf-Kufah area over to the Iraqi Government, specifically the Iraqi police and the Iraqi National Guard. From this point onward, al-Sadr turned to peaceful and political options.

The 24 days of action in an-Najaf cost 11th MEU seven killed in action and 94 wounded; the Army cavalry lost two men. Iraqi forces casualties also included one American advisor killed and a significant number of Iraqi soldiers killed and wounded. These numbers paled in comparison to those inflicted on the Mahdi Militia. The 11th MEU estimated 1,500 of al-Sadr's fighters were killed and an undetermined number wounded, most likely in the thousands. A positive aspect was the steady performance of the Iraqi security forces at an-Najaf, as the Iraqi local police, 405th and 36th Battalions all fought well and steadily, well-served by their embedded advisors.[62]

U.S. forces remained undermanned in Iraq largely because of the scarcity of capable Iraqi forces. At an-Najaf, Marine Corps and Army units demonstrated an ability to maneuver and to reinforce a deteriorating situation even better than at the first battle of Fallujah.

With the commitment of the Central Command theater reserve to operations in an-Najaf, its replacement in the Central Command order of battle also fell upon Marine Corps Forces. The assignment circulated in the Joint Staff in early June, based upon a requirement signaled by General Abezaid's command on 2 June. The final orders went to the 31st MEU, commanded by Colonel W. Lee Miller, on 15 June in the form of a "Seven-Day Prepare to Deploy Order." As in the case of the 24th MEU deployment, the orders dispensed with the usual special operations capability requirement.

The 31st MEU had operated in the western Pacific since forming for its 22d cycle in January, landing 2d Battalion, 3d Marines for training in the Marianas followed by the usual routines of exercises in Korea, Okinawa, and Thailand. As the deployment orders came, it exchanged its

infantry battalion for the newly arrived 1st Battalion, 3d Marines and attachments on Okinawa and then embarked Amphibious Squadron 11 for training in the Marianas during 10 July–4 August before going to Kuwait. When it arrived at the end of the month, its estimated deployment of 120 days (through 9 October) seemed half over, but its Marines and sailors would follow the experience of 11th MEU with their own odyssey commencing in October.[63]

In midst of the press of ongoing combat operations and deployments of reinforcements to I MEF, the requirement remained to execute the scheduled turnover of forces and personnel during August and September. As noted above, this had already begun in certain cases, such as the arrival of 1st Battalion, 8th Marines in western al-Anbar Province on 29 June. As specified in the original decisions by General Hagee in November 2003, the combat units and squadrons would serve a six- or seven-month deployment in Iraq while the personnel of the other organizations and staffs within I MEF would exchange with fresh groups flown in from their home bases.

The force turnover in I MEF took place over a three-month period, reflecting the staggered deployment dates of the battalions and squadrons shown in the accompanying tables. In addition, the Army replaced in September its 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, with the 2d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division, commanded by Colonel Gary Patton. With Fallujah yet to be resolved and ar-Ramadi demonstrating persistent spikes of combat and violence, western al-Anbar Province was still untamed.

In addition, 1st Marine Division exchanged artillery batteries and force reconnaissance, tank, combat engineer, and assault amphibian companies with fresh units from the U.S. The Ramadi-based intelligence services of I MEF also rotated battalions, as 2d Radio Battalion relieved 3d Radio Battalion and 1st Intelligence Battalion replaced 2d Intelligence Battalion.

As of 31 July, 29,129 Marines and sailors were in Iraq with I MEF forces, with 190 more Marines stationed in Iraq with other organizations. Provided by Marine Corps Reserve Forces, 10,929 Marine reservists were on duty worldwide beside their active component brethren, more than one-fourth the total reserve structure. Casualties to date in Iraq since the return of I MEF in 2004 were 97 killed and 1,064 wounded in action, of which 780 of the latter had returned to duty in theater.[64]

CHAPTER 5:
Second Fallujah Battle

After the termination of the First Fallujah Battle in April 2004, the Marines who had concentrated in and around the city turned their efforts toward the pacification of surrounding areas where insurgents had exploited the main effort at Fallujah. Many of them had fled Fallujah before the fighting began and sought to establish themselves in new safe havens. The departure of the task force of 7th Marines back to western al-Anbar Province and the continuing actions of Colonel Toolan's RCT-1 around Fallujah left the city itself in the hands of a desultory assembly of Iraqi police, Civil Defense Corps and Fallujah Brigade "troops." For the ensuing month and a half, an uneasy peace settled on the city, with few incidents reported and the civil affairs, and humanitarian actions of 1st Marine Division resumed the effort to reconstruct the city's infrastructure and support its self-government. Major General Mattis entered the city twice on well-armed "Fallujah patrols" to meet with city officials, and the Marines of 3d Civil Affairs Group resumed their efforts to identify and fund reconstruction projects.

Fallujah in Repose

Marines continued to man traffic control points in the outer cordon, while the police, Civil Defense Corps and Fallujah Brigade assembled and prepared to patrol in the city. Marines of RCT-7 conducted a demonstration convoy through the city on Route 10, halting briefly at the municipal government center, with the support of the Fallujah Brigade. At no time, however, did the local security forces turn over usable weapons or insurgent prisoners taken from the city.

Major General Mattis saw some positive aspects of the event:

> Today's successful joint patrol with the Fallujah Brigade represents the smallest of "baby steps" and should in no way be considered an opening of the city. Fallujah is still closed and a very dangerous place with large sections a "no man's land" controlled by jihadists, foreign fighters, and terrorists. In fact, an improvised explosive device was, without explanation, detonated at 0530, we think during emplacement and generally where the convoy principals dismounted to meet with the mayor. The convoy was planned and executed as a combat patrol with two powerful quick reaction forces waiting just off stage ready to respond, supported by significant rotary and fixed wing close air support. The good news is the general population, while still openly hostile towards the Coalition, is reportedly tired of the fighting and disruption and willing to allow civil affairs money to flow into the city. They see the cease-fire, as well as today's events, as a continuation of their victory over the Coalition.[65]

On 20 May, Lieutenant General Conway expressed his satisfaction with the relative calm in the entire province and prepared to leave all Fallujah checkpoints in the hands of Iraqi security forces, except for the Cloverleaf intersection of Routes 10 and E1. More good news came with the arrival of air reinforcement: 20 AV-8B Harriers of Marine Attack Squadron 214, as requested by Major General Amos in the middle of the Fallujah battle. Major General Amos remarked that day that

> These aircraft with their third generation targeting forward looking infrared [system], the Litening II pod, equipped with a digital downlink capability, will give the Marines on the ground, in places such as Fallujah and Ramadi, the ability to see "real-time" what is going on around them. The Harriers will then be able to deliver ordnance as required, confident that what they are attacking is exactly what our ground forces want attacked.[66]

Marine commanders judged sporadic but increasing attacks on Coalition forces in late May as opposition to the upcoming transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi interim government, not an emerging new threat. On 31 May, the Army 112th Military Police Battalion departed I MEF control and returned to the 1st Cavalry Division after two months' service in al-Anbar Province.

Already, changes in the U.S. senior leadership had begun that would replace the commanders who had directed I MEF and its major commands before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. Major General Amos turned over command of the 3d

Marine Aircraft Wing on 29 May to Major General Stalder and departed to assume command of II MEF at Camp Lejeune. Major General Mattis relinquished command on 29 August to Brigadier General Richard F. Natonski and assumed command of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command at Quantico. Both departing officers were promoted lieutenant general in their new commands and Brigadier General Natonski was promoted to the grade of major general after assuming command of 1st Marine Division. Finally, on 12 September, Lieutenant General John F. Sattler relieved Lieutenant General Conway, who departed to serve as the new Director of Operations (J-3) for the Joint Staff at the Pentagon. These new commanders would undertake resolution of the Fallujah problem in the months that followed.

The eruption of coordinated attacks against Marine positions around Fallujah on 24 June continued in a series of what intelligence analysts considered "spikes" in insurgent activities. Reports of internecine fighting among tribal and extremist factions added to the frustrations of trying to assess progress in Fallujah. Although the U.S. leadership frequently voiced its hope that the quarreling reduced the effectiveness of the anti-Coalition insurgency, intimidation campaigns against Iraqis seeking to work for the Coalition or in Iraqi security forces continued to increase with deleterious effects upon the local security forces. An assessment of the Fallujah Brigade by Lieutenant General Metz' strategic political-military staff in early July noted that the brigade had expanded to an overall strength of 2,075, including 23 general officers and 375 other officers. Although capable of limited patrolling in the city and maintaining liaison with I MEF representatives, the Fallujah Brigade had not attained any control over the city. In the view of the analysts, the Fallujah Brigade remained a failure and at best could be converted into an Iraqi Army unit subject to the same missions and standards of all other such units.[67]

An ominous development surfaced with the continuing attacks upon 3d Marine Aircraft Wing helicopters flying in the Fallujah zone. The downing of an AH-1W Cobra attack helicopter during the 24 June attack was the second helicopter loss of the campaign and the second one in the vicinity of Fallujah.

Following the downing of the Cobra on 5 July, small arms fire northwest of Fallujah damaged a CH-46E Sea Knight transport helicopter of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161. The aircraft came under fire soon after lifting off from its al-Taqqaddum base, wounding both pilots. The co-pilot, First Lieutenant Steven M. Clifton, assumed command of the aircraft and, ignoring his own injuries, directed first aid efforts in the cockpit while flying evasive maneuvers and returning to base safely as the aircraft suffered electrical failures, a flash fire, and degrading flight controls. There were two other incidents where helicopters were damaged or destroyed by small arms fire, killing one pilot in one incident and wounding four crewmen in the other.

Unfortunately, the command seemed reluctant to face these trends. For example, the I MEF situation report for 9 September began with the following: "The overall number of attacks across the area of operations remains at decreased levels from the recent surge . . . However, a section of helicopters flying south of Fallujah received small arms fire and RPG fire and one helicopter was forced to land [author emphasis] . . . Multinational Force-West will continue to closely monitor this emerging threat to Multinational Force-West air assets."[68]

The decision process leading to the final assault on Fallujah and the eradication of the extremist and insurgent nests that it sheltered remained complex and diffuse. The new sovereign status of Iraq and the Allawi government signified that the Iraqi political and military leadership had to be convinced of the benefits of the operation and that U.S. and Coalition support could and would be mobilized for the humanitarian relief and eventual reconstruction of the damage that would ensue. The ability of U.S. forces to limit and ameliorate damage remained by itself a most contentious matter.

The U.S. and Coalition military command saw sufficient progress to authorize initial planning and the early concept of operation began to emerge in the I MEF staff in September. A briefing in the first week of that month characterized "Fallujah Clearing Operations" as a pending task where, on order, the I MEF and Iraqi security forces would conduct "clearing operations in the vicinity of Fallujah proper, to defeat extremist forces in Fallujah when ordered." Shortly thereafter, a staff paper identified the initial concept for shaping the upcoming battle. It characterized Fallujah as a safe haven for foreign fighters, terrorists,

and insurgents, "a 'cancer' on the rest of al-Anbar Province." The operations necessary to prepare the city for the final assault would include the targeting of leading operatives and foreign fighter groups for precision air strikes. Continued pressure in the form of traffic control points limited but did not stop movement into the city. Marine attacks around the city limits could increase pressure and instill uncertainty in the insurgents. In sum, the I MEF staff believed that the preparation of the battlefield required a steady tempo of attrition operations sustainable "until time for decisive action; mid-November."[69]

By 23 September, 1st Marine Division planners had produced a concept of operations for Fallujah, doubtlessly reflecting the time spent on the same problem in mid-April, when elements of both 1st and 7th Marines stood in position around the city and the staff had prepared a final, decisive attack. General Casey's command had begun to use special operations forces against Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an al-Qaeda terrorist chieftain. Intelligence agencies placed al-Zarqawi in Fallujah and at the center of the struggle for authority among the insurgent groups. In addition to the panoply of tasks the division planners had to accomplish, they would have to coordinate division actions with those of special operations forces.

The division's plans called for building a target list including assessments of secondary and tertiary effects of each type of strike. Typical targets included safe houses, meeting places, weapon and ammunition caches, heavy equipment, insurgent patrols, crew served weapons, indirect fire weapons, fortifications (both surface and underground), and communications. The plans proposed building pressure on the insurgents by selective strikes on targets, and by using deception operations to cause reactions by insurgents and uncover communications and routes of movement in the city and in general to create opportunities to discredit and to humble the insurgent groups. After sufficient command nodes, positions, and fortified positions had been reduced, the Marines and soldiers would have accomplished the preliminary objectives required before the "decisive operations" or the assault phase.[70]

Continuing Operations in the Province

As important as the Fallujah situation became, the rest of al-Anbar Province remained unsettled, and ar-Ramadi frequently flared with new violence. Colonel Tucker conducted meetings with regional sheiks and town councils to determine their degree of support for recruiting local security forces and making arrangements for their training in Iraqi and U.S. camps. The return of troops to the Haditha-Hit corridor and ar-Rutbah led to renewed counterinsurgency operations in both locations. Road sweeps and road improvements were also a priority effort while battalions conducted their reliefs in place. Colonel Tucker also reviewed the situation at Husaybah and al-Qaim, because of the heavy fighting experienced in both places by 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines. The Husaybah camp, now renamed Camp Gannon in memory of Captain Richard J. Gannon, the late commander of Company L, received special attention because its new occupants, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines would also stand in relative isolation there and at al-Qaim during the renewed battle at Fallujah.

As RCT-7 prepared to reinforce RCT-1 at Fallujah, Colonel Tucker's Marines executed a flurry of disruption actions in Operation Rodeo (26–28 September). The RCT-7 forces executed 17 raids and cordon operations within 48 hours: six in Haditha, ten in Husaybah, and one in ar-Rutbah. On 27 September, Colonel Tucker began a command tour of AO (area of operation) Denver accompanied by Colonel Miller of the 31st MEU who would assume responsibility for the area after RCT-7 departed for Fallujah.

At ar-Ramadi, the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division and incoming 2d Brigade (Strike Brigade), 2d Infantry Division conducted a continuing series of raids, cordons, and other actions to maintain a rough balance against the insurgents.

Date	Operation
15 July 04	1st Brigade operations Yellow Cab II and Speed Bump III.
17 July 04	1st Brigade operation Black Rock.
23 July 04	1st Brigade operation Cowboys.
3 Aug 04	1st Brigade operation Traveler (with RCT-1).
11 Sep 04	2d Brigade operation Pointer.
26 Sep 04	2d Brigade operation Longhorn.
8 Oct 04	2d Brigade operation Mountaineer.
12 Oct 04	2d Brigade operation Seminole.

Colonel Patton's newly arrived 2d Brigade proved as well prepared as the 1st Brigade in meeting the challenges posed by ar-Ramadi and its surrounding area. He disposed of two motorized and one mechanized infantry battalions, an

artillery battalion (half employed as motor infantry), a combat engineer battalion, and the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines of Lieutenant Colonel Randy Newman. The weapons systems in the brigade included 28 M1A1 tanks, 44 Bradley fighting vehicles, and six M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzers.

Amid stabilization operations and counterinsurgency strikes, more mundane missions also required the attention of Marines and soldiers in al-Anbar Province. As part of infrastructure development assistance provided to Iraq, the U.S. procured several large generators for power plants in Iraq, replacing destroyed or obsolete equipment. Immediately christened the "mother of all generators" by Marines and soldiers, these huge and expensive machines entered Iraq from Jordan to Baghdad power plants. Six or seven combined heavy lift vehicles moved each General Electric 9E generator, weighing more than 250 tons. A convoy for a single generator comprised 15 heavy lift vehicles accompanied by 10 private security vehicles. Civilian engineers preceded each convoy to lift or to cut power lines, to remove fences and guardrails, and to make other minor improvements necessary for passage. An even larger generator, the Siemens V94 generator, was moved to the city of Taza using similar arrangements. These slow-moving (six kph) convoys received the highest priority protection during weeks of transit through the various areas of operations. In the I MEF zones, the Marine and Army units detailed to escort and to provide cover for the convoy through each regimental or brigade area followed the guidelines of an Operation Terrapin series of orders, which detailed the sequence of transfers from the arrival at the border crossing at the Trebil port of entry until it departed to the east or north, depending on the final destination. A security detachment of 2d Battalion, 11th Marines remained with the generator all the way to its final destination in each case. Thus, amid the smoke and dust of constant stability operations and the preparations for the major battle of Fallujah, Operations Terrapin I and II wound slowly across the I MEF battle space from 24 September to 12 October.[71]

Assembling the Fallujah Assault Force

The 1st Marine Division began detailed preparations for an urban battle of proportions not seen by the Marine Corps since the Battle of Hue in 1968. As in that battle, Marines would share a significant part of the fight with comrades of the U.S. Army. The basic concept reprised some of the planning of mid-April, concentrating as much as possible of both Marine Corps regimental combat teams, but in this case, each of them would conduct an assault of the city, working from north to south. Reinforcements from Multinational Forces-Iraq would add both Army and Iraqi combat units to the Marine assault regiments as well as additional forces to establish an effective cordon of the battle space surrounding Fallujah.

The first of these reinforcements reported to the 1st Marine Division on 27 October when it received tactical control of the 1st Battalion, The Black Watch Regiment (UK). The logistics base supporting Baghdad, Logistics Support Area Dogwood, initially served as the arrival and assembly area for the British Army unit, which reported to Colonel Johnson's 24th MEU to assist in its mission of securing northern Babel Province and the vital main service routes running south of Baghdad.

On 31 October, six battalion-sized Iraqi units were attached to the division for the operation, now called Operation Phantom Fury. Previously assigned to the U.S. 1st Cavalry and 1st Infantry Divisions, these Iraqi units appeared likely to perform their missions better than Iraqi troops fighting alongside Marines in April. Following their arrival and assembly in Camp Fallujah, they received U.S. liaison teams and fell under the operational control of the commanders of RCT-1, RCT-7, and the incoming 2d Blackjack Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division. Also on 31 October a mechanized task force from the Army's 1st Infantry Division, the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry, arrived for duty. Heavily armed with armor, mechanized infantry, engineers, cavalry, and self-propelled artillery components, it added considerable power to Colonel Tucker's RCT-7. In like fashion, RCT-1, now commanded by Colonel Michael A. Shupp, received another powerful battalion task force that day for his attack force, the 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry, bringing more armor and mechanized infantry to the fight.

The vital mission performed by the Army's Blackjack Brigade, commanded by Colonel Michael Formica, consisted of taking over the entire battle space outside Fallujah, thus freeing both Marine Corps regimental combat teams for their assault roles. Upon the deployment of the brigade,

the Marine assault units assembled in Camps Fallujah, Baharia, and Abu Ghraib for dispersal, rehearsals, and final preparations. The Iraqi battalions would operate initially in support of the attacking Marine Corps and Army battalions. Their essential missions eventually would include securing every building and position of the city.

Perhaps the most demanding reinforcement mission sent to the 1st Marine Division fell to the 31st MEU. Colonel Miller's 31st MEU had sortied from the western Pacific to replace the 11th MEU as the Central Command strategic reserve upon the assignment of the 11th to its missions in an-Najaf and Qadisiyah Provinces. During 18 September–2 October, the Marines of Miller's command trained ashore in Kuwait at the Udairi Range to prepare for any possible combat mission. On 3 October, General Abizaid relinquished control of 31st MEU to Lieutenant General Sattler for operations with I MEF. The key roles envisioned for the 31st MEU included reinforcing the Fallujah assault and relieving Colonel Tucker of his responsibility for AO Denver during Operation Phantom Fury. Accordingly, 31st MEU passed to the operational control of Major General Natonski on 14 October and began moving to al-Anbar Province. Its ground element, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Michael R. Ramos) with attachments and most of MEU Service Support Group 31 of (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James A. Vohr) reported on 24 October to Colonel Tucker's RCT-7, where it provided significant combat power in additional infantry, armored vehicles, and artillery for the assault force. Lieutenant Colonel Vohr's support group provided direct logistics support to RCT-7 during the operation with augmentation from Combat Service Support Battalion 7, which otherwise continued its support activities in western al-Anbar Province. The 31st MEU command and aviation combat elements flew and convoyed to al-Asad Air Base, from where Colonel Miller would take command of forces in AO Denver, effective 20 October. The 31st MEU's aviation combat element, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265 (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Matthew G. Glavy) joined 3d Marine Aircraft Wing.

During the Fallujah operation, Colonel Miller would maintain the stability of AO Denver and continue the work in progress in civil affairs and in support of the Iraqi security forces. After the departure of RCT-7 and the units assigned to the Fallujah assault, Colonel Miller reallocated the AO Denver battle space for his major organizations. The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines now covered the Euphrates River Valley from the Syrian border to a boundary about 20 kilometers short of Haditha while 1st Battalion, 23d Marines assumed responsibility to the eastern boundary of AO Denver. Ar-Rutbah and the extreme western sector became the responsibility of Task Force Naha, built around a reduced company each from 3d LAR Battalion, 1st Battalion, 23d Marines and Battery S, 5th Battalion 10th Marines a provisional rifle company.[72]

Target Fallujah

The pause between the first and second battles of Fallujah had permitted the insurgents to improve their defenses, which Marines had penetrated with comparative ease during the April battle. Intelligence reports credited the insurgents with the complete replacement of their April losses and more such that they now numbered 3,000–4,000 men. These sources also advised that the Fallujah-based insurgent leaders hoped to hinder any I MEF assault on the city by attacking external areas and routes and disrupting the other major cities such as Ramadi and Husaybah. The reported departure of many insurgents before the attack indicated these tactics were to be implemented by the insurgents.

The city itself had several lines of obstacles and fortified lines of resistance to the prying eyes of overhead sensors, cameras, and other types of surveillance, as well as the monitoring of insurgent responses to pre-assault shaping operations. The relative densities of these apparent insurgent lines of resistance suggested the insurgents feared an attack from the east, especially from the much-contested Cloverleaf and zones north and south of it, into the districts north and south of Route 10. Here could be found the largest concentrations of roadblocks, berms, fighting positions, sniper holes, and checkpoints. A secondary concentration of positions on the southeast edge of the city showed attention paid to the Shuhidah (Martyrs) District. Analysts also discerned likely positions prepared for later use by indirect fire weapons and small arms. The successive positions showed a willingness to fight in depth along Route 10 as well as much preparation for fighting in all directions from the strongholds of Jolan, Sook, and Muallimeen Districts. The presence of improvised

explosive devices was assumed on all sides and along all interior routes inside the city.

After the Coalition forces began their attacks and pushed the insurgents out of their initial line of resistance, analysts assumed the insurgents would move in small elements into the interior positions. Four- to eight-man teams would fight a delaying battle back to strong points where up to platoon-sized elements would form to resist and even counterattack any Coalition troops that could be isolated in small numbers. The enemy would remain mobile and exploit any operational pause offered by Coalition forces. The enemy fighters would move through a series of caches and engagement areas built around major intersections and public buildings such as schools, mosques, civic buildings, and parking garages. Marine Corps and Army leaders expected the enemy to continually attempt to re-enter areas already cleared and to interdict supply lines after combat units penetrated the city. Some insurgent teams would stay behind hoping that the assault troops would bypass them, leaving them free to surface later and to cut Coalition lines or even to escape from the city. While insurgents favored improvised explosive devices, they also intended to fire mortars and rockets into Coalition positions within range after the attack of the city began. Infiltration routes, especially along the Euphrates River, could be used to resupply or for withdrawal as needed.

The I MEF estimates reflected the desire of the Fallujah insurgent groups to attempt to rally international opinion and mobilize propaganda to interfere with the planned assault, with the ultimate aim of disrupting it and causing a halt as happened in April. This time, however, the Iraqi interim government was involved almost from the beginning, and the Coalition planned a large-scale information operation to complement the planned battle and counter the worst charges of the enemy propaganda. In short, the disadvantages encountered in the impromptu conduct of the first battle of Fallujah would not likely reappear in the more deliberate second battle of Fallujah.[73]

The Assault Plan and Aviation Support

Although directed tactically by Major General Natonski and his 1st Marine Division command, Operation Phantom Fury required the participation of the entire I MEF organization and vital Army and Coalition reinforcements. During the battle, the stability operations of 31st and 24th MEUs in the western and eastern extremes of the operations area, as well as the operations by the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, at ar-Ramadi and in AO Topeka, ensured that the operations in Fallujah took place without interference by the enemy coming from those areas. The full array of 3d Marine Aircraft Wing capabilities was engaged in the action as well as the vital assembly of resources by the 1st Force Service Support Group.

As early as 24 September, the two Marine regimental commanders had planned the assault operation with only two Marine infantry battalions for each RCT plus Iraqi forces. Soon after 28 September, however, additional forces entered the plans, and the forces allocated grew quickly as commanders realized the extent of the problems they confronted. The mature plan emerged by the beginning of October and passed through successive analyses and war-gaming until the commanders had settled upon the details.[74]

The objective of the attack remained as desired in April: to occupy the entire city, defeating all opposition and clearing any caches or other resources that might sustain the insurgency again. Lieutenant General Sattler's mission to his I MEF set the tone:

> On order, Multinational Force-West attacks to destroy the Anti-Iraqi forces and insurgent forces in Fallujah-Ramadi to deny the use of Fallujah-Ramadi as their safe haven and to facilitate the restoration of legitimate governance, security, and reconstruction.[75]

The term "Fallujah-Ramadi," somewhat ambitious in scope, appears taken from the higher headquarters orders emanating from Baghdad but with no indication of how and when the other city might become involved in Operation Phantom Fury. At any rate, to accomplish the Fallujah mission the operation would take the now familiar phases:

Phase 1 (September–October 2004). "Limited shaping" operations against insurgent forces. Shaping operations were those actions to collect intelligence, disrupt, isolate, and attrite the enemy while securing key infrastructure and routes. Information operations would highlight enemy failures and atrocities. Leaflets and broadcasts en-

couraged the citizens of Fallujah to leave the city although the troops manning the cordon refused to let any military-aged men so depart. At the last moment, the information campaign would notify inhabitants to take cover in cellars and remain away from any fighting.

Phase 2 (D-Day). "Enhanced shaping" included "violent" shaping operations over a short period of time (approximately 24 hours) and the positioning of I MEF forces to attack Fallujah.

Phase 3 (D+1). "Decisive operations" to destroy the insurgents in Fallujah and to seize control of the city to deny the use of Fallujah as a safe-haven.

Phase 4. "Transition to an interim emergency government." Combined MNF-W and IIF/IAF operations and reconstruction projects in Fallujah help to build legitimacy of the Interim government in the eyes of the Iraqi citizens. MNF-W forces provide security to facilitate reconstruction projects and establishing an Iraqi government and police force.

Phase 5. Transition to Permanent, Local Government and Security.

Certain ambiguities arose from the orders without affecting their execution. Little difference remained between "limited" and "violent" shaping operations in the vicinity of a dangerous place such as Fallujah. The shaping operations of Phase 1 consisted of actions typified by an air strike called on 9 September, just after midnight, by special operations forces against a house being used as an insurgent headquarters. Two GBU-12 (Guided Bomb Unit) 500 pound laser guided bombs, dropped by an Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle fighter bomber destroyed the house with minimal collateral damage to adjacent buildings. Two days earlier, the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines conducted a typical feint using tanks, LAV-25s, and armored Humvees against the southeast corner of the city. This set the pattern of seemingly endless forays of various sorts against the insurgent positions, all aimed at disguising the true intentions of the attack, its location, and its timing.[76]

Apart from shaping operations, Operation Phantom Fury would begin with the deployment of the 2d Blackjack Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, directly from its Baghdad bases to the block positions manned by RCT-1 and RCT-7, relieving them of their positions so they could regroup and rehearse their battle plans at Camps Fallujah and Bahariah. As the brigade relieved the two RCTs, it received tactical control of the 2d Reconnaissance Battalion and the Iraqi 6th Battalion, 3rd Brigade. The planned positioning of the Army brigade at the last minute would give minimal alert to the insurgents that a major alteration of the balance of forces had been accomplished.

Within hours of the establishment of the Blackjack Brigade around Fallujah's outskirts, the plan called for the D-day moves of Task Force 3d LAR Battalion (headquarters, one LAR company, one rifle company plus a mechanized company and engineer platoon from 2d Striker Brigade, 2d Infantry Division, and the Iraqi 36th Commando Battalion. These would maneuver the length of the "Peninsula" across the Euphrates River to the west of the city, effectively securing it and preventing the Iraqi hospital, operating on reduced staff, from being used by the insurgents as either a sanctuary or a battle position. In the last hours of D-day, initially scheduled for 5 November, one day after U.S. national elections, but changed to 7 November, the attack battalions would move through the night from their base camps and occupy attack positions along the northern outskirts of Fallujah, attacking at "A-hour" (for stage A of Phase III, Offensive Operations) of 1900 on D+1, or 8 November. During D-day, the assault battalions of RCT-1 and RCT-7 moved into covered locations beyond the railroad station and rail lines that constituted the first barriers guarding entry into the city from the north.

The division planned the actual assault to begin on D+1, whereupon both RCT-1 and RCT-7 would launch penetration attacks into the city from which the insurgents no longer had any opportunity to evade and escape. The leading assault battalions had the mission of overcoming obstacles and defeating insurgents wherever encountered. Any buildings or areas not cleared in the initial assault had to be cleared and secured by additional battalions fighting in trace, also using the support of the Iraqi battalions assigned to each regiment. The division plan assigned the main effort to RCT-1, attacking from north to south through the familiar Jolan district, continuing until the northwestern quarter of the city had been searched and cleared. The eastern half of the city fell to RCT-7 to assault and clear in like fashion. Jolan Park and the Government Center became division objectives one and two, respectively, for the two regimental combat teams. At this point, the plan called for RCT-1 to consoli-

date and mop up in its sector, securing Route 10 for use in supporting the remainder of the operation. Iraqi troops were to take the forefront of the mop-up in an attempt to demonstrate Iraqi sovereignty. The assault battalions of RCT-7 would continue south and southwest, clearing and securing the rest of Fallujah, south of Route 10. At the conclusion of the mop-up of remaining resistance and the clearing of all enemy materiel and personnel, conditions for Phase IV would be met and the forces would turn to the stabilization and recovery of the city.

Logistics preparations initially centered upon stockpiling the forward bases with the required materiel and supplies in what came to be known as the "Iron Mountain." Marine planners had noted the largely unsuccessful attempts by insurgents to interdict routes and supply lines during the April Fallujah operations. This time, the 1st Force Service Support Group provided forward operating bases a minimum 15 days of supply in advance of the operation. Because of problems with civilian contractors the group also mobilized the I MEF Engineering Group on short notice to build camps for the Iraqi Army battalions that had to move into the Fallujah camp complex before the operation.

The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing designed an aviation integration plan for Operation Phantom Fury after studying the after action reports from Operation Vigilant Resolve (First Battle of Fallujah) and the 11th MEU's combat in an-Najaf.

During Operation Vigilant Resolve in April the air observers and forward air controllers had to coordinate through two levels of air command and control systems before connecting the attacking aircraft to the terminal controller. The lack of a common grid reference system made for very long times from target acquisition and engagement for both fixed and rotary wing aircraft. After studying these and many other lessons from April, the air plan established a "high density air control zone" and devised a "Keyhole Template" inside it. These tactical control measures emerged from a U.S. Central Command tactics review board held in July. In it, representatives from I MEF's division and aircraft wing briefed the command on the airspace requirements and the need for unity of command needed to support the forward air controllers. The density of the airspace and the close proximity of ground forces made the Keyhole Template a good solution to achieve the efficiencies, safety, unity of command, and integration of fires required by this urban operation.

For airspace management, two temporary flight restrictions established Keyhole Templates over both Ramadi and Fallujah with each having a 15 nautical mile radius and sharing a center cap. After evaluation of many variables to include the size of the cities, weapons release parameters, Litening pod capabilities, ranges of insurgent weapons, safe release, egress maneuver room, and drone employment, a five nautical mile radius was chosen for this inner ring. This template essentially required aircraft to hold between the contact point and the initial point. The outer ring of 15 nautical miles served as that contact point and the 5 nautical mile ring the initial point for the use of forward air controllers. This area needed to be defined carefully to maximize deconfliction with neighboring air patrols. Two semi-cardinal lines extending out of the city center point defined each air patrol or "sector." The airplane holding technique remained at the discretion of the pilots as long they remained within the lateral limits of the sector and altitude assigned.

The altitudes assigned for aircraft loiter and holding in the Keyhole Template also reflected the parameters of target acquisition, insurgent weapons, and the need to stack multiple sections of different types of aircraft in each sector. In the case of the Fallujah Keyhole, the east sector, placed over the friendly bases of Baharia, Camp Fallujah, and Abu Ghraib allowed a primary altitude of 13–15,000 feet and a secondary altitude of 18–20,000 feet. The altitudes were the same on the west sector, but the primary altitude used was (18–20,000 feet) because of the enemy area of Saclawiyah. This arrangement also allowed fixed wing aircraft on the east and west to drop simultaneously and be deconflicted by altitude during attack or egress. The 3d Marine Aircraft Wing planners added procedures for the use of odd-numbered "time over target" for RCT-1 and even ones for RCT-7 but only for fixed-wing aircraft. A poor weather scheme changed the sector altitudes for a "high war," "low war," or "split war" based upon cloud layers.

Considering combined arms needs, the plan incorporated the maximum elevation for artillery ordnance, required to shoot across the city from proposed artillery battery locations. This measure set the minimum operating altitude of the inner ring so that aircraft remained above 9,000

feet while inside the ring, permitting artillery and mortar fire to a maximum elevation of 8,500 feet. Outside the ring, artillery could fire up to 11,000 feet. In both cases, no need remained to clear aircraft before firing artillery missions. If artillery required higher elevations for their missions, standard clearance procedures would be used.

The plan held rotary-wing aircraft in battle positions around the city at no closer than 1 kilometer from the city edge. The plan designed all positions to enable firing across the city with an AGM-114 Hellfire missile against any target in the city from any of these positions. Operating at altitudes from surface to 1,500 feet, no coordination would be required to clear their operations.

The planners recognized the need to operate unmanned aerial vehicles over the city but also recognized the risk of UAVs colliding with aircraft. They used a "little UAV, big sky" approach, hoping for a low probability of collisions because of the small size of the UAVs. Planners anticipated using four to five drones in the inner ring at anytime. North and south tracks for the drones permitted a certain measure of control such that they could be moved to a known track if necessary. The altitudes used depended on the characteristics of the three main drones employed: Predator, Pioneer, and Scan Eagle.

The aviation support plan specified standard loads for each aircraft type:

AH-1W—four Hellfire antitank missiles, two TOW (Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided) antitank missiles, rocket pod and 300-400 rounds of 20mm cannon ammunition.

F/A-18—one GBU-38, 500 pound JDAM (Joint Direct Attack Munition) bomb, two GBU-12, 500 pound laser guided bombs or one GBU-12 and one laser Maverick air-ground missile.

F/A-18 (airborne controller)—replaced one above weapon for four 5-inch Zuni rockets

AV-8B—one GBU-12 bomb or one laser Maverick.

The Marine fixed wing aircraft all carried a Litening targeting pod. Mounted externally, the system provides infrared detector, video camera, laser rangefinder, and laser designator in a single unit. Four of these pods were downlink-capable to the RQ-2B Pioneer drone system operated by the Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadrons (VMU-1 and 2). The Army also furnished continuous coverage by two AH-64 Apache attack helicopters in a direct support role to the Blackjack brigade

The air plan used a single "Gridded Reference Graphic" based upon the target reference points, phase lines, and building naming conventions of the two assault regiments. The graphic was designed for both cockpit and ground use and was made readable in red lighting, which is used to preserve night vision. The 1:7500 scale image included overlays with the grid lines, phase lines, and target references. The image was further subdivided into 250 meter increments and labeled for eight digit grid coordinates to facilitate quick target acquisition. A 1:5000 scale version was also made available. An additional overlay of approximately 700 buildings with accompanying coordinates and designated city blocks outlined for ground combat use was provided. All units received these aids through the military secure internet about four weeks before Operation Phantom Fury began.

Employing the AC-130 drew special interest in the plan. Stationing two AC-130s (call sign "Basher") inside the five nautical mile ring met the request of each assault RCT of having "its own Basher." These would operate at night at altitudes of 9,000–11,000 feet initially with slightly overlapping tracks. While hesitant about operating two aircraft inside the five nautical mile ring, the Air Force crews practiced this procedure before the commencement of Phantom Fury and executed without error or mishap. During Operation Vigilant Resolve, AC-130s often ran out of ammunition, but 3d Marine Aircraft Wing succeeded in having the aircraft "floor loaded" with additional 40mm and 25mm ammunition for the second battle.

Having prepared command and control measures in great detail for the operation, schedulers had to line up the aircraft thus required. The fixed-wing aircraft would be "pushed" from bases to provide two sections of aircraft continuously overhead for a 17-hour period. With AC-130s on station at night, the requirement dropped to a single section of fixed wing aircraft as augmentation. The KC-130 refueling aircraft of the Wing provided around the clock coverage to prevent fuel exhaustion limiting any ordnance delivery. The usual procedure of strip alert, and quick fueling and rearming also would be used so that "tempo drove the fight and not fuel." In short, the airmen

wanted to respond to the tactical situation without concerns for logistical needs.

Additional AV-8B Harrier aircraft deployed to Iraq for this battle in addition to the first squadron ordered in after Operation Vigilant Resolve, (VMA-214), which had arrived on 20 May after the First Fallujah battle. By the time the new battle began, the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing wielded a "super-squadron" of Harriers built around VMA-542 supplemented with aircraft and pilots from VMA-214 held over from its departure, a detachment of VMA-211 from 31st MEU, and VMA-311. The relief squadron for VMA-214 arrived at al-Asad Air Base on 17 August and VMFA(AW)-242 operated its two seat all-weather F/A-18D Hornets to good effect. All these aircraft came to Iraq trained and equipped with the Litening Pod.

The rotary-wing plan used the scheme of "pull" in that a two-section presence with two more available in alert status would be maintained for about 16 hours a day. The attack helicopters planned to fly from 0900–0200 daily, thus providing overlap of the AC-130 by several hours to attack targets on the outer edges of the city, to support additional ground units, and to exploit their night combat capabilities.[77]

The Seizure of Fallujah (7–19 November 2004)

Hours before the assault on Fallujah, Major General Natonski visited Army, Marine Corps, and Iraqi units in their attack positions outside the city. The Iraqi Interim Government invoked emergency powers and instituted a curfew in the Fallujah-Ramadi area. I MEF expected a surge in insurgent violence as Operation Phantom Fury commenced. Commanders initiated curfews throughout the I MEF area of operations as engineers prepared to cut the city's power supply.[78]

These final measures reflected the political preparations deemed necessary by the Coalition military commanders for successful operations in Fallujah. Leading up to the decisive assault, the Iraqi Interim Government announced the upcoming joint operations by the Coalition to re-establish Iraqi governmental control of Fallujah and to liberate the citizens from the insurgents. The Iraqi Interim Government appointed an ambassador to make political overtures of inclusion and reconciliation to the people of Fallujah but in the meantime declared a "State of Emergency." Iraq closed Syrian and Jordanian borders (the Jordanian border crossing was only partially colosed) and made available the Iraqi security forces necessary to support the operation, including Iraqi Army, National Guard, and police units.[79]

D-Day and D+1(7–8 November)

The Iraqi 36th Commando Battalion, in coordination with 3d LAR Battalion task force, seized the Fallujah Hospital on the peninsula to the west of the city at 2207 hours. The 3d LAR Battalion secured the bridges from the peninsula to Fallujah at 0005 hours on 8 November and established three vehicle checkpoints. By 1045 hours on 8 November, Marines of 4th Civil Affairs Group completed their survey of the hospital and unloaded medical and humanitarian assistance supplies for its use.

The units of RCT-1 and RCT-7 moved to attack positions during the night of 7–8 November. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines attacked at 1052 hours on 8 November to clear an apartment complex northwest of Fallujah and completed its seizure at 1255 hours with only light resistance. The 3d Battalion, 1st Marines prepared to seize the train station east of the apartment complex. The A-hour of 1900 approached for the assault battalions, beginning the vital clearing of the lines of departure of remaining obstacles and explosive devices. To breach the railroad tracks at the planned penetration point, four F/A-18Ds of VMFA(AW)-242, one flown by wing commander Major General Stalder, dropped eight GBU-31 2000 pound guided bombs on the berms and tracks at 1420 hours, when 3d Battalion, 1st Marines assaulted the station to effect the breach. As a final step, a team of Navy Seabees and 4th Civil Affairs Group Marines entered the power substation just west of the apartment complex and cut Fallujah's electricity supply at 1800 hours.

The Marines hit the train station at 1859 hours, taking sporadic small arms and rocket launcher fire. They secured the station by 2034 hours and began the hasty clearing of the breach area. The lead companies of 3d Battalion, 5th Marines jumped off from their positions at the apartment complex at 1926 hours, with tanks leading through their breach lanes, joining the tanks supporting 3d Battalion, 1st Marines as they engaged insurgent antitank teams.

The engineers began their breach operations at 2200 hours, and the advance elements of 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry began to cross at

0014 hours, 9 November. The cavalrymen judged the breach as insufficient for their wheeled vehicles, however, so the engineer efforts continued. The 3d Battalion, 1st Marines passed through the breach between 0503–0538 hours, and 2d Squadron pushed its lead armor elements forward in sufficient strength to protect the left flank of the main effort by that Marine battalion as it thrust south into the heart of Jolan. By 0636 hours, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines the designated main effort, neared its limit of advance for the first day, having cleared the Jolan Cemetery, and the cavalry squadron began to occupy strong points along its axis of advance. The Iraqi follow-on forces began to cross into the city in trace of the assault battalions at 0852 hours, and began to secure cleared areas and guard some of the numerous weapons caches uncovered in the assault. The small craft company, placed under Colonel Shupp's RCT for the operation, began to fire and move at 1114 hours against insurgents trying to flee the city along the bank of the Euphrates where it rounds the peninsula.

The assault of RCT-7 into its zone of action began at A-hour using three reinforced battalions line-abreast, attacking to penetrate the city and clear an area to Route 10, seizing the Government Center (Division Objective 2) and acting overall as the supporting effort for the attack of RCT-1. Colonel Tucker assigned his main effort to 1st Battalion, 8th Marines commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Gareth F. Brandl, on his right flank, moving somewhat east of the boundary with RCT-1, designated Phase Line George, but angling to the west to seize the Government Center and coordinating with Colonel Shupp's regiment via the 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry. The center unit, 1st Battalion 3d Marines (which was also designated Battalion Landing Team 1/3 from its 31st MEU assignment) attacked in zone at the center, and the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry attacked on the left flank of Colonel Tucker's force.

On 9 November, using accompanying Iraqi Special Forces, the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines penetrated along Phase Line Ethan and took the regimental objective, Hadrah Mosque, at 0900 hours. The Army mechanized infantry battalion moved rapidly along the left edge of the city, all the way to Route 10, killing approximately 48 enemy and then sending indirect fire into insurgent targets. The 1st Battalion, 3d Marines experienced difficulty clearing its penetration point and instead moved its vehicles through the Army battalion, continuing to move south afterward with little further difficulty.

Leading the attack, Lieutenant Jeffrey T. Lee (Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines) aggressively directed his tank platoon through major firefights. Initially operating continuously for over 12 hours, he ran the risk of low fuel while continuing to destroy insurgent resistance, enabling the battalion to reach its objectives. Days later, while leading Company A in its drive south, he was shot through his right arm yet refused to leave his unit and instead advanced two blocks further south, reaching the assigned battalion phase line. Surrounded by enemy insurgents, he supported the Marine riflemen taking positions in nearby buildings, eliminating more insurgents who attempted to attack the position. His aggressiveness and bravery contributed to the breaking of enemy resistance in the heart of the enemy's defense.[80]

D+2 to D+3 (9–10 November)

At the urging of the Iraqi Interim Government, the U.S. military command renamed Operation Phantom Fury the less imposing and more "politically correct" Operation Al Fajr (Dawn).[81]

While the Army cavalrymen of 2d Squadron, now executing the RCT-1 main effort, continued south on their thrust along the boulevard of Phase Line Henry, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines cleared its zone in the northern half of Jolan District. The regiment's other Marine assault battalion, following in trace of the cavalry squadron, cleared the rest of the district thus penetrated. The intense fight for the heart of Jolan District by the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines took the rest of the day of 9 November and culminated in a turn to the west in preparation to complete clearing operations to the river's edge. The 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry reached Route 10 (Phase Line Fran) at 2200 hours and controlled the streets to the east and west of its attack route by its firepower. The accompanying Iraqi 4th Battalion continued to clear buildings along Phase Line Henry, which had armor strong points now posted along its entire length north of Route 10. The insurgents could do little against the firepower and armor of the cavalry squadron, and any who resisted were quickly eliminated. Fire from tanks and 25mm automatic cannon fire from armored vehicles destroyed many of the improvised explosive devices and

car bombs arrayed along the routes, with little effect on the attacking forces. The cavalrymen took Jolan Park (Division Objective 1) at the end of the day, well ahead of the attack plan. At this point, the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines began its attack to the west at 1305 hours on 10 November to clear the remaining unoccupied part of Fallujah north of Route 10 all the way to the river's edge. On its left flank, the cavalrymen of 2d Squadron attacked along Route 10 to secure the two highway bridges from the east at 1424 hours. The 3d LAR Battalion already held the western sections. By the end of 10 November, Colonel Shupp's RCT-1 had captured the entire northwest quadrant of Fallujah with a classic cavalry screen established on the eastern edge of his zone and the two Marine battalions poised to mop up the interior and continue the attack south of Route 10.

In the zone of RCT-7, the Government Center fell to 1st Battalion, 8th Marines which began its movement at 0100 hours on 10 November south from the Hadrah Mosque area with two rifle companies, then launched Company A at 0400 hours, mounted in amphibious assault vehicles and escorted by tanks and light armored vehicles. The mounted company seized the center at noon, but the other companies fought for several more hours to overcome snipers and pockets of resistance before securing their sections of Route 10. Two rifle platoons, however, had to return to the Hadrah Mosque that night to prevent any insurgent reoccupation of the site.

As 1st Battalion, 3d Marines joined the rest of RCT-7 on the Route 10 line, several changes to the planning took place on 10 November. The rapid advance of both regiments to Route 10 (Phase Line Fran) had eliminated any need for RCT-7 to undertake alone the clearing of southern Fallujah. Therefore each RCT would instead continue south following the extended traces of the same boundaries and phase lines already in use. The securing of the northern part of the city, however, already taxed the Iraqi forces in the operation even though they had performed well supporting the assault battalions. Command and control of Iraqi units remained problematic and Marine battalions would remain behind in each regimental zone to complete the mopping up phase. Therefore, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines and 1st Battalion, 3d Marines were assigned to secure the northern half of Fallujah within their respective regimental sectors while the assault to the south ensued.

Sergeant Jeffrey L. Kirk led his 1st Squad, 3d Platoon, K Company 3d Battalion, 5th Marines in successive assaults of a fortified building and courtyard, eliminating insurgents and a machine gun position personally with rifle fire and grenades. Although wounded, he refused medical attention and led a third assault. Nearby, K Company's Private First Class Christopher S. Adelsperger executed a series of single-man attacks, clearing houses, rescuing wounded Marines and leading the charge into a courtyard after an assault amphibious vehicle crashed through a courtyard wall. Although he did not survive his wounds, Adelsperger's used unceasing courage and energy in destroying the last strongpoint in the Jolan district.

The broadcast by loudspeakers of the Marines' Hymn over Fallujah by B Company, 9th Psychological Operations Battalion took place in the early evening of 10 November as units set in for the night. The observation of the Marine Corps Birthday varied throughout the zone, and most units celebrated in small groups during the early morning hours. Several such observations, however, such as took place in the command posts of the larger units, allowed Marines to revel in their cherished traditions at the time of great danger.[82]

D+4 to D+13 (11–20 November)

Colonel Shupp's RCT-1 now continued the attack into southern Fallujah, sending 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry south on its same axis of attack as before, Phase Line Henry, to act once again as the supporting effort, beginning at 1900 hours. The armor company leading the thrust encountered a complex obstacle that required close air support and AC-130 fire to reduce. The armored attack continued south to the assigned limit of advance for the day, some 1,200 meters south of Route 10, by 0300 hours on 12 November. Supporting arms suppressed enemy fire, and the mechanized infantry company, following in trace, established a screen. Operating several hundred meters to the east, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines began its main effort attack at 1600 hours on 11 November, undertaking the mission of clearing the entire zone between the cavalry advance and the river's edge.

During the daylight hours of the 11th, the insurgents in front of RCT-1 had drawn south what men they could regroup and attempted to reorganize their defenses. Marines and soldiers moved

into the night, not making much contact. The cavalry screen anchored the regiment's left, with a section of either M2 Bradley fighting vehicles or M1A1 tanks at every major intersection. True to form, as the sun came up, the enemy came out to fight on 12 November.

At 1030 hours Marines of 3d Battalion, 1st Marines reported strong insurgent contact, receiving mortar and small arms fire about 500m south of Route 10 near the cavalry advance. A Pioneer drone showed 8–10 men fighting the along rooftops of four houses. Shortly after mid-day, the battalion reported both two companies low in ammunition and very low on fuel, yet by 1640 hours, one of these companies had reached the limits of south Fallujah.

The last major contact by RCT-1 with organized resistance came the next day (13 November) at 1017 hours, when Marines of 3d Battalion, 1st Marines fought squad-sized enemy elements. Several Marines fell wounded in one house and six insurgents in the upper floor prevented four of them from being evacuated. First Sergeant Bradley A. Kasal ran forward from the unit providing cover of the endangered Marines and joined a squad making a fresh assault inside the house. Killing one insurgent at close quarters, he was struck down by rifle fire and fell with another Marine. He shielded the wounded Marine with his body from hand grenade fragments and then refused evacuation until all other Marines had been removed. He shouted encouragement to all concerned as more Marines cleared the house. Inside the house, Corporal Robert J. Mitchell, Jr. leading the squad Kasal had joined, charged through rifle fire and grenades to reach a critically wounded Marine and begin first aid treatment. His covering fire permitted a corpsman to join him, and he was then hit while recrossing the lower room to assist other casualties. At close quarters, he killed an insurgent with his combat knife and then turned to assist in the evacuation of the wounded. After the wounded had been evacuated, a Marine threw a satchel charge, which brought the house down and finished the last insurgent resistors.

At the end of 12 November, Colonel Shupp signaled that RCT-1 had completed its initial assault through the west side of Fallujah:

> The soldiers of 2-7 [Cavalry] demonstrated extraordinary courage in the face of the enemy. Their firepower and can-do spirit has saved Marine lives. 3/5 [3rd Bn, 5th Mar] conducted detailed house-to-house searches and have uncovered tens of thousands of unexploded ordnance, which they are systematically destroying to ensure the safety of the Jolan. 3/1 [3rd Bn, 1st Mar] successfully seized the southern portion of the RCT-1 zone. Without regard for their own safety, the Marines and sailors of 3/1 made great gains despite running into some of the stiffest resistance since the fighting began. Resistance included suicide attacks by suspected foreign fighters.[83]

On the other hand the continued clearing of Fallujah proved difficult. Enemy contact was heavy during the early afternoon of 13 November and continued at lesser levels through the night and into the morning of 14 November.

Marines and soldiers of RCT-1 now entered an even more dangerous period in the operation. An increasingly desperate and tenacious enemy used suicide attacks, snipers, and booby-trapped buildings to inflict more casualties. The assault troops, however, continued to dominate what they already termed the "ten-second firefight" and effectively applied combined arms to eradicate resistance at every encounter.

As his regiment continued detailed clearing in zone, Colonel Shupp personally crossed the south bridge over the Euphrates on 15 November, officially opening it for military traffic only. Navy Seabees assessed the north bridge as being in good condition and it opened shortly thereafter. The next day, shortly after noon the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines reported that its sweep of the south bridge with dogs and explosives ordnance devices disposal teams had located six improvised explosive devices. The removal of these came just before the symbolic crossing of the bridge by General Casey, accompanied by Colonel Shupp, led by Lieutenant Colonel Willard Buhl, commanding 3d Battalion, 1st Marines.

On the eastern side of Fallujah, Colonel Tucker resumed his advance with the Army's 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry pushing armor south of Route 10 at 1900 hours, 11 November operating as before along the eastern fringes of Fallujah with 1st Battalion, 8th Marines further to the west in the zone. The Marine battalion crossed Route 10 in the attack at 1500 hours with two companies on line, tanks in the lead, and assault amphibious ve-

hicles following in trace. Here they encountered their heaviest resistance in Operation Phantom Fury. As the Marines crossed the highway, insurgents opened up with automatic gunfire and antitank rockets. In three hours of fighting both companies battled their way 250 meters to the south and stopped in some buildings at dusk. They advanced another 250 meters under the cover of darkness beginning at 0001 hours on 12 November without incident and again set into defensive positions. Iraqi troops joined later in the morning and cleared a mosque with no resistance. At 1800 hours, another move south and west under the cover of darkness brought the lead companies of the battalion to the vicinity of the 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry screen of RCT-1 without incident.

Although the Army mechanized task force encountered some heavy resistance in the southeast corner of Fallujah, Colonel Tucker's regiment effectively switched from its attack phase on 15 November and commenced mopping up in the interior of the city.

Combat operations did not cease with the occupation of the city, however, and die-hard pockets of resistance continued even as most insurgents sought to flee the city. The reports of the two assault regiments for 20 November showed each using two Marine infantry battalions in clearing operations, encountering some defended houses, especially in the southern sectors. The Army's 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry continued house clearing as well, and the cavalry squadron continued occupying strong points on the boundary between the regiments. Of the assault battalions, the Army mechanized battalion task force became the first to depart Fallujah, leaving on 21 November for its parent organization.[84]

Phase IV Operations in Fallujah (21 November–23 December 2004)

No clear-cut end of combat operations and beginning of stabilization operations followed the successful assault of the city. The assault battalions occupied assigned sectors of the city and crossed and recrossed them in sweeps and house-clearing operations, using the attached Iraqi battalions to the extent that their abilities permitted. Colonel Shupp's RCT-1 reports noted increasing efforts at humanitarian assistance and civil-military operations in the last third of the month, and Colonel Tucker's RCT-7 noted the same by 27 November and was able to begin rotating Marines by platoon back to base camps for 24-hour rest periods beginning on 29 November. The 2d Squadron, 7th Cavalry completed its withdrawal to Camp Fallujah on 23 November. Continuing discoveries of arms caches plagued the operation in its final weeks, creating security problems and also permitting renewed attacks in the city by surviving insurgents. The total number of caches uncovered in the city reached 370 at the end of the month.

Throughout the last weeks of November and the first two weeks of December, the 4th Civil Affairs Group staff worked with a variety of higher commands and the Interim Iraqi Government to develop a return and reconstruction plan for the city that would allow its residents to return to their homes but, at the same time, preclude insurgents from returning to the city. A new scheme of internal movement control came into practice, making use of biometric identification technology, a variety of scanners, and a new series of movement control points. The repair of the city's water system, sewage capacity, and electrical grid was accomplished as the over 200,000 residents of Fallujah began to return and restore the city to some sense of normalcy. The I MEF staff created an interministerial coordination group, located in the civil-military operations center, that coordinated all aspects of Iraqi and Marine stabilization operations in Fallujah.

Without fanfare, the shift from assault to recovery operations in Operation Phantom Fury/Al Fajr came on 23 December, the first day that Fallujah's inhabitants began to return to the city with 600 civilians being admitted to the al-Andalus District, which was served by the two Euphrates bridges. In other respects, the day was little different from previous ones as Marine rifle companies with Iraqi troops attached continued to conduct security patrols. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines fought 10–15 insurgents in northern Fallujah. Its Marines employed tanks and air strikes to destroy the buildings the insurgents occupied. Three Marines were killed in action and five more suffered wounds. Sergeant Jarrett A. Kraft led three assault squads on three separate instances to repel insurgents and to clear houses. Despite receiving repeated blast effects from grenades and being knocked down stairwells, he continued to lead his Marines with courage and verve. At the same time, another squad leader in the same platoon, Corporal Jeremiah W. Workman, led his Marines

into several buildings, rescued wounded Marines, and then personally covered them with his fire after receiving fragment wounds in his arms and legs. He led his Marines in one more assault before reinforcements arrived to complete the action.[85]

The Phase IV (stability operations) plan used by I MEF and 1st Marine Division aimed at establishing competent Iraqi security forces in the city who would require minimal backup by U.S. forces. Civil affairs group teams and detachments from 1st Force Service Support Group operated with every battalion in the Fallujah operation, assessed damage, and sought to protect infrastructure wherever possible. In the aftermath of combat operations the priorities for Marine commanders in restoring the city's operation were public health, public works and utilities (water, food, electricity, medical), infrastructure (communications and transportation), the economic infrastructure, emergency services, and finally the reevaluation of projects previously begun that might prove salvageable. During 14–16 December, the Army's 2d Blackjack Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division departed 1st Marine Division, having transferred its responsibility for the area outlying Fallujah to RCT-7. The latter regiment had departed Fallujah city on 10 December, leaving 1st Battalion, 3d Marines under the tactical control of Colonel Shupp's RCT-1, which now conducted the occupation and stabilization of the city proper.

Colonel Shupp's instructions to RCT-1 conveyed the complexity of the change in mission:[86]

> Our operational success depends on our efforts in this phase. At no time is the phrase "No better friend, no worse enemy" more applicable. This phase however, will be complicated with no clear beginning and probably starting as areas of Fallujah are cleared of enemy activity. Identified forces must roll into these tasks on the heels of our advance. We must keep the citizens of Fallujah informed through creative info ops that readily offer aid and assistance. We must reach out to the citizens to reduce their human suffering and quickly restore daily operations. We must introduce the Interim Iraqi Government as soon as possible and steadily transition to their control and operations. The citizens must be impressed with the power of Iraq's legitimate authorities and identify with the government as their benefactor and hope for the future. We must destroy any ties to criminal elements and seek the assistance of the people. Maintaining security is paramount to enabling all other operations, but it must not consume our focus.

As the troops of RCT-1 began to occupy the "secured" eastern half of Fallujah, some surprises occurred causing some consternation in the regiment. Although combat also continued in the western half, where 3d Battalion, 1st Marines held security and stabilization responsibilities, most engagements and many cache discoveries occurred in the eastern side after 10 December. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines and 1st Battalion, 3d Marines combined to fight and to kill approximately 35 insurgents on 12 December using tank fire and close air support that delivered four GBU-12 bombs. Another engagement on the following day saw seven bombs dropped and more tank fire used to kill five insurgents. After a visit from the assistant division commander, Brigadier General Joseph F. Dunford, the division was told that more clearing and reclearing operations would be required even as the city was retuned to a more peaceful state.

As in all combat operations conducted in Iraq, the civil affairs teams accompanying the assault troops included payment teams compensating owners for battle damage to property and paying death claims to families whose members were killed during the battle. As soon as feasible, labor and construction contracting would employ local workers and provide basic items (wheelbarrows, shovels, etc.) to clear and to repair roads and streets. Humanitarian assistance measures sought to provide essential services (initially water, food and fuel distribution) to mosques and humanitarian service centers, operated by Marines of 1st Force Service Support Group. Depending upon the Iraqi government actions, the civil-military teams (Marine Corps and U.S. diplomatic) sought to establish once again a civil-military operations center with the local government in the downtown government center capable of coordinating military assistance.

The overall stabilization plan culminated in the integration of Iraqi security forces into security operations to advance to the desired local control of security (Phase V). This measure consisted

of giving internal security and policing responsibility to Iraqis and maintaining U.S. quick reaction forces to support subsequent security and civil military operations.[87]

Assessing Operation Phantom Fury/Al-Fajr

The second battle of Fallujah defined the initial I MEF Campaign of 2004–2005. Marines and soldiers fought through the city at close quarters, frequently engaging in point-blank firefights and hand-to-hand fighting that consistently vanquished their foes. No enemy tactic or procedure sufficed to repel the ferocity and effectiveness of squads, teams, and even individual Marines and soldiers. Caught in their defensive maze, the insurgents fought to the death, surrendered, or fled the city, the latter move becoming increasingly difficult as the assault forces cleared the city.

An exchange monitored between two insurgents demonstrated the overall effect of the battle in dealing a decisive blow:[88]

A: Where is this shooting?

B: Everywhere. In every area.

A: What is it, artillery?

B: Artillery, mortars and tanks everywhere.

A: Where are you?

B: By the flour mill.

A: They are attacking the flour mill?

B: Yes, and they are attacking us too. The artillery is destroying us. All of Fallujah is in ruins. Not a house is left standing. What can stand? The tanks come down every street with artillery falling ahead of them.

A: Get out of there!

B: Where? How? If I go in the streets I get shot. If I stay inside I get shelled. And let's not forget the mortars and the aircraft and the snipers!

A: But . . . They said the Americans had withdrawn!

B: The Americans are everywhere.

A: They said Nazaal was still safe . . .

B: Nazaal is a warzone.

A: Where is A_____?

B: No one knows.

A: Try to make it somewhere . . .

B: Even if I go in the yard I will be attacked.

A: What about Shuheda?

B: Just bombing there, they have not entered yet.

A: Listen, on the streets, it's just tanks right? Nobody on foot . . .

B: Yes but you see, a tank is roughly as big as a house . . . You can hit it with a rocket and it doesn't blow up.

A: What about Jolan?

B: War zone.

A: They said Mujahideen reinforcements were arriving.

B: Well they haven't arrived yet. There are still Mujahideen in Askeri, only because they regrouped there from Souq and crossed over the new road. Fallujah is finished. It is the attack of all attacks. All the sheikhs have left us and are happily organizing demonstrations and protests in other parts.

A: How can you say the sheikhs have left?

B: They fled with the families from Jolan and elsewhere. They may still be leaving; they are still getting families out somehow. Today a family of a woman and children had a house fall down around them. They got them out and took them to Jubeil or somewhere . . .

A: Look, call me if anything develops. I don't care what time you call. Try to find A____.

B: I'll do what I can. We did burn one tank.

A: That's good at least.

B: Yes, but if you burn one tank they send three more. It's useless.

A: Two aircraft were brought down. Hang in there.

The tactical surprise accomplished at Second Fallujah ranks as one of several remarkable feats of I MEF and the 1st Marine Division in a highly complex battle. The attack disoriented the insurgent defenses at the outset, and they never recovered their balance. Although the Jolan district contained the heart of Fallujah's insurgency, the rapid penetration into it forced insurgents from their positions and prevented a sustained defense. After the operation Coalition soldiers and Marines discovered the majority of safehouses and other insurgent sanctuaries in the area. In the south, specifically in Nazal and Shuhaydah, the assault units found the staunchest defenses, including great numbers of prepared defenses, such as foxholes, spiderholes, and tunnels inside and between fortified houses and insurgent billeting areas. Considerable caches of ordnance were found throughout the city.

Table 5-1:Artillery Missions Fired during Second Fallujah Battle

	7-8 Nov	8-9 Nov	9-10 Nov	10-11 Nov	11-12 Nov
Call for Fire	47	53	37	35	45
Counter Fire	22	15	10	21	11
	12-13 Nov	13-14 Nov	14-15 Nov	15-16 Nov	16-17 Nov
Call for Fire	28	31	24	7	7
Counter Fire	9	8	23	22	4
	17-18 Nov	18-19 Nov	19-20 Nov	20-21 Nov	21-22 Nov
Call for Fire	2	1	0	0	0
Counter Fire	10	3	5	4	4

155mm high explosive ammunition expenditure

Expended 7–22 Nov	Daily Rate	Daily Avg. Call for Fire Rate, per mission	Daily Avg. Counterfire Rate, per mission
5685	379	21.1	11.4

The enemy typically fought in small groups of four to twelve individuals, armed with small arms and RPG-type rocket launchers, who generally chose to fight from inside buildings rather than out in the streets. Although these groups tended to congregate in houses, which were close to one another, they fought as individual groups rather than establishing a mutually supporting series of positions. Although Marines sustained some casualties from rooftop shootings, most casualties occurred inside buildings where the enemy waited for assault troops to come to him. These tactics were probably a result of dominant U.S. firepower on the streets and rooftops. The enemy usually opened fire on Marines as the latter were entering a house or ascending the stairwell. The insurgents often used rifles and grenades to initiate the engagements and would usually continue to fight until killed. Fighting to the death does not mean, however, that Marines fought a suicidal enemy. In many instances, insurgents attempted to escape by throwing down their weapons and either trying to evade U.S. units or approaching them pretending to be civilians. By all accounts, however, the enemy that Marines encountered in Fallujah proved more willing to stand and to fight to the death than any enemy forces met elsewhere in al-Anbar Province. The insurgents generally did not choose to fight at night.[89]

As noteworthy as the ground assault of 1st Marine Division and its reinforcements, the employment of the aviation support of the Coalition and 3d Aircraft Wing and the various artillery batteries provided precisely delivered supporting arms fire.

The operating altitudes changed to the poor weather plan on D+1. The fixed wing aircraft loitering for close air support came to the 10,000–12,000 or 11,000–13,000 feet blocks many times due to the weather. In the following days, these lower blocks continued in use even when the weather was good. Lower altitudes enhanced target acquisition by reducing slant range for sensor acquisition and had very limited effect on the clearance of artillery fires. Although insurgent antiaircraft missiles were always a concern, the airmen accepted the risk of low attitude flight needed to retain the accuracy demanded in this complex environment. Many times fixed-wing aircraft would use the lower block to find or verify the target location and then exit the ring and come in at a higher altitude for release of guided bombs. Several times during the battle multiple aircraft in multiple sectors worked on targets both inside and outside the 5 nautical mile ring.

The staging of multiple aircraft in the Keyhole patterns served to maximize the response time and tempo of air support. Often a section of aircraft performed target acquisition in the ring at 16,000–18,000 feet for one assault regiment while another aircraft circled at 13,000–15,000 feet delivering ordnance for the other regiment. These aircraft shared their space with five to seven drones and artillery and mortars while six to eight battalions engaged insurgent forces on the ground. A thorough knowledge of the plan and good situational awareness allowed these operations with minimal risks. No friendly fire of any kind occurred at Second Fallujah as the result of supporting arms fire.

Many times rotary wing aircraft flew up to 3,000–4000 feet to avoid the high volume of small arms fires and to improve pilot visibility of the city. The drone and manned surveillance aircraft

over the city averaged seven at night and four to five during the day. Although more than anticipated, the Keyhole system template accommodated them well.

The employment of Laser Maverick and gun attacks required more coordination. The Keyhole template was designed for efficiency and speed, and when aircraft used such flat trajectory weapons the controllers moved the drones and restricted the maximum elevation of artillery and mortar fire. The pilots and forward air controllers modified the delivery parameters to accomplish the Laser Maverick and gun attacks. While such attacks required more coordination, only minutes were required to move the drones and to coordinate other fires.

During Second Fallujah aviation expended approximately 318 precision bombs, 391 rockets and missiles, and 93,000 machine gun or cannon rounds. The artillery consumption demonstrated the relative intensity of the ground fighting during the battle:[90]

The overall Marine Corps casualties for this operation, according to summaries of the Manpower Department, Marine Corps Headquarters, totaled 70 Marines killed in action, 651 wounded in action (394 returned to duty), with another three non-battle deaths and five deaths from wounds received in action.[91]

The brunt of these losses fell upon the 1st Marine Division and its attachments.

Legend:
1. KIA: killed in action
2. WIA: Wounded in action
3. RTD: Returned to duty
4. NBD: non-battle death
5. NBI: non-battle injury

Among the immediate results of the second battle of Fallujah, non-combatants fled the fighting in large numbers before the operation, and many insurgents left the city by hiding in the non-combatant populace departing Fallujah. The attempts at organizing sympathetic uprisings in other parts of the province failed. The surviving insurgents could only seek to rearm and reorganize, waiting for a return of civilians to the city. In the immediate aftermath, the insurgent operational capacity seemed severely impaired as indicated by the notable drop in indirect fire attacks on Coalition bases and camps. These indications directly encouraged I MEF and high command commanders to set conditions for some form of exploitation operations.[93]

Table 5-2: Second Fallujah Battle Casualties [92]

Fallujah Assault Force:					
Unit	**KIA**	**WIA**	**RTD**	**NBD**	**NBI**
HQ RCT-1		5	5		
3d Bn, 1st Mar	22	206	123		8
3d Bn, 5th Mar	8	56	39		4
3d LAR Bn	1	36	11		5
HQ RCT-7		15	14		1
1st Bn, 8th Mar	16	102	51		16
1st Bn, 3d Mar	10	79	45		11
Army Units					
2d Bn, 2d Inf	5	24	16		1
2d Sqdn, 7th Cav	1	12	5	1	
Rest of al-Anbar Province:					
2d Bde, 2d Inf Div		9	6		1
2d Bn, 11th Mar		1			1
31st MEU		2			1
2d LAR Bn*		7	5		
2d Recon Bn*	1				
2d Tk Bn*		3	5		2
2d Asslt Amph Bn*	1	12	7		3
Total	65	582	339	1	54

* present in company strength

Chapter 6:
Operations post-Fallujah

The conduct of pursuit operations actually began during the last phases of the Second Fallujah Battle but continued into January when they became part of the military operations conducted to support the 30 January elections. A pursuit is undertaken when an enemy force has been broken and no longer can offer effective resistance. Main requirement of the pursuing force is speed, keeping forces in contact such that fleeing forces cannot escape destruction. In the insurgency in al-Anbar Province, however, the multi-faceted and numerous enemy factions and elements had simply melted into the network of hiding places, sanctuaries, and training areas. Bringing him to battle under coalition advantage remained as difficult as ever, and making contact proved typically illusive.

Operations outside Fallujah

The program of pursuit operations began with Operation Plymouth Rock (24–27 November), conducted by 24th MEU in northern Babil Province. A complicated series of targeted raids on known and suspected insurgent sites by 1st Battalion, 2d Marines were combined with maneuvers by the Black Watch Battalion and 2d Battalion, 24th Marines and Iraqi units in blocking positions; these raids and maneuvers were intended to keep the enemy off balance and away from the vital Route 8 linking Baghdad to Kuwait. The two-stage Operation Lightning Bolt (28–30 November, 3–19 December) saw the 2d Blackjack Brigade first isolate and clear Amariyah, with the Black Watch Battalion blocking from the south, and then executing a similar operation on the opposite side of Fallujah against Khalidiyah and Karmah, while cooperating with 2d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division to clear Saqlawiyah. A second Plymouth Rock operation (22–23 December) repeated raids in northern Babil Province as 24th MEU sought to capitalize on the resulting enemy moves away from the army brigades in area Raleigh. At this last juncture, however, the responsibility for North Babil and tactical control of the 24th MEU had already (6 December) moved to the 1st Cavalry Division, another regional modification undertaken as the coalition commanders shifted priorities toward Baghdad and the January election. During 4–5 December, the Black Watch Battalion began its return to southern Iraq, having sustained five soldiers killed in action while serving with I MEF. At that point, all the non-Marine Corps reinforcements previously detailed to I MEF for the Second Fallujah Battle may be considered as having departed.[94]

As 2005 began, priorities for I MEF focused upon the 30 January national election, the continued hunt for and destruction of the insurgents, the preparation of Iraqi security forces, and the return of the civilian populace of Fallujah to its city. The expected arrival of II MEF of course instilled thoughts of a smooth turnover and departure by the sailors and Marines for their home stations. For the election to succeed, its security and the smooth functioning of the election process had to be guaranteed by military authorities throughout Iraq. Soldiers and Marines carried out numerous operations in Areas of Operation Raleigh, Topeka, and Denver, aimed as always at upsetting insurgent regrouping, destroying arms caches, and where feasible demonstrating support for Iraqi security and government entities, however disparate they might be in their nascent state. The border stations with Syria remained closed and Jordanian access limited to authorized commercial traffic.

In the eastern part of I MEF's area of operations (AO) Atlanta, 1st Cavalry Division's responsibilities and the Baghdad political center of gravity led to the turnover of all of an-Najaf and Karbala Provinces to Lieutenant General Stadler. Given the number of units already transferred out of the Fallujah operation, the additional area had to be taken over by Colonel Haslam and his 11th MEU, a choice made more logical by that organization's evident success in stabilizing an Najaf since the summer. All the Marine expeditionary units sent to Iraq, however, now required relief and return to home stations in the very near future.

An army brigade would arrive in February and relieve both 11th and 24th MEUs of their responsibilities in a combined AO South, operating under the tactical control of the I MEF commanding general. For the time being, however, Colonel Johnson's 24th MEU continued to operate with the cavalry division, which even took tactical control of 2d Battalion, 24th Marines on 27 December to support its operations securing Route 8, while 1st Battalion, 2d Marines continued to cover Taheer Firm Base, Eskan Patrol Base, Haswah Police Sta-

tion, and patrols in zone. Only on the first day of February did 24th MEU return to I MEF tactical control, whence it began relief in place activities with elements of the arriving 155th Brigade Combat Team. On 6 February, 1st Battalion, 155th Infantry and 2d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment relieved 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, which joined the rest of 24th MEU to Kuwait and al-Asad Air Base during 9–11 February. First Battalion's last convoy of ground equipment reached Kuwait on 18 February.

The 2d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division handed over responsibility for Karbala Province to 11th MEU on 22 December, bringing it not only extensive territory but also new Iraqi police and military units for its Marines to train, to direct, and to mentor. With very little interference from insurgents and criminal elements, the 11th MEU ended its first campaign in Iraq with major success in stability operations and in facilitating the election in Karbala and an-Najaf. On 14 February, Colonel Haslam transferred authority of his vast area to incoming commanders of the 155th Brigade and the next day his organization joined the departure movements to Kuwait and local air bases, with the last ground movement entering Kuwait on 17 February. By this point, the newly arrived 15th MEU (Colonel Thomas C. Greenwood) had arrived in Kuwait and as of 20 January was the Central Command operational reserve.[95]

Security for the 30 January 2005 Elections

The Iraqi elections directly affected the pace of operations in area Atlanta, as well as the efforts to plan and to conduct the repopulation of Fallujah, and it was hoped that the displaced inhabitants could return in time to participate in the elections, at the same time they received humanitarian relief and began the reconstruction of their city.

The efforts of RCT-1 Marines and sailors produced one significant benchmark when the contentious Jolan District opened on 30 December to receive Fallujah citizens. The openings of specific districts continued until 14 January, when all of them stood open to receive their residents. Civil-military operations at this point focused on resettling Fallujah, rendering humanitarian assistance, and re-establishing Fallujah and al-Anbar Province's governance at all levels.

Although late in energizing activities in al-Anbar Province, the Independent Election Commission of Iraq requested in mid-January that coalition military forces provide "life support" (meaning shelter and subsistence) at polling centers, the transportation of election materials to the polling centers, and polling center security by Iraqi security forces onsite with Coalition Forces' support. The Marine commanders, however, had not waited for the Independent Election Commission of Iraq and had begun preparations for election support by surveying and determining the most suitable polling sites for several weeks.[96]

Operationally, the Coalition plan for securing the elections involved controlling borders, securing Baghdad, neutralizing insurgents in selected key cities, and supporting the election process. Dubbed Operation Citadel II, the Coalition military election support countered insurgent moves and activities, selected offensive actions against known targets, erected multiple cordons of security for polling sites, and organized the logistical support for the election process.

Marines and sailors of the 1st Force Service Support Group and the MEF Engineer Group hardened the polling sites with field fortification and highway barrier materials. They also received and transported election polling materials and life support sets to the polling sites for the polling workers and the Independent Election Commission personnel who would train and supervise the workers' actions. Most of the workers and IEC-I personnel came to al-Anbar Province via C-130 flights of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, carrying some 2,300 of these passengers between 26–29 January.[97]

At Fallujah, units of RCT-1 cooperated with Iraqi security forces and provided outer cordon security for polling centers. Citywide, they enforced election curfews, continued to operate the entry checkpoints, and continued humanitarian assistance missions. The infantry battalions also screened the city perimeter to prevent infiltration by insurgents, encountering light enemy contact. A raid conducted on the Peninsula netted 17 men suspected of insurgent activity.

In the area surrounding the city, RCT-7 provided similar security at its polling centers to support the election while enforcing election day restrictions on curfew, driving and carrying weapons. Its 2d Reconnaissance Battalion patrolled Zaidon with the Iraqi 2d Battalion, Muthanna Bri-

gade, during which the troops discovered caches near Nasser Wa Salaam and Abu Ghraib.

In and around Ramadi, the army 2d Brigade enforced curfews, provided the outer cordon at polling sites, and conducted patrols, random checkpoints, and raids. The insurgents launched numerous small attacks, several of which targeted polling centers or troops guarding polling centers. Marines of 2d Battalion, 5th Marines guarded the government center and conducted security patrols along Route 10. In western al-Anbar Province, the battalions of 31st MEU stretched to counter insurgent activity in the form of numerous attacks with rockets, mortars, and improvised explosive devices. It was during these operations that a CH-53E crashed 26 January in a sand storm near ar-Rutbar, killing the four-man crew from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron-361 and the 26 Marines and a navy corpsman from 1st Battalion, 3d Marines. This event remains the deadliest single incident of the entire Iraq war.[98]

The bulk of election support actions centered upon the key cities of Ramadi, Fallujah, Karbala, and Najaf. But in considering the results of the 30 January 2005 election, the ethnic character of the population was apparent. In the mixed and Shi'a-dominant provinces of Karbala and Najaf, an estimated 90% voter turnout voted at 431 polling centers, and women made up more than half of the voters. In Sunni-dominated al-Anbar Province, the Sunni boycott of the election prevailed and only 16,682 voters entered the 49 polling sites. The exception came at Fallujah, where 7,679 persons, believed to number one-third to one-half of the eligible voters present, cast their ballots. This first of several elections in 2005–2006 created a 275-seat transitional National Assembly, a provincial assembly in each of the 18 provinces, and a Kurdistan regional assembly. The election system used proportional representation with voters indicating a preference for a list of candidates posted by a specific party or other political entity.

Of course, the conduct of a fair and secure election remained the primary objective of the I MEF commanders, and despite the Sunni boycott, they met those objectives. The insurgents made considerable efforts to spoil the events, making 38 separate attacks on 16 polling sites during 28–30 January, but no voters were harmed. The Marines and soldiers remained alert after the polls closed and until all polling workers and their election materials had left the sites. On 31 January, border crossings reopened and on 2 February, the Iraqi security details returned to their garrisons.[100]

Table 6-1: Polling sites established in I MEF area of Operations, January 2005[99]

MSE	Area	No. Polling Centers	Alt. Polling Centers
2 BCT	Ramadi	10	4
	Tammin	2	0
	Khalidyah	1	1
	Habbaniyah	1	1
RCT-7	Karmah	1	0
	Nasser Wa Salem	2	3
RCT-1	Fallujah	3	6
31 MEU	Hit	1	2
	Hadithah	2	1
	Al Qa'im	1	1
	Trebil	1	0
	Baghdadi	1	1
	Akashat	1	0
	Waleed	1	0
	Rutbah	1	0
2/11	Nukhayb	1	0
	Musayib	0	1
	Ar Ar	0	1
Total		27	22

The results of the January election became known about two weeks later, and the clear winners emerged among the Shi'ite Islamist "United Iraqi Alliance," the Kurds, and a few secular parties. Sunni Arabs won only 17 national assembly seats spread over several lists and very few seats on the provincial assemblies. After the first tumultuous sessions of the national assembly, a somewhat balanced government formed with some Sunni representation including the assembly speaker, one of two deputy presidents, one of three deputy prime ministers, and six cabinet ministers. The presidency went to Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani with Shi'a leader Ibrahim al-Jafari as prime minister.

Resettling Fallujah

Despite U.S. efforts to limit collateral damage, Fallujah's residences, mosques, city services, and businesses all received varying degrees of damage. The "City of Mosques," with its over 200 mosques, perhaps lost 60 of them in the fighting. An estimated 7,000–10,000 of the approximately

50,000 residences may have been destroyed with a large portion of the remaining ones damaged. Of the perhaps 200,000–350,000 inhabitants, up to 200,000 may have become displaced persons as a result of the two Fallujah battles of 2004. The "repopulation" of the city began only after returnees received biometric identification and received their new identity cards.

Residents of Fallujah continued to return to the city and evaluate their holdings and life support means, often departing again to their displaced persons camps. An increasing number gradually remained in the city and sought to reestablish their lives. Businesses began to reopen, and the Marines and sailors patrolling the city and operating the humanitarian assistance sites could sense a sense of purpose. The Iraqis displayed an open friendliness toward the Americans, and in many cases assisted Marines by showing them hidden weapons caches and unexploded ordnance. A new newspaper hit the streets in February, and "Al Fajr," (published by RCT-1) found an accepting audience especially because it contained information on security rules governing the city, reconstruction programs, how to make damage claims, and how to obtain medical treatment. On 12 February, Fallujah Traffic Police began routine patrols of the city streets.[101]

By 25 February, the pace of resettlement indicated genuine progress. On that single day, almost 15,000 civilians entered the city with over 2,000 vehicles. In addition, 466 contractors and 1,117 government workers came through the entry control points. By that date, over 87,000 persons had visited the humanitarian assistance sites, and 32,546 claims payments totaling over $6.5 million had been paid. A shattered city showed signs of mending. An estimated 30% of the population had returned as of the end of March 2005.[102]

Post Election Return to Normal Operations in AO Atlanta

The increasing stabilization in Fallujah and the pending turnover to units of the incoming II Marine Expeditionary Force propelled the redeployment of I MEF organizations to their original bases. The departure of RCT-7 for area of operations (AO) Denver began on 1 February from Camp Baharia, with the final turnover of AO Raleigh back to RCT-1 conducted on 5 February. As Colonel Tucker's immediate task, the relief of 31st MEU had to be accomplished rather quickly in December. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved the extension of 31st MEU's deployment in December for another 45 days, but the MEU had to first recover all its units, to move to Kuwait, and to embark in amphibious shipping in time to exit the U.S. Central Command theater by 15 March. The turnover came promptly at al-Asad Air Base on 7 February. The 1st Battalion, 3d Marines had returned from Fallujah in later January and Medium Helicopter Squadron 265 flew its last combat mission in support of RCT-7 units at Korean Village in support of Task Force Naha on 7 February, before returning to al-Asad the following day and rejoining 31st MEU. Colonel Miller now could begin the retrograde movements of his reunited organization back to Kuwait, using both ground convoys and aircraft of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. The embarkation on USS *Essex* (LHD-2) and accompanying ships of Amphibious Squadron 11 began on 26 February, and the force sailed on 6 March, eventually reaching Okinawa on 2 April.[103]

The reconstitution of RCT-7 in AO Denver during February culminated in the launch of Operation River Blitz (20 February–6 March), the last major operation of 1st Marine Division before its rotation to home bases. Centered in the western Euphrates River Valley, the operation assigned RCT-7 and the Army 2d Brigade a series of counterinsurgency operations against the major insurgent sanctuaries and logistical routes to prevent any interference with the pending turnover of forces with the 2d Marine Division. The staffs of both divisions participated in the planning and execution of River Blitz with 2d Marine Division taking over the operation under the successor name of Operation River Bridge (10–25 March). The transfer of authority between the two divisions took place on 17 March, and the second campaign of I MEF in Iraq ended on 27 March. At that point, 307 Marines had died in action in the second campaign, with 3,456 wounded in action. Added to the 2003 campaign losses, I MEF had sustained 365 killed in action, 3,740 wounded in action, of which 2,203 had returned to duty. Furthermore, there were 90 non-combat deaths and 145 non-combat injuries in I MEF.[104]

In the aftermath of the Fallujah Campaign, Marines of the outgoing I MEF saw the tide apparently turning against the Iraqi insurgency. The operational reporting emphasized the nearing

success, and I MEF planning forecasted the pending establishment of Iraqi regional control.[105]

Considerable doubt remained, however, that favorable conditions had been achieved. During December, as the Army reinforcements sent to participate in the Battle of Second Fallujah began to withdraw from AO Raleigh, Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey R. Chessani, the operations officer of RCT-1, sent a poignant memo to his commander, Colonel Shupp:[106]

> I spoke with the [division] G-3 this evening and he indicated that the chain of events that are eventually going to happen is going to happen sooner than we like, but when we expected it.
>
> The G-3 indicated that Blackjack Brigade would be folding up shop and heading out on 15 Dec, which means there will be a relief in place beginning on or about 12 Dec between RCT-7 and Blackjack Brigade. RCT-7 will take 1/8 [1st Battalion, 8th Marines] out of the city with them to relieve Blackjack Brigade. RCT-7 will have 1/8 and 2nd Recon Bn to run area Raleigh. As you know 1/8 and 3/1 are slated to go home on time and currently have a latest available date of 13 January. If they were to execute this, 3/1 would need to leave Fallujah in December so they could embark and prepare for redeployment. Exactly when would be up to you. However, their initial cut for being relieved in place is 15 Dec. Not sure they need an entire month to get ready to redeploy. It can be done in less time.
>
> . . . But why would higher headquarters want to create a vacuum like this after successfully crushing an insurgency that has been a thorn for more than a year? I understand there are other fish to fry in Iraq, that we are not the only show. What I do not understand is why higher headquarters would not want to ensure there was some semblance of stability in Fallujah before they walked away from Fallujah. Higher headquarters got what it wanted . . . .a destroyed insurgency in Fallujah or so it would appear. They are going to walk away thinking they did their part and the smoldering heap of rubble that is Fallujah is going to start sparking again because higher headquarters failed to follow though with the resources we need to smother the embers. Then they are going to ask us why we let the embers become a fire again.
>
> I sincerely believe . . . our immediate headquarters is going to contribute to snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. By forcing division to move RCT-7 and 1/8 out of Fallujah before the conditions are right, Multinational Force-Iraq will in effect contribute directly to the destabilization of a situation that is currently under control. I am not sure they have even thought about let alone considered the 2nd, 3rd and 4th order effects of simply moving Blackjack Brigade out of area Raleigh. This is not a hard one to read, but they seem to be missing the effects and the situation they will create by re-deploying the Blackjack Brigade.

In large part, the first stabilization campaign of I MEF ended with the recapture of Fallujah with a large number of local insurgent fighters killed and the defeat of an apparently surging Sunni rebellion. The level of destruction achieved in the Fallujah battles, however, almost prohibited any repetition of the same level of combat destruction by the Iraqi-U.S. leadership. The costs and efforts required to repopulate and rebuild the city would in fact tie down enormous resources when the rest of al-Anbar Province remained outside of true coalition control. The battle did not engage the insurgents decisively, for their leadership and many non-local insurgents had likely fled before the November assault, leaving mostly local militants behind. Much work remained, therefore, for the incoming II Marine Expeditionary Force.

Part II: *Protecting the New Iraqi State*

Chapter 7:
The Mission Continues

Planning by Headquarters Marine Corps for a new series of deployments replacing I MEF in 2005 began the previous summer as it realized that U.S. forces would continue their efforts to establish security and to assist the evolution of a free Iraqi national government. In wake of the First Fallujah Battle and the parallel al-Sadr rising in April, the transition to Iraqi sovereignty on 28 June 2004 took on a rather hollow ceremonial character. The equally symbolic raising of the American flag over the new U.S. Embassy in Baghdad by Marines marking the first time the American flag has flown there in 13 years, did herald some significant changes in U.S. policies and plans for the future.

The U.S. led Coalition Provisional Authority dissolved itself and legal authority devolved upon the appointed Iraqi Interim Government, with the United States and Coalition forces operating under the "all necessary measures" language of the U.N. Security Council resolutions that identified the state of conflict existing in Iraq and the need for the Multinational Force to conduct operations and to detain individuals to help establish a secure environment.The Multinational Force-Iraq, commanded by General George Casey, U.S. Army, replaced Combined Joint Task Force 7 as the highest military command in the country under the control of the Combatant Commander at U.S. Central Command. In a much-needed organizational improvement, Multinational Corps-Iraq, first commanded by Lieutenant General Thomas F. Metz, U.S. Army, assumed the operational aspects of the campaign.

The planned Iraqi Transitional Government would succeed the Interim Government after elections leading to the establishment of a national assembly, all to occur by 30 January 2005. Iraqi government ministries already bore the responsibility for governing at regional and local level as well as the administration and control of Iraqi security forces. The U.S. forces in Iraq would no longer control the pay and formation of these security forces. For the foreseeable future, the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and new Iraqi Army would remain under the operational control of the Commander, Multinational Corps-Iraq, who also took the responsibility to equip, to train, and to mentor them in the field. Regardless to the outcome of these ambitious plans for Iraq's future, the Multinational Force-Iraq staff forecast that a force totaling 17 U.S. or Coalition brigades would be required to meet the security mission for the ensuing 12 to18 months.[107]

The Multinational Corps-Iraq staff also undertook a new campaign plan because the scope of the existing one had extended only to the transition to Iraqi sovereignty. Thus, effective from that point, the new mission called for "full spectrum counter-insurgency operations in support of the Interim Government, and in partnership with the Iraqi security Forces, to provide a safe and secure environment; enabling the functioning of legitimate governance and allowing the restoration and development of Essential Services and the Economy; to assist Iraq in rebuilding itself as a stable and responsible sovereign state and to permit the redeployment of Coalition Forces."[108]

In the aftermath of these policy determinations, the Commandant, General Hagee, promulgated his guidance for the relief deployment, tentatively termed "Operation Iraqi Freedom III" by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in early July. Based upon initial planning conducted since the requirement had first been identified in February 2004, the Commandant published the task organization agreed to by mid-summer:

II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)

2d Marine Division

RCT-8–three infantry battalions, a company each of light armored reconnaissance, tanks, assault amphibious vehicles, artillery and combat engineers.

RCT-5–three infantry battalions, a company each of light armored reconnaissance, tanks, assault amphibious vehicles, and combat engineers.

2d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward)

Marine Aircraft Group 26–three light attack, three medium transport and two heavy helicopter squadrons, plus one fighter or attack squadron and an aerial refueler detachment.

Ground support units and a squadron of unmanned aerial vehicles.

2d Force Service Support Group

Six support battalions of various types

(The detailed, final task organization appears in Appendix G)

As with the previous guidance given for the deployment of I MEF, the plan included the authority to draw upon normally scheduled deployments of ground and aviation units of III MEF on Okinawa. Planning anticipated the continuing assignment of an Army brigade to the force, with the required capability of supporting an additional Army brigade for surge operations. The secretary of defense approved the planning on 21 June. Because the new Multinational Corps-Iraq organization placed a lieutenant general in overall command of the forces, a major general would now head the Marine Corps contingent. Considerable thought was given to assigning the commanding general, 2d Marine Division to a dual position as the commander of II MEF (Forward), but in the end the force structure included separate commanders and staffs. Marine Corps doctrine prevailed amid the inevitable bureaucratic infighting in the Iraq military command structure, and Major General Stephen T. Johnson, the deputy II MEF commander, led the new contingent relieving Lieutenant General Sattler's I MEF organization.[109]

The assignment of 5th Marines with only three battalions from the 1st Marine Division in the June force plan did not survive long, probably reflecting uncertainties in the readiness of 2d Marine Division forces to handle all competing global requirements. By August, however, the 2d Marines had been selected as the second RCT headquarters in the task organization, assigned only two infantry battalions normally assigned to the 1st Marine Division.

The staff officers of II MEF and subordinate commands developed the details of the deployment including the final organization and the identity of almost all units during August and September. Given the ongoing campaign of the two Fallujah battles then being waged by I MEF, the studies and planning ranged widely.

Unlike the situation facing I MEF in the fall of 2003, no illusion existed as to the security situation II MEF was about to enter. The initial assessment of AO Atlanta highlighted the persistent unrest.

> As the provincial capital Ramadi will be the focus of Anti-Iraqi Forces attacks, Anti-Coalition Forces will continue standoff attacks, assassinations and coercion of IIG leaders, Coalition Forces and perceived collaborators in an attempt to disrupt election preparations and de-legitimize the Iraqi Interim Government. Anti-Coalition Forces may increase the level of attacks or attempt a "spectacular" attack prior to the elections to prevent popular support of the Iraqi Interim Government and promote instability throughout the area of operations. There are indications that the rift between competing agendas of different Anti-Coalition Forces is widening and Coalition Forces information operations may be able to exploit it. Developing credible Iraqi security forces and performing successful civil military operations will help win the information operations war during this pivotal period. The potential for violence hinges on success or failure of these efforts.[110]

The two regiments of Major General Richard A. Huck's 2d Marine Division brought six infantry, one reconnaissance, and one LAR battalion to Iraq, thus lacking two infantry battalions and a provisional military police battalion that 1st Marine Division had brought a year earlier. In theory, the more robust Iraqi security forces now present in the province compensated for such a shortfall in ground combat power, but that Iraqi security presence had proven illusory in 2004 and remained to be proven in 2005.

Though the deployment of II MEF varied considerably from I MEF, there was wide agreement on the exchange of equipment and like Marine Corps units replaced each other in all cases. For the renamed "Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-06.1" (a new Joint Chiefs of Staff jargon reflecting the fiscal year and sequencing of the deployment) strategic deployment by II MEF, little sealift took part although the presence of prepositioned shipping in Kuwait ports served to provide fresh ground and aviation support equipment as required. A single roll-on, roll-off ship, USNS *Cape Hudson*, supported the II MEF movement. The scheduled air transport movements of civilian charter and military aircraft moved the over 22,000 Marines and sailors of II MEF in approximately eleven weeks during the period 9 January-30 March. This com-

Table 7-1:Typical Monthly Aircraft Usage Data, early 2005[114]

Type	Avg. Missions Flown, each	Normal Planning Utilization*
AH-1W	36.6	18.3
UH-1N	41.6	18.8
CH-46E	46.9	18.2
CH-53E	40.3	17.6
KC-130	53.3	36.9
FA-18D	85.8	30.8
AV-8B	59.2	23.2
EA-6B	57.6	29.9

* Weapons Systems Planning Document (WSPD) Standard

paratively unforced pace of the relief of I MEF by II MEF permitted sequential reliefs of battalions in key areas such as Fallujah and AO Topeka first in the cycle. It also allowed for a generous overlap in forces such that no vulnerability could develop before the transfer of authority taking place. For instance the percentage of I MEF departures to II MEF arrivals on 10 February stood at 11:26 on 24 February 24:55, and by 8 March 45 percent of I MEF personnel had departed while 75 percent of the II MEF manpower had arrived.[111]

One difference in the deployment of II MEF compared to I MEF was the much-abbreviated Reception, Staging, Onward movement, and Integration of forces phase, which proved mostly unnecessary because of the predeployment training of II MEF forces in the United States and the convenience of relieving like forces in theater. For example, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines of the Marine Corps Reserve 4th Marine Division mobilized at eight home stations in January and deployed to the Air-Ground Training Center, Twenty-nine Palms, California on 10 January, where it conducted combat training through the end of the month. In February, the battalion completed its combined arms exercise and conducted a stability and security operations exercise at March Air Force Base, California. On 19 February its advance party departed for Iraq, and the remainder of the battalion flew on 1 March to Kuwait, spending only a day there to change mode of transport to C-130 aircraft for the final arrival at al-Asad Air Base. It conducted a transfer of authority with 1st Battalion, 23d Marines on 15 March.[112]

Some equipment concerns in Iraq had begun to surface before the arrival of II MEF. The high usage rate for ground vehicles and aircraft of all types in just months was the equivalent of years of peacetime use. Almost predictably, the tracked armored fighting vehicles showed signs of deterioration first. The 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion dispatched a team of 90 Marines to Fallujah in early January 2005 as a "reconstitution detachment" built around the battalion's A Company. A six-week effort refurbished or replaced a total of 84 AAV7A1 series vehicles, including 42 vehicles brought from Camp Lejeune. After six weeks, the equipment in the hands of I MEF with few exceptions showed readiness in the 80–95 percent range. An equivalent effort in the following month swapped the tanks and tank recovery vehicles of the two tank companies with vehicles drawn from the maritime prepositioned shipping.[113]

Aviation also suffered from heavy use, and serious concerns surfaced in particular with the readiness of light attack and heavy lift helicopters. The entire aviation complement of I MEF had operated consistently at high tempo, as shown in the typical 30-day cycle ending on 9 March (see table 7-1).

One particular aspect of materiel readiness troubled II MEF considerably less than its predecessor. The various armor enhancement programs for the wheeled tactical vehicle fleet operated in Iraq had reached fruition by February 2005. The Maintenance Center, Marine Corps Logistics Command, Albany, Georgia had served as the primary producer of Marine Corps armor for the program, both in the form of kits and armor plates. This effort included fabrication of the 3/16-inch and 3/8-inch plates for the Marine armor kit as well as an explosive resistant coating processes. Later in the year, the equivalent facility at Barstow, California became an armor producer. Additional armor components for undercarriage, tailgate, back plates, and gunner's shields also entered production during 2004. In that year, the Logistics Command processed some 5,000 tons of steel to pro-

Table 7-2:Tactical Vehicles operated by Marine Corps Forces in Iraq (February 2005) [116]

	Level 1 UAH	Level 2 AOA	"Level 3 "Hardening"	No Protection		Total
				On Base	Off Base	
HMMWV	364	2683	12	196	0	3255
MTVR	0	940	0	31	0	971
LVS	0	236	0	0	0	236
5 Ton	0	179		8	0	187
TOTAL	364	4038	12	235	0	4649

Note: UAH: Up-Armored HMMWV, a new production item (M1114) AOA: Add-on Armor, armor kits, installed in theater. "Hardening": expedient or improvised attachment of plating.

duce armor for 5,000 vehicles, including 1,000 delivered to the Army.[115]

The next objective was upgrading the force with uparmored Humvees and armor kit Humvees and fitting all seven-ton trucks with their specific armor systems. The Albany armor installation team arriving at Camp Taqaddum in late February was ordered to begin installation in March, building to a capacity of 200 units per month. The parallel seven-ton truck armor installation began in May at 40 per month. By 30 April, II MEF reported the processing of 276 Humvees by the Marine Armor Installation Site.[117]

Initial Employment of II MEF

Colonel Stephen W. Davis, commanding RCT-2, deployed his three battalions to Iraq during 24 February–1 March from Camp Lejeune. He conducted his relief with RCT-7 by a planned operation in area of operations (AO) Denver. From 10–17 March, RCT-7, followed by RCT-2 from 17–25 March, conducted Operation River Bridge, comprising of interdiction operations to disrupt and to defeat enemy elements that might endanger the relief as well as countering enemy infiltration in the area. On 17 March, RCT-2 effected its transfer of authority at al-Asad Air Base. As an indicator of the new look hoped for in future operations, the battalion commander of the 503d Iraqi National Guard Battalion, operating out of Camp Hit, attended the ceremony. During this phase, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines replaced 1st Battalion, 7th Marines at al-Qaim, and 3d Battalion, 25th Marines relieved 1st Battalion, 23d Marines at Hit, and Haditha. The 2d LAR Battalion operated initially with two line companies and K Battery, 3d Battalion, 10th Marines attached as a provisional rifle company as it relieved 3d LAR Battalion at Camp Korean Village. Each infantry battalion gave up a rifle company to the security force assigned to al-Asad Air Base. The remaining attachments clustered with the RCT-2 headquarters at al-Asad Air Base for operations as required in AO Denver: 1st Force Reconnaissance Company; Company A, 2d Tank Battalion; Company A, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion; and Company A, 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion.[118]

Units of RCT-2 then continued its tasks under Operation River Bridge. This operation remained focused on interdicting insurgent logistal routes east of the Euphrates River between Hit and Haditha. Tactics included small unit raids, vehicle checkpoints, cordon and knock, and cordon and search. In addition, specialized teams conducted raids in search of high value individuals to kill or capture insurgent leadership. The regiment's main effort centered on Task Force 3d Battalion, 25th Marines operating in Hit and along the Hit-Haditha corridor with direct support from 1st Force Reconnaissance Company. The other battalions conducted tasks in their zones, contributing as well to the operation.

Although RCT-8, commanded by Colonel Charles M. Gurganus, conducted its transfer of authority with RCT-1 slightly later than did RCT-2, two of its battalions had deployed considerably earlier in the II MEF deployment schedule to relieve battalions covering Fallujah, where they operated under RCT-1 until the transfer of authority. The 3d Battalion, 8th Marines departed home station 14 January and relieved 1st Battalion, 8th Marines in a transfer of authority at Fallujah on 20 January. The battalion immediately commenced its operations in support of Operation Citadel II, the Iraqi elections. It provided security of polling sites as well as participating in training and integrating Iraqi forces into the operation. On 30 January, the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines had 11 Ma-

rines wounded in a rocket launcher attack on an observation post just south of Al Karmah, a precursor to what awaited the rest of the II MEF forces.[119]

From its California base, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines departed on 9 January and moved into Camp Abu Ghraib on 17 January, conducting its transfer of authority with 1st Battalion, 3d Marines on 20 January. Thus began the third deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom for 3d Battalion, 4th Marines coming only five months after the battalion returned from Iraq and the First Fallujah Battle. The battalion assumed responsibility for the southern half of Fallujah. In addition, the battalion took responsibility for operating entry control point 1, the primary entrance route into the city of Fallujah for contractors, government officials, and vehicles carrying cattle and produce. The battalion also relieved Company A, 2d LAR Battalion on 13 February and assumed responsibility for the battle space west of Fallujah, known as the Peninsula.[120]

The remainder of RCT-8 mostly deployed with the main body of II MEF from its bases during 5–15 March. It immediately began relief with RCT-1 until assuming responsibility for AO Raleigh on 21 March, with a final transfer of authority on 27 March. The leading battalions already in place, Colonel Gurganus assigned 2d Reconnaissance Battalion to the Zaidon area and 1st Battalion, 6th Marines to Camp Bahariah, east of Fallujah. An additional battalion deployed with the regiment, but 1st Battalion, 5th Marines actually traveled independently from its Camp Pendleton home station and simply replaced sister battalion 2d Battalion, 5th Marines at Camp Hurricane Point, operating under the Army 2d Brigade task organization and missions on 17 March after an 11-day transfer of authority process. The regiment's combat support attachments settled into Camp Fallujah before beginning their supporting missions in AO Raleigh: Battery A, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines; Company A, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion; Company B, 2d Tank Battalion; Anti-Tank Platoon, 2d Tank Battalion; Company B, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion; and Scout Platoon, 8th Tank Battalion.

RCT-8 entered its first full month of operational control of the area of operations by holding Fallujah and striving to disrupt insurgent bands throughout the area of operations. Operation White Feather began on 1 April with a mission to clear main supply roads of improvised explosives and other threats. Marines of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines routinely screened Iraqi civilians, government officials, and contractors entering the city at entry control points 1, 4, 5, and 6. Elements of 1st Battalion, 6th Marines conducted equivalent searches at entry control points 2 and 3. RCT-8 and the 5th Civil Affairs Group also worked to improve the quality of life for the Fallujans and the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. The regiment experienced its first coordinated attack on 2 April, when the Abu Ghraib prison received an indirect fire and small arms insurgent attack.[121]

Brigadier General Robert E. Milstead's 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) replaced the 3d Wing elements in detail, sending a light attack helicopter squadron detachment to al-Qaim; another detachment to Korean Village; and a light attack helicopter squadron, a medium helicopter squadron, and most of the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to al-Taqaddum. At al-Asad Air Base, Colonel Thomas M. Murray, commanding Marine Aircraft Group 26, exercised control over all aircraft squadrons at al-Asad Air Base, including the second light attack, two more medium, and one heavy helicopter squadrons, as well as one squadron of F-18D Hornets, one of AV-8B Harriers and another of EA-6B Prowlers fixed-wing aircraft. The usual aerial refueler squadron detachment provided logistics support, using the KC-130J, a new model now introduced in service. An Army air ambulance company attached for casualty evacuations. At Fallujah, the air control squadron and a detachment of drones supported the immediate needs of the II MEF commander. The two aircraft wings conducted their transfer of authority on 1 March.

The 2d Force Service Support Group (Forward) arrived under the command of Colonel John E. Wissler, who was promoted to brigadier general in May. The task-organized detachments deploying from the al-Taqaddum base reflected the new logistics doctrine now well under way in the Marine Corps. Combat Logistics Regiment 25 provided general support to the entire II MEF AO Atlanta. Combat Logistics Battalion 2 supported the vast AO Denver from Camp al-Asad, while Combat Logistics Battalion 8 performed the same from Camp Fallujah for AO Raleigh, as well as Marine Corps needs in area of operations Topeka. The supporting 22d Naval Construction Regiment was also based at Camp Fallujah with one of its

battalions, sending the other to ar-Ramadi. The Seabee regiment executed a transfer of authority with the Marine Engineer Group of I MEF on 11 March, and the two force service support groups transferred authority on the following day.

Before the II MEF took responsibility for AO Atlanta, the odysseys of 11th and 24th MEUs came to an end on 14 and 15 February, respectively. The new arrival, the Army's 155th Brigade, also designated an enhanced separate brigade, deployed from Mississippi and other home stations and took responsibility for the norther Babil, Karbala, and an-Najaf Provinces, now call AO Biloxi. Unlike the previous command relationships, where Army brigades were under the operational control of the deployed Marine division, the 155th Brigade was under the tactical control of the commanding general, I MEF, with the commanding general, Multinational Corps-Iraq, retaining operational control. Although this arrangement spared the 1st and 2d Marine Division commanders the additional operational responsibilities, the MEF commanders and staffs had to work out the operating relationships, with special attention to air support and logistics responsibilities yet to be specified. With a battalion each of motorized infantry, armor, armored cavalry, combat engineers, and field artillery, the 155th, under Colonel (later Brigadier General) Augustus L. Collins, proved a capable partner in the campaign, operating under the tactical direction of the II MEF commander.[122]

Almost unnoticed in the shuffling of the forces, the 15th MEU (SOC) operated in Iraq during the period 11 March–7 April, but only partially with the I or II MEF. Colonel Thomas C. Greenwood reported this organization for duty as the new Central Command theater reserve on 23 January, having conducted humanitarian operations in Sumatra and Sri Lanka for two weeks while en route from the United States. After a period of combat training in Kuwait, the 15th MEU moved to the southeastern edge of Baghdad, and on 11 March occupied Forward Operating Base Falcon, the former base of the 5th Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Now under the tactical control of the 3d Infantry Division, the Marines and sailors of the 15th MEU secured a portion of northern Babil province until the later arrival of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment the following month. The 15th MEU Marines stopped insurgent mortar and rocket attacks into the city from the south as the newly elected Iraqi parliament convened for the first time.

The aviation component of 15th MEU did report to I MEF tactical control, however, and Medium Helicopter Squadron 165 operated from al-Asad Air Base (six AV-8B Harriers) and al-Taqqadum (helicopters) bases with the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing, supporting I and II MEF activities during the deployment. From its Falcon Base, the rest of Colonel Greenwood's command, especially 1st Battalion, 1st Marines commanded by Lieutenant Colonel David J. Furness, worked for Army commanders while conducting mechanized patrols on national route 8, counter-rocket and counter-mortar sweeps, and the usual range of security patrols and cordon operations in its sector. The MEU Service Support Group 15, under Lieutenant Colonel Jay L. Hatton, provided the usual logistical support for all MEU operations from Falcon and carried out six humanitarian assistance operations at villages in the 15th MEU area. In addition, the MSSG-15 Marines conducted a number of security missions to complement the efforts of the infantry battalion, including route security patrols, security for raids, and vehicle check points. For these missions, the Army Multinational Command-Iraq issued 15th MEU a large number of uparmored Humvees with radios and a few Blue Force Tracker devices to perform these missions and to interface adequately with the Army command and control systems. After participating in Army directed Operations River Sweep, Iron Fist, Warning Track, and Strong Will, 15th MEU returned to Kuwait after turning over its responsibilities to 3d Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment on 6 April, then departing the theater on 22 April.[123]

The 2d Marine Division executed its transfer of authority with 1st Marine Division on 17 March, even as subordinate elements continued their own reliefs. Such was the advantage of having major formations of the same service at hand, each containing units of the two U.S.-based Marine divisions. II MEF, however, conducted its transfer of authority on 27 March, which included standing up as Multinational Force-West. However, II MEF units continued to flow into theater until by months' end—22,630 Marines and sailors of II MEF were in Iraq with 10,599 Army and Navy personnel attached with various units. Marine Corps forces in Iraq totaled 30,887, including 5,699 personnel of I MEF awaiting redeployment. At this point 12,997 Marine and Navy reservists

of the Marine Corps Reserve were on active duty Marine Corps-wide, of whom 92.5 percent served in operating forces with 43 percent serving in Iraq.

The relief operation by the two Marine Expeditionary Forces required 325 inter-theater and 1,059 intra-theater airlift missions to transport some 52,010 Marine Corps and Navy personnel during 10 January–4 April 2005. This effort represented a significant level of achievement for Marine Corps operations but remained somewhat obscured by what was likely the largest troop rotation in U.S. military history.[124]

CHAPTER 8:
Into the Fray

Reflecting the overall U.S. strategy in the spring of 2005, when the Army conducted its annual major turnover of forces in Iraq, the I MEF and II MEF forces conducted a series of major operations intended to disrupt and damage insurgent cells and to prevent any advantage they might seek during the transitioning from experienced to newly arrived units. In al-Anbar Province, these operations differed little from most other major efforts mounted against insurgent enclaves and operating areas. The obvious opportunity that the transfer of authority period presented the enemy to make an attempt at significantly damaging to the U.S. and Coalition troops and discrediting their mission objectives made stopping any enemy actions affecting or occurring during this period imperative.

The 1st Marine Division's Operation River Blitz (20 February–5 March) began the series of offensive actions as II MEF forces began to arrive. Typically, it served as an overall directive for actions by subordinate commands to conduct the actions required to stop insurgent moves and deployments, accounting for local conditions and views of local commanders.

General Natonski estimated likely results at the outset:

> Operations at both ends of the Husaybah-Baghdad corridor preceded initiation of operation "River Blitz." We assess that the insurgents may perceive the [operations] to the north in Rawah and RCT-1's raids in Karmah and entry control pointss [established] around Nasser Wa Salem and Shahabi as part of Multinational Force's overall operation. As yet, there is no reporting suggesting that insurgents are fleeing; they are waiting to determine the scope and duration of Multinational Force operations. The formal release in the media headlining "River Blitz" will further amplify the scale of the operation in insurgents' eyes. Arabic media agencies are providing sensationalized coverage; al Jazeera news carried a headline of troops "flooding" into Ramadi. Insurgents will begin to flow toward gaps around Lake Thar Thar, Akashat, and the Salafist seam south of Fallujah as Multinational Force make current safe havens untenable. Key insurgent leaders may flee.[125]

In the far west, RCT-7 conducted its own continuation of the division's program with its own Operation River Bridge (10–17 March), continued by RCT-2 through 25 March. It consisted of interdiction operations in area of operations (AO) Denver to disrupt and to defeat insurgent elements, prevent infiltration of terrorist bands into Mosul and Ramadi, and to prevent enemy interference with the relief by RCT-2.

Operation River Bridge focused upon interdicting insurgent logistical routes east of the Euphrates River between Hit and Haditha. In Haditha, Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines engaged insurgents, killing four by an aircraft delivering a GBU-38 500 pound bomb. In Haditha and Hit, the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines operated with tank and assault amphibian support and the assistance of Iraqi National Guard troops.

As a result of Operations River Blitz and River Bridge, the enemy was not able to disrupt or to capitalize on the transfer of authority. Some intelligence reporting indicated that the enemy did not know or suspect that a relief had occurred until it was completed. Further, the detention of nine insurgent leaders or facilitators and the killing of two more significantly decreased insurgent activity throughout AO Denver, and especially in the Hit-Haditha corridor. The intelligence analysts suspected that insurgent higher-level leaders moved to alternate sanctuaries such as Rawah, Tikrit, and Mosul.

A more routine event took place shortly thereafter with yet another transfer of a commercial generator for the Mosul power grid from Jordan. Dubbed Operation Terrapin III (22–31 March), the convoying of another "Mother of all Generators" through AO Denver occupied RCT-2 until it transferred the generator to the 42d Infantry Division across the Euphrates for continued movement to Mosul. Elements of 2d LAR Battalion and 224th Engineer Battalion escorted the convoy without incident.

In a special effort against saboteurs, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company and 3d Battalion, 25th Marines conducted Operation Nightstalker I. The first in a nearly continuous series of operations to kill insurgents placing mines and explosive devices on the main supply and auxiliary supply

routes, the operation saw units deploying sniper teams and directing precision fires. This first operation focused on known areas of interest in the Hit-Haditha corridor.

Maintaining the Momentum

Operation Outer Banks (1 April–4May) fell under the umbrella of 2d Marine Division. Operation Patriot Shield, covering April–May 2005, consisted of a series of tactical actions clearing towns that had not seen Coalition forces for several months in the Hit-Haditha corridor. These locations included Barwanah, Baghdadi, Abu Hyat, Muhamadi, Kubaysah, the three train stations in the Hit-Haditha corridor, and Haqlaniyah. Marines encountered a few minor small arms engagements, the ever present mine, improvised explosive devices and indirect fire attacks, and confiscated several small caches of weapons. Commanders estimated that the limited contact and low resistance to Coalition force moves confirmed that the insurgents had not found alternate sanctuary in lesser population centers but simply had "gone to ground" in the major population centers or displaced out of AO Denver. Sniper teams of 1st Force Reconnaissance Company and 3d Battalion, 25th Marines combined efforts again for a repeat Operation Nightstalker II (1–10 April), between Hadithah and Camp al-Qaim.

On 23 April, RCT-2 received its first Iraqi Army unit as a partner for combined operations. The 7th Reconnaissance Company, consisting of 34 soldiers, reported for operations. These soldiers had been former Iraqi Republican Guardsmen who then joined the Shawayne Special Forces, one of the first Iraqi units formed to fight for the new Iraq before the establishment of the new Iraqi Army. In eight-man squads, the Iraqi soldiers began to work with Marine Corps battalions throughout AO Denver. In contrast, RCT-2 began to integrate the Iraqi National Guard units in AO Denver. Their absorption into the Iraqi Armed Forces ended the long odyssey that had begun in 2003 as the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. The Iraqi government offered enlistment in the Army only to the 503d and 504th Battalions. A total of 127 of these personnel agreed to continued service, whereupon they boarded buses for their movement from Hit to Kirkush Military Training Base for basic training.

During May, Colonel Davis shifted his focus to the far west of his zone, where with Operation Matador (8–14 May), he sought to sweep enemy sanctuaries north of the Euphrates. With only three battalions at his disposal in the vast AO Denver, he could concentrate forces only at the expense of drawing down security in the more populated areas, which also tended to be the insurgent objective areas. The key element in Matador, therefore, consisted of a very rapid assembly of designated units from the three battalions and an immediate maneuver through the objective area, using AAV and helicopter mobility as available.

The enemy had attacked Camp Gannon the previous month in an unusually brazen coordinated attack. Located on the Iraqi-Syrian border, Camp Gannon occupies an abandoned warehouse complex on the northwest corner of the border town of Husbayah. Considered the "mouth" of the insurgent logistical routes leading to Baghdad and points north, the Marine Corps presence there continued to attract attention.

Beginning at 0815, 11 April, insurgents fired mortars and launched three suicide vehicle bombs. They tried to pin down the camp guard with mortar and rocket fire while the three explosive-laden vehicles moved in succession to break through and to destroy the base. The first vehicle blew up against Guard Post 2, but the defenders rallied and stopped the next two, a dump truck and a fire engine. The fire engine had a driver, a spotter, and a bulletproof windshield, and carried bottled gas containers filled with explosives.

The initial blast scattered fragments and debris, damaging a few structures including the detention facility and Post 2. Also, the lightweight counter-mortar radar was destroyed during the fighting that followed. One officer reported that the attack "demonstrates an extremely mature and capable insurgency. It showed its ability to mass a very complex attack very quickly."

The garrison, consisting of Company I, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines deployed its quick reaction force and called for support. Enemy mortar and rocket launcher fire continued for an hour, but AH-1 helicopter gunship fire and F/A-18 air strikes turned the tide against the enemy. The small arms volume fire ceased around 0930, but some random shots continued for another 10 hours. The exact number of enemy killed in action or wounded remained unknown; however, commanders estimated that the Marines killed at least 16 enemy insurgents and wounded 15 dur-

ing the 24-hour engagement. The enemy force, including support personnel, must have approached one hundred. [126]

With its Operation Matador, RCT-2 responded to insurgents in the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines sector to eliminate their sanctuaries and support systems in the vicinity of Ramana. Several elements comprised Lieutenant Colonel Timothy S. Mundy's Task Force 3d Battalion, 2d Marines: Companies I and K, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines; Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines; Company B, 2d LAR Battalion; Combat Logistics Battalion 2; and the Army's 814th Bridge Company. The planned opening moves placed two rifle companies, Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines and Company K, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines by helicopter assault using six CH-46E and four CH-53E helicopters operating in three waves. Intelligence received shorty before the operation, however, caused a shift to assault amphibious vehicles, because the insurgents seemed to be reacting too well in advance. The tank and light armor sections secured the old Ramana Bridge site near Ubaydi, and tank sections and the Army bridge unit moved to place a temporary span across, permitting all RCT-2 vehicles to operate throughout. The assault amphibious vehicles filled with the assault companies moved forward as well, prepared to sweep the objective area with mounted infantry and tanks, while the LAR company screened the northern flank. A vehicle accident and other difficulties, however, in the part of the bridging company led to a 13-hour delay before the assault units crossed the bridge.[127]

The operation produced some fierce fighting during the first 24 hours when both the blocking position at the Ramana Bridge and the bridge-crossing units became decisively engaged, leading to significant insurgent losses and the clearing of most of New Ubaydi, which had been considered calm after a recent civil military operation. On the morning of 9 May, the amphibious vehicles crossed the river and the mounted infantry commenced clearing operations. By the evening of the ninth, the Army ribbon bridge became operational and with it RCT-2 established a secure line of communications on the north shore of the river. The Task Force cleared in zone from east to west through Ramana to ar-Rabit. Once at ar-Rabit, the Marines scoured the suspected cave networks lining the dominating escarpment that bounded the river valley. As the task force withdrew to the south side of the river on the 14 May, it attacked into New Ubaydi prior to returning to base. All forces returned to al-Qaim by 1930 on 14 May.

At the Ramana Bridge position, Second Lieutenant Brian M. Stann led his mobile assault platoon of the Weapons Company, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines to seize the position and then defend it by traversing across four kilometers of urban terrain at New Ubaydi. Effectively employing air support with his heavy machine gun Humvees and attached tanks, Stann defeated every insurgent attack over a six-day period. The regiment's air officer made good use of ground data links to the Litening system on board the supporting F/A-18D aircraft, which permitted him to see and then to direct strikes at the insurgents in New Ubaydi.

Enemy casualties included an estimated 144 killed and 40 prisoners. Ongoing intelligence collection confirmed the presence of foreign fighters. During the operation, six vehicles, rigged with bombs, were captured and destroyed along with a significant quantity of enemy weapons and bomb-making materials. Friendly casualties as a result of Operation Matador included nine killed and 39 wounded. Equipment losses consisted of two assault amphibious vehicles, one M1A1 tank, one M88A2 tank recovery vehicle, and four armored Humvees.

Ten days later, Haditha received virtually the same treatment. On 24–30 May, RCT-2 conducted Operation New Market to clear designated objectives in Haditha to disrupt and neutralize the insurgents. This operation was led by Lieutenant Colonel Lionel B. Uruquhart's Task Force 3d Battalion, 25th Marines reinforced with Company K, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines.

Company K, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines made a helicopter assault on the left bank of the Euphrates, while two companies, Company K, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines and Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines swept into town from the west, mounted in assault amphibians and accompanied by tanks and LAVs. The operation killed 11 insurgents, wounded eight, and produced 31 detainees. Over 300 82mm mortar rounds were seized and destroyed as were several other, smaller caches of ordnance. Friendly losses in Operation New Market included two killed, nine wounded, and the disabling of two assault amphibians.

During one of the 25 May sweeps by Company L, an insurgent ambush pinned down the

command element. To overcome the enemy, Sergeant David N. Wimberg left his covered position, crossed intense enemy fire to scale a wall and to enter a courtyard from which the fire originated. Opening the gate to the courtyard, he covered the entry of his fire team and then led the assault on the door of the house containing the insurgents. Breaking in, he came face-to-face with four insurgents, fired his rifle until he was wounded, wounding one, but stunning the enemy. Corporal Jeff S. Hunter, stepped forward to assist Wimberg, firing his rifle at the four men as he pulled the sergeant out of the house. He then led a squad back into the house and killed the insurgents. Wimberg died but saved many lives by his selfless actions. Hunter virtually repeated the feat three days later, leading a squad in three repeated assaults, the last with tank support, to capture a house from which insurgents had ambushed another squad.

The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company conducted its Operation Night Stalker III during 4–8 June. Snipers killed seven insurgents who were positively identified while digging and emplacing mines or bombs. Marines also uncovered bomb-making materials that had been cached for use. This typical discovery included a 152mm round, four 130mm rounds, three 122mm rounds, a video camera, two Motorola receiver-transmitters, a cell phone and a washing machine timer.

During 15–20 June, RCT-2 conducted Operation Spear (Romhe) in the vicinity of Karabilah, located on the south shore of the Euphrates midway between al-Qaim and the border town of Husbayah. As in previous operations, a show of force, drawing several units temporarily from nearby RCT-2 camps, aimed at disrupting insurgent refuges and killing or capturing their leadership. This force consisted of the RCT command element, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines; Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines; Company C, 2d LAR Battalion; Company A tanks; Company A assault amphibians; the Iraqi 7th Reconnaissance Company; the Iraqi 2d Battalion, 4th Brigade; and the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company. After establishing blocking positions south and northeast of the town, Task Force 3d Battalion, 2d Marines sent Company K, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines and Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines to clear the town of Karabilah from south to north, beginning at 0300.

As they cleared the town, Marines fought numerous engagements with insurgents, and several buildings were destroyed by attack helicopter fire and fixed wing aircraft bombs to overcome resistance. The advancing riflemen found numerous caches of weapons and explosive materials, and a tank section discovered and eliminated more than two dozen vehicles, rigged with bombs, discovered in a parking lot.

All units withdrew from Karabilah to al-Qaim on 20 June. While disrupting this insurgent nest, Task Force 3d Battalion, 2d Marines destroyed 24 vehicles, rigged with bombs, two explosive devices, and numerous munitions caches. Marines killed an estimated 47 enemy fighters and detained one other suspect. The Marines suffered one killed, six wounded, and eight non-combat injuries.

Operation Sword (Saif, 28 June–6 July) brought the RCT-2 clearing effort to the town of Hit. The operation commenced with 1st Force Reconnaissance Company conducting a raid into Hit aimed at capturing a noteworthy insurgent leader while elements of Task Force 3d Battalion, 25th Marines simultaneously moved into blocking positions to isolate the city from the north, east and west. For this operation, Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry, Company B, 2d LAR Battalion and two Iraqi companies reinforced 3d Battalion, 25th Marines. The raid detained two people while 3d Battalion, 25th Marines moved through Hammadi and Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines and Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry, gained a foothold in their respective sectors in southern Hit. The LAR company drove by night from Rutbah and crossed the Euphrates Bridge and secured the far shore. The task force cleared Hit and established two "firm bases" intended for permanent occupancy in an abandoned school and a youth center. Hit thus became the first town in AO Denver that RCT-2 occupied permanently. Marines of Combat Logistics Battalion 2 provided Texas and Jersey barriers (usually made of concrete to separate traffic lanes or to stop vehicles, rigged with bombs) as it fortified both bases. They also set up generators and swamp coolers to improve living conditions. Explosive devices remained the most likely threat at Hit with 19 being destroyed on 2 July alone. Operation Sword ended on 5 July with the detachment of the Army and light armor companies. From 27 June to 5 July the battalion received Task Force Lionheart from Colonel Davis' control. This task force swept the left bank side of the Euphrates River for weapons caches with

limited results. The battalion then received two infantry companies and a headquarters company from the 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade of the Iraqi Army. Each Iraqi infantry company was assigned to a firm base. Company I, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines rejoined its battalion from al-Asad Air Base security duties and conducted a relief in place at Firm Base 1 with Company L on 19 July. Company K remained at Firm Base 2. The battalion also transferred its main headquarters from Camp Hadithah to Camp Hit on 15 July. The Marines of the two rifle companies conducted joint combat patrols with their Iraqi partners daily. Engagements with the insurgents varied as the patrols encountered car bombs, explosive devices, and indirect and direct fire engagements. Task Force Lionheart returned in the middle of July and swept south of Hit, locating and destroying a large number of weapons caches.[128]

In AO Topeka, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines occupied the central core of ar-Ramadi, between the Euphrates River and the canal, with 1st Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry (motorized) covering the eastern quarter of the city and its approaches and the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry holding the sector extending south of the canal into farmland beyond. In its exclusively urban sector, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines worked diligently to maintain patrol coverage and operated entry checkpoints, traffic control points, observation posts, and it secured vital government facilities in the city. The continuous patrolling and constant pressure of raids kept the insurgents off balance. During 15–16 June the battalion saw its heaviest fighting, and simultaneous attacks against several of its positions confirmed that the enemy remained present and offensively oriented. The battalion responded with mandatory vehicle inspections at chokepoints, increased patrolling, and cordon and search operations of the more troublesome neighborhoods.

Checkpoint duty continually exposed the soldiers and Marines to perils. On 3 May, First Lieutenant David T. Russell oversaw his platoon's operation of an entry control point in Ramadi when 13 insurgents assaulted it with small arms, machine guns, and grenades. From his position on the second level of a building, he saw an insurgent manning the machine gun and killed him with a single shot. He then crossed to a bunker where one of his Marines needed ammunition, ignoring the fire of six insurgents. While directing subsequent fire and maneuver, a rifle bullet hit his helmet, knocking him to the ground with a concussion. Rushing back into the fight, he crossed the kill zone several times to direct his Marines finding time to retrieve a wounded Iraqi soldier in the process. Only when ordered to receive medical treatment did he relinquish command at the scene.[129]

Colonel Gurganus commenced his portion of the division's Operation Patriot Shield with RCT-8's Operation White Feather (1–7 April). It focused upon the main service roads in area of operations (AO) Raleigh and disrupting insurgent actions, especially those placing bombs. Battalions continued integrated patrols with their Iraqi counterparts throughout Fallujah and along nearby major routes. In addition, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines secured Jolan Park to support Operation Greenback, which was the extensive compensation payment program for the people of Fallujah who had lost property during the November offensive. Third Reconnaissance Battalion commenced its Operation Zaidon Focus with offensive actions in the southern portion of area of operations Raleigh.

Operation Clear Decision (30 April–5 May) marked the beginning of RCT-8's efforts to clear towns that Coalition forces had not garrisoned. Here Gurganus deployed Lieutenant Colonel Stephen M. Neary's 3d Battalion, 8th Marines to al-Karmah, reinforced by elements of 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, Company B tanks and Company B assault amphibians, Company A engineers, Combat Logistics Battalion 8, and the RCT-8 command group with its security detachment. After establishing a cordon with the tank unit at 0300, a pair of CH-46Es dropped leaflets, and 3d Battalion, 8th Marines began to clear the town at 0530, using cordon and knock techniques. The reconnaissance battalion scoured the countryside north of the town. Combat Logistics Battalion 8 and the RCT commander's security detachment took the normal posts of 3d Battalion, 8th Marines during the operation.

Company L, 3d Battalion, 8th Marines and the Iraqi 2d Muthanna Battalion moved into the southern sector of al-Karmah. Marines reestablished old Camp Delta and established observation posts in and around the city. Scout-sniper teams dispersed to several locations to conduct surveillance and to prevent insurgents from escaping the cordon. Company B moved its assault amphibians into the city and secured the police

station to facilitate its use by civil affairs and medical units. Company I, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines and the 1st Company, 2d Muthanna Battalion then moved into the northern sector of al-Karmah. By 2 May, al-Karmah was declared secure with no friendly casualties and only one civilian casualty from an escalation of force incident. Third Reconnaissance Battalion continued to find several weapons caches, including a significant cache just inside the 3d Infantry Division's Baghdad area of operations. On 13 May, the town was turned over to the 2d Muthanna Battalion.

Team Brawler, comprising elements of Company B, 2d Tank Battalion, and Team Gator, similarly formed from Company B, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion, moved into the regimental security sector north of Fallujah and began RCT-8 Operation Firm Control (8–16 May). Beginning at 0300 on 8 May Team Brawler commenced cordon and search tasks in the eastern portion of the northern regimental security area, while Team Gator worked the western half. RCT-8 established a joint combat operation center in the area. Simultaneously, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion conducted two raids in the Zaidon area in the southern portion of the regiment's area of operations and 1st Battalion, 6th Marines continued with its operations in northern Fallujah, as did 3d Battalion, 4th Marines in southern Fallujah. Third Battalion, 8th Marines continued to maintain security in al-Karmah, Nassar Wa Salaam, and connecting routes.

The move north by Team Brawler and Team Gator began a string of significant events for RCT-8. The first 24 hours produced two indirect fire attacks, five by small arms, and then the discovery of three explosive devices. Insurgents made several efforts to strike 3d Battalion, 8th Marines in al-Karmah, and the tank and assault amphibian units continued to uncover significant caches of weapons and ordnance, including a bountiful one uncovered on the last day by Team Gator: 19 mortars and two rocket launchers found near Lake Thar Thar.

June inaugurated 2d Marine Division's Operation Guardian Sword, and RCT-8 launched Operation Khanjar (Dagger) during 1–21 June as its contribution, essentially a reprise of May operations in the northern regimental security area. Attacking as far as the Lake Thar Thar resort to disrupt insurgent operations, Company B, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion and Company B, 2d Tank Battalion surged into the northeast region to find enemy command and control, logistical, and training areas. Within hours of arriving in their zone, Marines of Team Gator discovered a cache containing 11 122mm rockets and 71 120mm mortar rounds. Team Gator later found intelligence materials and military manuals near the northeast corner of the regimental security zone. Less than 30 minutes later Team Gator discovered an "insurgent lair" consisting of several underground facilities and many more caches. The house located in this area also held insurgent materials and evidence of recent use. This huge find by RCT-8 indicated that the insurgents used this area for training, to store equipment, and to conduct planning. Dust storms then pummeled all of AO Raleigh during 6–8 June, resulting in the early return of Team Gator and Team Brawler from the northern regimental security area.

At 0330 on 18 June, Task Force 1st Battalion, 6th Marines with supporting attachments (Company B, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion and B Company 2d Tank Battalion) moved to the northern regimental security area to conduct the next stage of Operation Khanjar. These units received support from elements of Combat Logistics Battalion 8 including a fully functional field surgical hospital.

U.S. Army forces located further north outside the II MEF area also operated to support the regiment, blocking insurgents from fleeing. The Army's 2d Brigade supported 1st Battalion, 6th Marines providing mortar fire and blocking positions established southwest of the Marine battalion objectives. Aviation and fire support furnished key elements of the operation. Battery A, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines moved two 155mm artillery pieces north to the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines forward command post to provide on-call fire support to the task force. Marine and Coalition aviation units came to the fight, providing almost 20 hours of continual air support during the first day of task force actions. Company K, 3d Battalion, 8th Marines reported for operations as RCT-8's reserve to the south.

The more detailed coverage of the zone by the infantry battalion uncovered caches of munitions that were confiscated and destroyed:

155mm shells	20
122mm shells	31
120mm mortar rounds	233

80mm mortar rounds	45
82mm mortar rounds	10
82mm fuzes	4
60mm mortar rounds	69
60mm fuzes	50
60mm mortar tubes	2
RPG warheads	15
RPG propellants	5
RPG boosters	4
Powder bags	5
Primers	8

These results remained typical throughout the campaign of 2004–2005 for that level of effort and indicated that a seemingly inexhaustible supply of munitions remained within easy reach of the insurgents and foreign fighters. Upon return of its units from Operation Khanjar, RCT-8 had completed numerous major and minor operations since its assumption of the mission. Thus far, six of its Marines and sailors had died in action and 88 more were wounded during combat operations. Still, the focus remained on maintaining control of Fallujah.

On the southern approaches to Fallujah, a mobile patrol of Weapons Company, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines ran into an ambush on 19 June when an estimated 50 insurgents triggered an explosive device and opened fire with small arms. The section leader on the scene, Corporal Wyatt L. Waldron, ordered his vehicles into the oncoming automatic weapons fire, gained fire superiority with vehicular weapons, and then called for a dismounted assault against the enemy flank. Waldron personally killed five insurgents and captured two of their fighting positions as the Marine assault broke the enemy's resistance. Waldron's team then remounted, pursued, and killed 16 and captured six more insurgents. Marines found another six improvised explosive devices at the ambush site.

On 23 June insurgents scored a particularly lethal car bomb ambush in Fallujah that resulted in the first woman Marine killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The coordinated attack (small arms fire also hit the targeted convoy) left five Marines and one sailor dead and over 12 Marines wounded. The insurgents specifically targeted the women Marines and sailors as they rotated out of control point duty, obviously seeking a moral as well as kinetic blow. Marines of Camp Fallujah, however, resumed their daily rituals with more women Marines ready to conduct woman searches. Thus Marines continued to provide basic security for Fallujah's inhabitants.

On 30 June, RCT-8 assumed control of AO Jackson from the 155th Brigade Combat Team. This measure expanded AO Raleigh to include another 1000 square kilometers. Such boundary shifts in this area continued to ebb and flow throughout the Iraq campaign depending upon the priorities claimed for the Army forces operating in and around Baghdad.

II MEF headed into July and the pending rotation of its Army brigade after a highly active period in which U.S. forces and insurgents tested each other. With limited manpower, the regiments and brigade managed to extend their reach with operations outside urban boundaries, striking into the countryside to disrupt enemy sanctuaries. Inside the urban cores, they continued stability and security operations to deny easy movement to the insurgents, to assist the public with civil affairs and security measures, and to find insurgent cells with cordons and raids. The insurgents replied with continuing attacks by explosives, small arms, and indirect fire. An unsettling discovery, given the mission at hand, came with the unreliability of the Iraqi Security Forces, which were repeatedly formed and trained but which "dissolved" and had to be re-formed and re-trained. The Iraqi government and its advisors had yet to develop an indigenous security force of any depth and reliability.[130]

CHAPTER 9:

Protecting Self-Rule

Assessing the Mission

Major General Johnson's campaign planning before the entry of II MEF into al-Anbar Province recognized the essential need for Iraqi security forces to augment his forces and to take over local security. With no expectation that the insurgencies could be reduced during the year II MEF would occupy the province, the creation of Iraqi security forces remained vital to overcome the II MEF shortfalls in combat strength, compared to the previous I MEF force, and to permit the establishment of local political authority. The campaign planning by the staff of Multinational Force-Iraq had set specific goals in this regard: local control in key cities by 30 December 2004; provincial authority established by 31 July 2005; and constitutional elections in mid-December. That ambitious plan, however, had already failed in that local control in key cities remained an illusion to date.

Thus, the outlook for Marine Corps commanders in 2005 changed in the face of these and other realities. The establishment of local control could only be hoped for in more benign Karbala and Najaf by mid-2005, and perhaps the "decisive" Ramadi-Abu Ghraib sector by mid-December and the elections. Expectations remained that local control might be accomplished in all of al-Anbar by March 2006. Provincial control thus would follow in al-Anbar by 31 July 2006.

The planned establishment in al-Anbar of Iraqi security forces in the form of a complete division of two brigades remained key to these plans. Whether those forces proved capable or not, the political goal of conducting national elections in mid-December posed an unchanging requirement for II MEF and the other U.S. forces in Iraq. With or without the recovery of Iraqi political and security authority at the local and provincial levels, the elections remained a paramount goal.

Coalition forces also adjusted the estimated enemy order of battle by adding a new sub-category of enemy: "Sunni Arab Rejectionists," influenced primarily by former regime loyalists, now posed the most significant threat to stability in Iraq. Although the Sunnis ranked statistically as an ethnic minority in Iraq, they had maintained political, economic, and military dominance over Iraq's other major ethnic groups for nearly six hundred years. Given the Coalition objective of assisting Iraq in forming a democratic form of government, the Sunnis stood to lose considerable influence. The loss of political and economic power, a lack of security, and decisions made following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime acted as catalysts for this reclassified rejectionist-based insurgency. While many Sunnis did not necessarily oppose a new form of government, the perceived injustices imposed on Sunnis since the collapse of their minority rule in 2003 created a level of distrust and animosity towards the Coalition and Iraq's Interim Government. This particular insurgency therefore capitalized on distrust and animosity to rouse Sunni fears and to create a pool of recruits. Their motivations reflected a wide range of political objectives primarily driven by socio-economic concerns.[131]

The II MEF campaign strategy for counterinsurgency centered upon conducting five "Lines of Operation" simultaneously to advance local conditions and counter the discontent and chaos that fed the insurgencies: Security; "Operationalize" the Iraqi Security Forces; Governance; Economic

Table 9-1: Ground Combat Turnover, July-October 2005

Initial Deployment	Replacement Unit	Area of Operations	Transfer of Authority
3d Bn 4th Mar	2d Bn 7th Mar	Raleigh	23 July 2005
2d Bde 2d Div	2d Bde 28th Div	Topeka	28 July 2005
3d Bn 8th Mar	2d Bn 2d Mar	Raleigh	6 August 2005
3d Bn 2d Mar	3d Bn 6th Mar	Denver	10 September 2005
1st Bn 5th Mar	3d Bn 7th Mar	Topeka	20 September 2005
3d Bn 25th Mar	3d Bn 1st Mar	Denver	21 September 2005
2d LAR Bn (-)	1st LAR 6th Mar	Denver	24 September 2005
1st Bn 6th Mar	2d Bn 6th Mar	Raleigh	4 October 2005
3d Recon Bn (-)	1st Recon Bn (-)	Raleigh	7 October 2005

Table 9-2: Aviation Turnover, August-October 2005

Initial Deployment	Replacement Unit	Base	Relief in Place
VMFA-224	VMFA-332	al-Asad	1 August 2005
HMLA-269	HMLA-167	al-Asad	21 August 2005
VMGR-252(-)	VMGR-252(-)	Al-Asad	21 August 2005
HMM-264	HMM-266	Al-Asad	24 August 2005
VMFA-142	VMA-223	al-Asad	28 August 2005
HMM-364	HMM-161	Taqaddum	8 September 2005
HMH-465	HMH-466	al-Asad	27 September 2005
HMM-764	HMM-774	al-Asad	30 September 2005
HMLA-775	HMLA-369	Taqaddum	4 October 2005
VMU-2	VMU-1	Taqaddum	6 September 2005

(see Appendix G for the Task Organization of II MEF for second half deployment)

Development; and Influence. These five concepts provided an operational framework for applying the kinetic and non-kinetic actions necessary to change the environment, which alone could bring a separation of the insurgents from the Iraqi population of al-Anbar Province. The campaign plan defined these lines of operation as:[132]

Security. Create an environment in which insurgents are not allowed to intimidate or to cause fear among the people, to inhibit legitimate self-governance, or to prevent the development of Iraqi infrastructure.

Operationalizing the Iraqi Security Forces. The Iraqi Security Forces must be trained, equipped, supported, and mentored in a manner enabling their organizations to grow in size, confidence, and skill. The effectiveness of the Iraqi Security Forces must be developed so they can assume an increasingly greater role, allowing Multi-National Force West [II MEF] presence to be proportionally reduced.

Governance. Create an environment that allows elected officials to govern in an effective manner consistent with the expectations of the electorate. The Iraqi populace must perceive that its local elected officials can provide basic security and quality of life services such as electricity, water, and sanitation. Alleviating legitimate political grievances is an important element for a successful counterinsurgency.

Economic Development. Create an environment allowing jobs to be created, where people are free to earn a living and can procure or receive essential services fundamental to a decent quality of life, and where critical infrastructure exists to support economic growth.

Influence. Influence binds the other four lines of operation by affecting information content and flow in the area of operations, particularly into and out of its key population centers. This will involve affecting three distinct information audiences: anti-Iraqi forces, local and regional populations, and friendly forces.

The operations planned by II MEF and 2d Marine Division sought to implement these lines of operation for the rest of the year following the transfer of authority from I MEF. After the initial series of operations in March designed to protect the turnover between the two Marine expeditionary forces, the 2d Division had ordered Operation Patriot Shield in April–May. The two Marine regiments and the Army's 2d Brigade planned and conducted numerous local combat operations under Patriot Shield, noted in the preceding chapter, to interdict insurgent lines of communications from the border, to operationally shape the Ramadi sector by controlling access and establishing Iraqi security forces, and to protect the gains made in pacifying Fallujah by disrupting insurgent enclaves in the surrounding areas.

Under the overarching II MEF operation plan for 2005, Operation Shurouq [Sunrise], the Patriot Shield series ended 30 May and gave way to the Operation Guardian Sword (Saif Haras) series during 6 June–15 August. Here, the objectives called for neutralizing the insurgencies in Ramadi while covering the rotation of combat units and personnel in other units for the second half of the deployment, as well as the Army's rotation of the 2d Brigade. With the final rotations complete in September, the divisional plan Operation Sanguine Thunder came into effect with the aims of training and arming Iraqi Police in Northern

Table 9-3: II MEF Combat Power, September 2005[138]

Combat Power (Air)					
AH-1W	AV-8B	CH-46E	CH-53E	EA-6B	FA-18A+
25/20	10/7	38/35	16/14	5/4	6/6
80%	70%	92%	88%	80%	100%
FA-18D	KC-130	RQ-2b	UC-35	UH-1N	
12/11	6/4	8/7	1/1	15/10	
92%	67%	88%	100%	67%	
Combat Power (Ground-USMC)					
Tank M1A1	LVA	AAV	Howitzer M198	HMMWV Hardback	UAH M1114
34/31	67/63	89/84	14/14	307/288	574/537
91%	94%	94%	100%	94%	94%
Combat Power (Ground) (2-28th BCT)					
M1A1/A2	M2/M3	Mortar 120MM	Howitzer M109A6	Scout HMMWV Armored	UAH M114
43/32	49/47	15/14	8/7	176/158	226/201
74%	96%	93%	88%	90%	89%
Combat Power (Ground-155th BCT)					
M1A1/A2	M2/M3	Mortar 120MM	Howitzer M109A6	Scout HMMWV Armored	UAH M114
74%	90%	100%	83%	100%	93%
M113					
79/72					
91%					

Babil, transferring Karbala and Najaf to Iraqi local control, and in general supporting Operation Liberty Express, the Coalition program for safeguarding and supporting the December national elections.

Major General Huck predicted favorable results for Operation Guardian Sword in a 30 May message to his division:

> Operation Patriot Shield comes to a close today [30 May] and Operation Guardian Sword is ready to commence 6 June. I feel confident that we will be able to pick up the tempo of operations and apply more Iraqi security forces to operations in Guardian Sword. As you know, the Iraqi security forces projections for Operation Patriot Shield fell short of the mark. Our ability to train, integrate and operate with Iraqi security forces will allow us to significantly increase our forces. Put an Iraqi face on all of our operations.[133]

As noted in the preceding chapter, the battalions of RCT-2, RCT-8 and the Army's 2d Brigade continued to execute the same types of operations, whether under Operation Patriot Shield or Guardian Sword. These organizations truly had few new options for "kinetic" or offensive combat operations because their extensive static security responsibilities aggravated the relative paucity of units available for offensive operations. In addition, the routine logistical and administrative support for the three major units of 2d Marine Division, spread over the 335-kilometer corridor from al-Qaim to Abu Ghraib, required frequent recourse to armed convoys, road sweeps, and other force protection tasks that reduced even more the resources available for commanders to employ against enemy targets.

In westernmost al-Anbar Province, Colonel Davis deployed 3d Battalion 25th Marines to find arms caches and to interdict insurgent flow near Dulab, on the left bank of the Haditha Dam reservoir. The 3d Battalion, 2d Marines continued its normal cordon and knock operations and similar cache searches in its zone, exclusive of Husaybah and Karabilah which remained highly contested, while beginning a site survey for polling stations. Second LAR Battalion continued patrolling main routes, especially against bomb and mortar teams and provided direct support to the Army 224th Engineer Battalion, assigned to clear and to maintain the main supply routes for the regiments as

Task Force Ironhawk. The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company continued its sniper operations, and the Azerbaijani Company, charged with internal security at the Haditha Dam, prepared for its own relief slated for early July.

The Army's 2d Brigade employed 1st Battalion, 5th Marines with combined U.S.-Iraqi combat patrols, cache sweeps, and stay-behind ambushes in western Ramadi, partnered with the Iraqi 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade, 7th Division. On the other side of Ramadi, 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry conducted a company movement to contact in the Mulaab district. In Tammin, the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry patrolled, deployed snipers, and planned company-size attacks if targets appeared. The 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry partnered with the Iraqi 3d Battalion, 2d Brigade, 1st Division for patrols in Civil Camp and Abu Flies.

Colonel Gurganis continued the RCT-8 program of security and counterinsurgency operations in Fallujah and the rest of the operations area Raleigh. His tank and assault amphibian company teams continued to operate in the "regimental security area" extending north of Fallujah to the Lake Thar Thar resort. The 3d Reconnaissance Battalion covered the comparable security area to the south of Fallujah, where potential polling stations also required survey and assessment. The newly secured Karmah area also required combined operations with the Iraqi 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Division, now based there.[134]

Force Rotation in Mid-deployment

Operation Saber (Hissam) covered the rest of July for RCT-2, an umbrella operation stressing counterinsurgency actions by each battalion in their respective zones during 23–31 July. Aimed at disrupting insurgents while unit rotations took place in the other areas of operations, it netted an average amount of cached arms and munitions but also resulted in 39 insurgents killed and 177 people detained.[135]

The last major operation planned by RCT-2 before the rotation of its battalions was Operation Lightning Strike II (Darbat al Barq) slated for early August. This multi-battalion attack on the right or south bank of the Euphrates River almost midway between al-Qaim and Hadithah targeted the city of Anah and nearby village of Qadisiyah. In addition to disrupting insurgent activities and eliminating foreign fighters in the zone, the operation aimed at demonstrating the deployment by the Iraqi government of a competent security force in the form of its 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry Division. The Army's 2d Squadron, 14th Cavalry assisted in isolating the objective area by blocking the bridge over the river in the direction of Rawah in its sector. In zone, RCT-2 planned to employ elements of 2d LAR Battalion, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, and 3d Battalion, 25th Marines as well as tank, assault amphibian, engineer, and Iraqi Army support to cordon the two towns, to raid specific targets and then to clear them of insurgents.[136]

That operation never occurred because the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines was ambushed. This battalion had completed its transfer to Hit by mid-July but also kept units in its former garrison in Haditha. On 1 August, insurgents attacked two sniper teams of the battalion scout-sniper platoon operating together in a firing position 3.5 kilometers northwest of Haditha on the left (east) bank of the Euphrates overlooking Barwanah. A third sniper team, Team Six, located 2 kilometers to the north heard a few seconds of small arms and machine gun fire coming from that location, then radioed the two teams without receiving a response. Team Six requested permission to move south and investigate. The battalion approved and also launched its quick reaction force from Hadithah Dam. On the scene, Team Six found five Marines dead and one missing, and their weapons and weapon systems were missing.

Lieutenant Colonel Urquhart detailed his L and Weapons Companies immediately to cordon Barwanah to search for the insurgents responsible for this attack. In the early hours of 2 August, reports from tip lines indicated that a body was located 3 kilometers south of Hadithah on the right (west) bank of the Euphrates. The body was the sixth Marine, and they recovered his remains that day from the village of Haqlaniyah.

This killing of a trained and experienced team of Marine rifleman brought a rapid response from Colonel Davis' regiment. The forces slated for Operation Lightning Strike II instead were reset for Operation Quick Strike (3–6 August, extended to 11 August), a cordon and search of Haqlaniyah and Barwanah.

While 2d LAR Battalion screened the flanks, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines moved with Companies K and L and 2d Platoon, Company A, 1st Tank Battalion into an assembly area on the right bank of the Euphrates after an Iraqi Special Operations Company had secured it. At the same time, a task

force of 3d Battalion, 25th Marines with L and Weapons Companies, and Company A, 1st Tank Battalion prepared to clear Barwanah on the left bank of the river, where the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines task force had been operating for three days, fighting insurgent small arms and mortar teams with infantry and tank weapons and precision air strikes. The Marine battalions had with them the 3d and 2d companies, respectively, of the Iraqi 2d battalion, 1st Infantry Division. These companies had reported to RCT-2 on 17 July. The 1st Force Reconnaissance Company provided raid and sniper support as required. Late in the first day of the operation, an assault amphibian vehicle carrying Marines of Company L, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines was hit by an explosive device of such size that it badly damaged and overturned the vehicle, killing 15 crewmen and passengers.

On 4 August, Marine battalions attacked north and conducted cordon and searches through the villages. The 3d Battalion, 2d Marines encountered only sporadic resistance in Haqlaniyah and established a base to support continuing actions. Resistance then stiffened for both engaged battalion task forces, and a number of air strikes were used to destroy buildings from which insurgents fired small arms and rocket launchers.

Operation Quick Strike, which began as a response for the killing the Marine snipers, uncovered a considerable nest of resistance in the three towns located only a few kilometers south of Haditha. The operation netted the destruction of nine vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and 23 improvised explosive devices. Marines destroyed seven buildings defended by insurgents, killing 15 and detaining another 63. Friendly casualties included 14 U.S. killed, six wounded, one Iraqi Special Forces soldier killed, three wounded and one assault amphibian vehicle a total loss. During 9–10 August, the participating units returned to their bases.

These incidents caused considerable media attention in the United States, especially for the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, which lost 19 men killed in three days in an Iraq deployment costing this unit 48 killed in action. For a U.S. public unaccustomed to heavy casualties, the loss sustained by this reserve forces unit proved especially devastating to the Marine Corps, the families of those lost, and the public. During 12–18 August, the units received visits from the commanders of 2d and 4th Marine Divisions, II MEF and Multinational Forces-Iraq.[137]

The next upsurge of insurgent activity in operations AO Denver took place 24–29 August at Husaybah, perhaps prodded by the departure of Company L, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines from al-Qaim to Kubaysah, where it joined 2d Force Reconnaissance Company and Company C, 2d LAR Battalion in a cordon and knock clearing operation. Camp Gannon exchanged small arms and rocket fire with insurgents on 24 August. Two days later, the RCT-2 targeting staff identified an al-Qaeda safe house and leveled it with multiple air strikes delivering two GBU-38 direct attack bombs, six GBU-12 laser-guided 500 pound bombs, three Maverick guided missiles, and five 5-inch unguided rockets on the target. A similar effort the next evening brought eight buildings down with a total of 5 GBU-12s, 1 GBU-38, and 7 Mavericks. The regiment now considered all the enemy's safe havens inside the RCT-2 area of operation as destroyed. Small arms fire hit Marines of Company I, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines the evening of 29 August, and another air strike destroyed another insurgent house with a GBU-38. As these actions continued, the relief battalion, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines began to arrive at al-Qaim.

The force turnover in II MEF covered in part by Operation Guardian Shield spanned a two-month period, reflecting the staggered deployment dates of the combat battalions shown in the accompanying table. In addition, the Army replaced 2d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division with the 2d Brigade, 28th Infantry Division, formed principally from the Pennsylvania, Utah and Vermont National Guard, commanded by Colonel John Gronski. With a one-for-one replacement of battalions in operations area Topeka, no let-up in the struggle to pacify and shape Ramadi would occur.

In addition, the 2d Marine Division exchanged artillery batteries and force reconnaissance, tank, combat engineer, and assault amphibian companies with fresh units from the U.S. In the ground support aviation units and 2d Force Service Support Group, the units remained in place and instead the personnel rotated during the same rotation period. The Ramadi-based intelligence services of II MEF also rotated battalions, as 3d Radio Battalion relieved 2d Radio Battalion on 11

June and 2d Intelligence Battalion replaced 1st Intelligence Battalion on 24 September 2005.

The aircraft squadrons of 2d Marine Aircraft Wing mostly rotated during August–September, retaining two fixed-wing and four rotary wing squadrons and the aerial refueler detachment based at al-Asad and two more rotary wing squadrons and the unmanned aerial vehicle unit at Taqaddum (see table 9-2).

The combat power now available for II MEF to employ in AO Atlanta thus amounted to the following as of 1 September 2005 (see table 9-3).

Operation Guardian Sword ended with the relief in place by the two Army brigades assigned to the 2d Marine Division. In its last weeks (through 15 August), Guardian Sword planned for the newly arrived units to assist with election preparations and economic development programs and to enhance the ability of local leaders to exercise authority. The Army's 2d Brigade, 28th Infantry Division received tactical control of the Iraqi 3d Brigade, 1st Division and conducted its first major action, Operation Heavy, on 29 August with a counterinsurgency clearing of Jazirah. The units of RCT-8, carrying out rotations from late July to early October in AO Raleigh, continued actions in and about Fallujah and searched for weapon caches in Operations Vital Ground (2–14 June), Scimitar (7–14 July) and Southern Fire (24–29 August).

Securing the border

The emphasis on RCT-2 operations in July and August continued after Operation Guardian Sword because of a higher headquarters order. With his Operation Sayaid (Hunter), the commander of Multinational Force-Iraq required operations within the II MEF AO Atlanta to secure the Syrian border by establishing a presence along the border and capturing al-Qaeda foreign fighters north of the Euphrates River beginning in mid-July with a projected duration until late August. During this period, combat operations continued with Operation Sayaid within the Euphrates River valley and specifically in the cities already targeted by RCT-2: Hit, Hadithah, Husaybah and al-Qaim. Operation Sayaid included a task force from 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment operating out of Combat Outpost Rawah in the former RCT-2 zone of operations north of the Euphrates River but now designated AO Saber by the armored cavalry regiment. Later, the timeline for the operation extended until 15 December, having become another series of combat operations protecting the Iraqi election series under Operation Liberty Express.

The occupation of border posts experienced continuous delays, however, and during September the Multinational Force-Iraq commander restored area of operation Saber to II MEF and relinquished tactical control of four U.S. Army units to 2d Marine Division and RCT-2 for the continuation of Operation Sayaid: 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry; 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry; Task Force 2d Battalion, 114th Field Artillery; Company F, 51st Infantry; 519th Military Intelligence Battalion; and Task Force Phantom, an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance unit[139]

The 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry cleared the village of al-Ash on 16 September in Operation Mustang and repeated the effort at Qadisiyah and Anah on 28–29 September in Operation Lightning Strike, the operation deferred by RCT-2 in August because of the substitution of Operation Quick Strike to clear Barwanah and to stop counterattacks against 3d Battalion, 25th Marines. The 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry cleared a military housing compound at Baghdadi during Operation Green Light (21–22 September), and the 2d Battalion, 114th Field Artillery road marched from the 155th Brigade Combat Team in operations area Biloxi to Hit, beginning on 20 September, effecting a relief of 3d Battalion, 1st Marines there on 28 September.

The reinforcement of RCT-2 by Task Force 2d Battalion, 114th Field Artillery provided a boost for the overly extended forces in western al-Anbar Province and demonstrated an early success for the 155th Brigade in achieving provincial and regional control in AO Biloxi, where the cities of Karbala and An Najaf remained relatively quiet. That situation thus precipitated the reinforcement of Colonel Davis' regiment.[140]

The border forces that the Commander, Multinational Forces-Iraq sought to bolster on the Syrian frontier with Operation Sayaid did not yet exist in the II MEF area of operations. In 2005, only the three border zones covering ports of entry at Ar Ar (from Saudi Arabia), Trebil (from Jordan) and Waleed (from Syria) operated with battalions of three Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) brigades manning the border forts in an-Najaf and al-Anbar Provinces. Iraq operated no port of entry in an-Najaf Province. The U.S. units stationed

in Camp Mudaysis and at Camp Korean Village operated to support the Anbar and Nukhayb DBE Brigades in al-Anbar Province, and the Army's 155th BCT covered the an-Najaf DBE brigade in AO Biloxi. The DBE services planned a fourth battalion of its Anbar Brigade at al-Qaim to occupy nine border forts covering the rest of the Syrian border in al-Anbar Province northeast of the last manned Border Fort 10 at Akashat. After it was properly secured, that sector of the frontier would reopen for commerce with Syria by reactivating the abandoned port of entry facilities at Husaybah.[141]

The Iraqi Armed Forces and its Problems

In mid-2005, however, realities only faintly approached the planned operational capabilities in al-Anbar Province border facilities. Not only was the fourth battalion of the Anbar DBE Brigade not formed and the building of the forts not even contracted, but also the same applied to the third battalion, which simply augmented the first two while awaiting fort construction. In any case, the Marine Corps had yet to send the required 10 border transition teams for assignment to each brigade and battalion of the border forces in the II MEF area of operations. These ten-man teams, specially prepared and trained at Camp Lejeune, arrived during July and by August had evaluated the border force battalions based at Najaf, Trebil, and Waleed. Given the continuing delays in border construction and operations, three of the border transition teams converted to military transition teams and assisted in the stand-up of new Iraqi Army units at Ramadi. In the last two months of the year, the border posts began to take form north of Waleed, and the makings of a three-brigade DBE structure emerged: 1st Brigade operating from an-Najaf and covering all the posts facing Saudi Arabia; 2d Brigade, at Waleed operating four battalions covering the posts facing Jordan and Syria, and a new 3d Brigade al-Qaim operated a single battalion stationed in area of operations Saber. The seven Marine Corps transition teams operated with the 2d and 3d Brigades, and two units of RCT-2 provided the decisive military power if required: 1st LAR Battalion (Korean Village) and 3d Battalion, 6th Marines (al-Qaim).[142]

From the outset of its campaign, the II MEF staff planned to receive control eventually of two Iraqi Army divisions comprising six brigades and 18 battalions for operational commitment in al-Anbar Province, with another brigade and three battalions established in an-Najaf and North Babil. In tandem with the political consolidation of the Iraqi government through the national elections, establishing a trained and viable Iraqi security force remained the real pillar of achieving regional control.

The Iraqi Army lacks, and still does at this writing, any combat service support capability and remains dependent upon Coalition support. Contractors built a support base at Habbaniyah for a division headquarters and two brigades. Some form of base support unit was proposed for Habbaniyah as the initial Iraqi logistics hub for al-Anbar Province and adding a second one when a second division came to al-Anbar Province. A nearby "India" base was built to support the third brigade.

The units of the new Iraqi Army replaced the last of the Iraqi National Guard battalions that had proven ineffective in al-Anbar Province because of their evident tribal affiliation and vulnerability to the insurgent murder and intimidation campaign. Thus, no new Army units reconstituted from formerly Sunni-affiliated National Guard forces were acceptable in the al-Anbar Province, and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense policy took recruits from al-Anbar to units outside the province.

Initially, the Ministry of Defense and the Coalition command assigned the 1st and 7th Iraqi Army Divisions to II MEF as Multinational Force-West for employment in counterinsurgency operations. In addition, the 25th Brigade, organic to the 8th Division, drew the assignment to the an-Najaf and northern Babil Province sector (area of operation Biloxi). In all, the Coalition planned sending seven brigades to Multinational Force-West in addition to the specialized military and paramilitary units designed for border and internal security tasks.

Under the same plan, the Iraqi 1st Division headquarters at Habbiniyah exercised control over all Ministry of Defense units from Ramadi to the eastern boundary of area of operation Raleigh. From Ramadi, the 7th Division headquarters controlled similar forces west of Ramadi to the Syrian border.[143]

Numerous operational requirements existed throughout the Marine Corps zone of action and several Iraqi Army battalions and brigades deployed to al-Anbar Province before the 7th Division established its headquarters in the province.

The conditions demanded considerable operational flexibility by the fledgling Iraqi units to operate with their American counterparts before the rest of the Iraqi Army had in fact developed as a fully capable and manned combat force.

Timing, as usual, counted for almost everything. By October 2005, the 1st and 4th Brigades of the 8th Division, based at an-Najaf and Karbala, operated three battalions, all partnered with the U.S. 155th Brigade in area of operations Biloxi with military transitions teams provided by the 155th. These teams rated the battalions as becoming militarily capable in three to six months. The 1st Division, which had a Marine Corps transition team since May, arrived in Camp Habbiniyah in October. Most of its three brigades and nine battalions preceded it, but it required another three to four months to reach a "capable" rating. That tentative status did not apply to the 1st and 2d Battalions, 1st Brigade, 1st Division, which had joined the U.S. Army's 2d Brigade at Ramadi and RCT-2 at Hit and Haditha during Operation Guardian Sword. Characteristic of the initial operations of the Iraqi security forces, those two battalions had operated without their parent brigade (never assigned to al-Anbar Province) under direct control of 2d Marine Division, yet remained two to six months short of being fully fighting capable because of their chronic undermanning.

The Iraqi 7th Division headquarters lagged considerably in arriving in the province, first to Fallujah in January and then to the Iraqi compound in Camp Blue Diamond, Ramadi in late February 2006. Its 1st and 2d Battalions, 1st Brigade had joined the U.S. Army 2d Brigade at Ramadi during Operation Guardian Sword. Their personnel, leadership and equipment shortfalls placed them in an eight to 10 month delay in reaching full fighting capability. Their transition teams came from the three Marine Corps border transition teams left unassigned because of delays in activating the Iraqi units to cover the Syrian frontier. The remaining units of 7th Division formed in July-September 2005 and after training deployed to al-Anbar Province during September 2005–January 2006.

The manpower requirements for the military transition teams providing liaison and training advice for elements of the Iraqi Army sent to the II MEF area of operations proved demanding. In addition, local U.S. commanders and staffs spent considerable effort mentoring their counterparts. These demands fell upon the combat units despite efforts by Marine Corps Headquarters and the Multinational Forces-Iraq to provide them from the United States and allied nations. Twelve of the teams fielded in the 2005 contingent came "out of hide," jargon for the receiving Coalition partner unit providing the team upon arrival. In all, the Marine Corps provided 366 officers and enlisted to the teams in 2005, 170 of which came locally from II MEF. A few of the II MEF Marines became involved with the unending police training team mission in Fallujah as did Army solders in Ramadi. The Iraqi security forces began to assemble under the tactical direction of 2d Marine Division in al-Anbar Province and under the Army 155th Brigade in Najaf-northern Babil Provinces.

CHAPTER 10:

Protecting the New Iraq

The twin pillars of the U.S. and Coalition strategy for 2005 functioned independently of each other. The **security situation** (first pillar), which was not improving in 2005, largely because of the dilatory process of building Iraqi military and paramilitary forces, training and provisioning them, and then fielding them against the insurgents. Despite this setback, plans proceeded for the new national government and popular elections under self-imposed deadlines of the Coalition governments. For U.S. and Coalition military forces, the **self-government** (second pillar) and election process in Iraq became the focus of activity in late 2005 although the same counterinsurgency operations conducted in the preceding months continued because the insurgency continued and had to be ended or minimized.

Supporting the Election

Operation Liberty Express (Tahrir Saia, 1 September–30 December 2005) covered the military actions of II MEF and its subordinate units to provide adequate security and to ensure conditions for a successful Iraqi national constitutional referendum on 15 October 2005 and Iraqi national election on 15 December 2005. Although the 2d Marine Division provided the major contribution to this operation, it will be seen that the contributions of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and the soon to be redesignated 2d Marine Logistics Group remained indispensable throughout the operation.

Major General Huck published his operations order for Liberty Express on 30 July, setting three phases: completing unit rotation, as an extension of Operation Guardian Sword; operations supporting the referendum; and operations supporting the national election. He identified his mission as:

> 2d Marine Division continues partnership with the Iraqi security forces and conducts combined counterinsurgency operations in al-Anbar Province to neutralize anti-Iraqi forces, secure designated polling centers, and provide support to the Independent Election Commission - Iraq to maintain operational momentum, prevent anti-Iraqi force interference with unit rotations, and ensure the conduct of free, fair and legitimate constitutional referendum and national elections.[144]

To support the referendum, the 2d Marine Division planned continuing counterinsurgency campaigns in AO Atlanta that would provide the secure environment for polling sites by the Iraqi transitional government and the election commission. In particular, the subordinate commands would "execute focused disruption operations from 1–12 October, targeting extremist groups with the capability and intent of interfering with the referendum to disrupt their operational planning and execution cycle."[145]

Using Iraqi security forces, then in their initial stages of arrival in the division's area of operations, remained essential to securing and to operating the polling sites and providing force protection, security, transportation, and sustainment. The U.S. and Iraqi forces would have to provide an election support team for each polling site within the zone for liaison with and support to the election workers.

The expected threat to the elections, according to 2d Marine Division estimates, included both Muslim extremists and the Sunni Arab resistance. Muslim extremists sought to inflict a high U.S. and Coalition casualty rate in Iraq, coupled with an aggressive information operations campaign designed to erode public support and to force a Coalition withdrawal from Iraq. At the same time, their actions aimed at preventing any strong central government from establishing itself in Iraq. The Sunni Arabs in Iraq had lost ground to the Shi'a and Kurdish factions in the 2004 election, and moderates in their ranks sought to regain some degree of Sunni influence through the political process.

Marine Corps intelligence estimates predicted that insurgents focused on Ramadi because of its significance in the governmental process and Fallujah because of its symbolic importance. Their immediate goal remained to discourage voter turnout through the unfettered use of violence. The expected tactics included attacking polling sites and the areas around them using proven techniques such as indirect fire, improvised explosive devices, and sniping. Their information campaign painted the elections as a conspiracy of the Shi'a, Kurdish, U.S., and Zionist interests against

the Sunni Arabs. Thus, the extremists portrayed themselves as the defenders of Sunnis in Iraq.

The Coalition hoped that the moderate Sunnis and some insurgent groups would urge their followers to vote, thereby avoiding their self-inflicted electoral debacle of 2004. Extremist elements, however, increased attacks across the province in an attempt to prevent voter participation. For the Coalition, the worst case resulting from uncontrollable sectarian violence would persuade Sunni Arabs that a favorable outcome in the elections remained impossible. Such an outcome could bring them to re-align themselves with extremist elements to attack U.S. and Iraqi forces and to disrupt the election process.[146]

The method by which General Huck and 2d Marine Division planners sought to meet these conditions combined the types of combat operations that Marine evaluations considered a success in Operation Guardian Sword with a civil affairs campaign that focused upon the local Sunni leaders and public opinion. The II MEF Campaign Plan thus continued in effect with the goals of interdiction in RCT-2's AO Denver, neutralizing extremists in the Army 2d Brigade's AO Topeka, principally Ramadi, while continuing to control Fallujah and the remainder of RCT-8's AO Raleigh. Marines estimated that they could maintain operational momentum throughout al-Anbar Province and thereby disrupt insurgent operations, develop and act upon intelligence, and establish a "relatively secure environment" for the Iraqi referendum and election. In contrast to the 2004 events, Marines could look to additional support in the form of the newly arriving Iraqi forces units, with up to three brigades joining to add combat power and an improved measure of internal security in the cities.

The orders to civil affairs commanders and planners were equally clear. They were to continue efforts supporting the nascent provincial councils and provincial reconstruction development committees and to improve economic and infrastructure development throughout al-Anbar Province. Specific actions, however, would also support the elections. These included seeking to educate and to influence local and provincial Iraqi leaders to encourage their followers to participate in the electoral process and to themselves educate the populace about the electoral process and the importance of their participation. On the other hand, the U.S. forces had to avoid a perception that they controlled or directed the election process, which had to remain an autonomous and fair Iraqi action in the eyes of all. Finally, Marine commanders ordered a surge in counterinsurgency operations immediately before the voting days that, combined with the civil-military engagement of the al-Anbar leaders at municipal and provincial level, they calculated would persuade the Iraqi public that participating in the voting was safe.[147]

The actions required to support the elections required considerable planning and allocation of resources for the 15 November and 15 December events. In each of the areas of operations in the II MEF zone, Marines would set up several dozen polling centers, encompassing 15–24 sites in each area of operations, to handle the voter turnout estimated by the Iraqi Independent Election Commission to be some 575,000 persons in al-Anbar Province. At each of the polling sites, Marine Corps election support teams of one or two Marines or soldiers and an interpreter would maintain order over the election commission workers and equipment provided by the Coalition. They also served to maintain liaison and communications at each site with the U.S. and Coalition forces. In the 2d Marine Division areas, for example, over 170 military personnel and 70 interpreters comprised this contingent. Although many of these Marines and soldiers came from the civil affairs units, the combat and support units of the division provided approximately half of these personnel.

Logistical support for the estimated 3,000 polling workers included flying them from Baghdad International Airport to al-Anbar province, to al-Asad Air Base, and to al-Taqqadum Air Base; the polling workers were then driven to camps where they received billeting, subsistence, and final training from the election commission. Polling workers hired within the province reported to local bases for transportation to the camps. From these camps, the polling workers were driven to military forward operating bases near their polling sites three or four days before the elections. At each point of entry, the forces screened and processed the polling workers and segregated potential security risks for further scrutiny. At all assembly locations for the polling workers, Coalition forces had to provide emergency medical care, billeting, feeding, and hygienic facilities.

Security measures for the polling worker camps and polling sites required dedicated security forces in both close and distant protection modes and materials for segregating the inner and

middle cordons and the traffic and entry checkpoints. Fortification material came from the 30th Naval Construction Regiment, but 2d Force Service Support Group provided all other items for the camps. Election materials arrived in packaged containers for each site, and election commission personnel retained responsibility for the chain of custody and accountability of ballots. Route security measures included surged sweeps by both ground and aerial electronic devices. Aviation support remained dedicated to normal military operations in September and early October, although the KC-130 transport-refueler aircraft would support movement of election commission and polling workers into the air bases. During 11–14 October, and on election day, most rotary-wing aircraft (transport and attack) increased flights to support aerial and ground movements.

Much of the efforts required in working with local leaders and public affairs would come from the newly arrived (and newly formed) 6th Civil Affairs Group, which took over from the 5th Civil Affairs Group during 8–22 September. Colonel Paul W. Brier's concept of support called for a major effort to engage the provincial and local civilian leadership. The governor, provincial council, and mayors received briefings to inform them of the importance of the constitutional referendum, to encourage them to inform their constituents, and to provide them with election materials for their constituents. Working with the governorate election official of the Independent Election Commission, Marines of the 6th Civil Affairs Group sought to assist (1) in developing ideas and strategies to identify polling workers from al-Anbar Province to work at the polling centers and (2) in helping the election commission inform the public about the election processes. Colonel Brier's command also played a key role in planning the movement, billeting, and training of polling workers for al-Anbar Province, providing civil affairs Marines as members of the election support teams as well as liaison personnel during all the polling worker's movements and processing.[148]

Counterinsurgency Operations Before the Elections

The combat operations supporting the summer turnover of units and personnel gradually evolved into a new series of operations designed to shape the battlefield and to disrupt any insurgent disruption of the electoral processes. The operational pattern remained unchanged, as noted above in Major General Huck's orders: interdict in the west; neutralize insurgents around Ramadi; and hold Fallujah and areas further east under firm Coalition control. Largely for this reason, the Multinational Force-Iraq Operation Sayaid continued as Operation Sayaid II. Not only would it support the establishment of the Iraqi forces in al-Anbar and strengthen the border defenses, but also it would cover the desired interdiction of the al-Qaim-Hit corridor of the western Euphrates River Valley.

Phase II of Operation Sayaid in September continued the efforts to restore Iraqi control of its border with Syria. In addition, II MEF received orders to construct two combat outposts, north and south of the river to support the border defenses that the Department of Border Enforcement at last began to reconstruct in the Syrian border region covered by forts 1 through 9. Coalition engineers would build the combat outpost in the south while an Iraqi contractor built the other on the northern side of the river valley. The planned presence of Coalition forces, mostly border units and Iraqi Army units, would at last cover the western Euphrates River Valley. The Iraqi Army would also establish permanent garrisons in al-Qaim, Rawah, Haditha, and Hit. By default, combat service would have to provide support and for all Marine Corps forces in western al-Anbar Province.

In addition, Marines established random vehicle checkpoints on the routes connecting al-Qaim, Hadithah, and Hit. As a new initiative, they destroyed bridges across the Euphrates at key crossing sites near the Syrian border, thus depriving infiltrators their usual line of communication. As a matter of priority, the Haditha sector was chosen for special attention before the referendum, and al-Qaim before the national election. This prioritization clearly reflected the relative security of each sector and the limited military resources that remained a problem in western al-Anbar Province. Destroying the bridges also indicated the weakness of the border security, and the construction of Border Forts 1 through 8 remained slow, with forts 1 through 4 still incomplete at year's end.[149]

After receiving approval from Central Command and Multinational Corps-Iraq headquarters to remove the bridges from the "No Strike" target list, Marine air started bombing the bridges (the Al Bu Hardan and Mish Al Bridges crossing the Euphrates northeast of Karabila and east of

al-Ubayd) on 3 September. On 3 September, the aircraft dropped guided BDU-type 500 pound cement-filled practice bombs, reporting some damage to the bridges, but imagery showed three of the eight bombs did not strike the bridges. Accordingly, the RCT-2's planners requested another attack. On 6 September, aircraft dropped GBU-12 bombs directed at the bridge abutments. Again, desired effects were not achieved and would require an additional strike.

On 11–12 September, the attacks resumed after preparing targeting packages employing the M270A1 guided multiple-launched rocket systems supporting the Army units in AO Saber. Six rockets hit the Mish Al Bridge and destroyed it. Aircraft attacked Al Bu Hardan Bridge with GBU-38 and GBU-12 bombs following a mechanical malfunction of both M270A1 launchers. The eight 500 pound bombs used this time achieved the desired effects.[150]

Division had concurred in the destruction of these bridges using no forward controllers and direct involvement of ground troops because of the paucity of ground forces available in western al-Anbar Province. Given the number of units rotating in RCT-2 during the month, small scale local raids and patrolling remained the norm except for the Army units operating in AO Saber.

Apart from its turnover with the incoming 1st LAR Battalion, the 2d LAR Battalion developed Operation Cyclone (Zoba'a) with RCT-2 support for clearing ar-Rutbah of persistent insurgent activity. Assembling reinforcements at nearby Camp Korean Village on 9 September, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Austin E. Renforth and his staff briefed and incorporated 2d Force Reconnaissance Company; Company K, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines; and an Iraqi special forces unit into his task force. Moving out of their camp at 0100 hours on 11 September, the LAR units established a cordon of the city and launched two assault forces to clear its eastern and western parts. The force reconnaissance and Iraqi Special Forces troops cleared their sectors from north to south. Moving in the opposite direction, south to north, the Marines of Company K, reinforced by a section of amphibious assault vehicles and a platoon of Company C, 2d LAR Battalion, cleared their zone. At 1100 hours the next day, the troops had detained a total of 61 people and had confiscated numerous weapons and explosive devices.

The relative lull during September permitted the planning of several larger scale operations for October, and here Operation Sayaid II began to show some results. The operations of October coincided with the welcome arrival of the first units of the Iraqi 7th Division in the form of three battalions of its 3d Brigade, deploying to Hit, Hadithah, and Rawah. At the same time, the Iraqi 1st Brigade, 1st Division established its headquarters at al-Qaim with its 1st Battalion, the beginning of a long awaited Iraqi covering force on the Syrian border in al-Anbar Province.

Lieutenant Colonel Julian D. Alford's 3d Battalion, 6th Marines executed its first major operation since relieving 3d Battalion, 2d Marines at al-Qaim. Beginning in the early morning hours of 1 October, the battalion began to clear the village of Sadah and the eastern half of Karabilah under Operation Iron Fist (Kabda bin Hadid), a seven-day effort designed to eradicate insurgents, clear routes, and to establish battle positions. It also provided a deception operation to distract insurgents while units assembled and prepared for Operation River Gate. Supported by a platoon each of tanks, combat engineers, and assault amphibious vehicles, Alford's Task Force cleared Sadah from east to west with three rifle companies on line the first day. Insurgents fought from prepared positions with small arms, rocket launchers, mortars, and explosive devices. In sporadic fighting, the Marines killed an estimated 12 enemy and encamped into positions on a wadi separating Sadah from Karabilah. A troop of the 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry screened the left bank of the Euphrates River, and mobile assault platoons of the Marine battalion's weapons company blocked the roads between the two towns.

The next day saw much stiffer opposition from the insurgents fighting from Karabilah. Advancing through the town over the next three days, Marines employed all their direct fire weapons and mortars, and Marine aircraft delivered rockets, Hellfire missiles, and GBU-12 and -38 guided bombs. The enemy death toll increased to 51 while the task force suffered one Marine killed and 12 wounded. The operation ended on 7 October, with two battle positions constructed for rifle platoons. Patrolling and small arms engagements continued for several weeks. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines now had a foothold for continued operations to the west, where Camp Gannon, garrisoned by elements of Company L, marked the an-

vil that permitted further "hammering" by Alford's task force through the principal enemy enclave of Husaybah. But that moment would await further reinforcement and Operation Steel Curtain. Until then, Marines killed an estimated 200 insurgents while operating from the new battle positions and Camp Gannon. Lieutenant Colonel Alford's double-size sniper platoon of some 38 Marines trained and operating in his Weapons Company, accounted for most of the enemy killed, followed in number of kills by his attached tank platoon and battalion heavy machine guns.[151]

The Army's 2d Brigade, 28th Infantry Division at Ramadi executed its own large-scale sweep at the same time on the southern outskirts of Ramadi. Operation Mountaineers (Hiba) sought to kill or capture insurgents and to locate arms caches on 4 October. After four Marine CH-47E helicopters lifted A Troop, 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry into a blocking position southeast of the city, Company C, 1st Battalion 172d Armor Battalion, established a cordon isolating the southeast corner of the city from the north and two Army infantry companies, accompanied by the Iraqi 1st and 3d Battalions, 1st Brigade, 7th Division cleared and secured their targeted districts on the southern side of the canal, while 3d Battalion, 7th Marines cleared the northern side of the canal accompanied by the 2d Iraqi Battalion and supported by a tank platoon of Company D, 2d Battalion, 69th Armor. Marines soldiers and Iraqi troops searched all houses and vehicles in a major demonstration of combined U.S. and Iraqi military presence. After being attacked by explosive devices, small arms, and rocket fire, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines called in both fixed and rotary wing air support, which remained overhead until all objectives had been cleared and the ground Marines had returned to their base.[152]

With the even larger Operation River Gate (Bawwabatu Annaher), Colonel Davis' RCT-2 placed more pressure upon insurgent groups operating in the western Eurphrates River Valley, well-timed with Operation Iron Fist. Commencing on 3 October, elements of three U.S. and one Iraqi battalion searched the towns of Hadithah, Haqlaniyah, and Barwanah, the scene of the impromptu Operation Quick Strike conducted in reaction to the killing of the Marine sniper teams of 3d Battalion 25th Marines in August. In addition to killing foreign fighters and insurgent groups, Colonel Davis sought to establish a U.S. and later Iraqi Army presence and in general prepare these towns for elections.

Under the control of Colonel Davis and his RCT-2 command group, the operation opened with isolation moves blocking movement out of the target area: an Iraqi special operations company blocked movement to the north near Hadithah Dam, and on the left bank of the Euphrates River, the Iraqi 7th Reconnaissance Battalion, 7th Division covered the eastern flank while 1st LAR Battalion screened and then occupied Barwanah. On the right bank, 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry moved against Haqlaniyah by air assault, using 12 CH-46E helicopters supported by 3d Platoon, Company B, 1st Tank Battalion and a company of the Iraqi 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Division. At Hadithah, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey R. Chessani, moved into three zones supported by the tank company headquarters and 1st Platoon; another company from the Iraqi 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade; and the 2d Battalion, 3d Brigade, 7th Division.

During this operation, Iraqi troops discovered sophisticated propaganda production equipment in a house in Hadithah. The items seized included numerous al-Qaeda in Iraq compact discs and audiotapes, three computers, several printers, banner makers, multi-disc copiers, and thousands of blank discs and tapes. Troops later discovered a complete bomb-making facility in the same town.

When the operation terminated on 20 October, Major General Huck reported construction of the firm bases underway and polling places secured. The damage to the enemy included 12 enemy killed and 172 suspects detained with 30 caches and 96 explosive devices discovered. The 3d Platoon, Company C, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion built the firm bases Sparta, Raider, and Horno in the three towns (Hadithah, Haqlaniyah and Barwanah). In addition to the helicopter support for the Army paratroopers, RCT-2 also conducted a combined air assault raid by 2d Force Reconnaissance Company and the Iraqi special operations company in the vicinity of Abu Hyat against a known high value target, taking several detainees in the process. Marines called for air support to deliver ordnance as large as 2000 pound bombs, when targeting a cave complex.[153]

Operations Iron Fist and River Gate also covered part of the continued Iraqi Army movement into al-Anbar Province, as the three battalions of the Iraqi 3d Brigade, 7th Division deployed to Hit,

Haditha, and Rawah, while the 1st Brigade headquarters and its 1st Battalion of the 1st Division deployed to al-Qaim. On 13 October came another welcome reinforcement in the form of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Colonel James K. La Vine), reporting to Major General Huck for tactical direction after it reported to Major General Johnson for operations and received its own AO Tucson on 26 October, where it began counterinsurgency and route security operations.

The Constitutional Referendum, 15 October 2005

The combat operations in al-Anbar Province preceeded the referendum at all of the polling sites selected and surveyed during the previous five months. During the weekend of 1–2 October, the Independent Election Commission-Iraq, apparently on the basis of local sentiments and because it wished to demonstrate greater self-reliance, changed the logistics and security arrangements for the more settled parts of al-Anbar. Instead of using the polling centers surveyed and secured by Coalition forces, the election commission opened approximately 87 independent polling centers, operated and provisioned by the local Iraqi population, with local police and unarmed guards for security. Accordingly, the polling centers east of Ramadi to the eastern limits of the II MEF area of operations operated with Facility Protection Service and Iraqi police security. In the western zones, the original plan prevailed for employing Iraqi Security Forces, including Iraqi Army troops, in the inner and middle cordons of the polling centers, backed up by Coalition military quick reaction forces as the outer cordon.[154]

Despite these changes, the II MEF organization proved sufficient to execute the referendum with few setbacks. Transportation, billeting, and supplies for the polling workers succeeded except for food. Contractors provided food to polling workers at al-Asad Air Base and Taqaddum Air Base. Beyond these arrangements, the plan was to provide polling workers with halal meals and bottled water. Most workers remained for one to three days at the air bases before moving on to forward bases near their polling centers. In some instances polling workers staged protests due to their dissatisfaction with halal meals. At Baghdad International Airport, airport security personnel confiscated the cellular telephones of election commission personnel assembled there for flights to al-Asad Air Base and Taqaddum Air Base. Even though al-Anbar Province had limited cell phone service, the commission relied on these phones for communications nationwide. Even satellite telephones failed to connect in western Anbar, and so Marines had to assist in unsnarling the communications at most polling centers.

The commission's expectations for local arrangements in the eastern part of the zone were met. Besides moving commission officials, polling center kits and ballots between air bases and local distribution points, Marines there provided little in the way of logistics support to the commission. The "local" model likely succeeded for a number of reasons such as the improved security environment, emergent Fallujah leadership, and the adaptability of Marine and Army units. The security model used by 2d Marine Division proved effective, however. On 12 October, Marine units seized polling sites and immediately moved pre-staged force protection materials to properly barricade the polling sites. Between 13 and 14 October, polling workers occupied polling sites with U.S. units providing security escort. While insurgents conducted a few harassing attacks during the referendum, no voters or polling workers were injured at a polling site.

Imperceptible to the outside observer, several measures taken by II MEF provided for better results than had been in the January 2005 election. In the days leading up to the referendum, 2d Marine Division attacked locations considered likely firing positions for insurgent rocket and mortar attacks by indirect fire. During the January 2005 election, the daily average of indirect fire attacks had increased from the usual 12 to 36 the day before the election and 57 on the day of the election. Radar coverage of potential attack sites was evaluated to ensure previously used firing locations were appropriately covered. In the case of the referendum, no increase in these kinds of attacks occurred. Only five attacks by explosive devices occurred during the voting period, all occurring while the supporting electronics support aircraft was off station refueling. The division requested continuous airborne fixed wing coverage for close air support and surveillance patrols over three sectors: Ramadi-Fallujah; Hit-Haditha; and al-Qaim-Rawah. These aircraft remained on station from six hours before pollings opened until six hours after the pollings closed. Finally, E-8 Joint STARS aircraft monitored vehicle movement along routes

between Ramadi during voting hours and during curfew hours. The aircraft also remained ready to track indirect fire trajectories, although none occurred in that sector.[155]

Due to the detailed planning and actions of Marines soldiers and Iraqi security troops, tens of thousands of voters in al-Anbar Province ignored the threat of attack and cast ballots in the constitutional referendum on a remarkably calm day with isolated insurgent attacks but no major bombings or mass killings. Ramadi remained a problem, and soldiers forced three of the city's main polling centers to close shortly after opening at 0700 hours. Hospital officials said that at least seven people seeking to vote were killed by insurgents. Ammar Rawi, manager of the electoral commission in Ramadi, added that most of the "turnout came from the outskirts of the city." Muhammed Jamaili, manager of the electoral commission in Fallujah, opined that 93 percent of the city's 257,000 registered voters participated in the referendum. The population in the far west, in the area of RCT-2, cast a mere 7,510 votes, virtually none at Hit and Haditha.[156]

Although Sunni Arabs rejected the terms of the constitution, they took a significant part in the voting in this referendum and therefore in the process of moving toward self-government. The soldiers, sailors and Marines under the direction of II MEF could take pride in the results posted in their three "governorates."

With the approval of the constitution, Operation Liberty Express remained in effect to support the required 15 December elections for a permanent government. Had the constitutional referendum failed, the National Assembly would have been dissolved, and a new transitional government would have been elected to attempt to write another permanent constitution, thus reverting to the awkward situation of the previous year.

Continued Counterinsurgency Operations supporting "Liberty Express"

Area of operations (AO) Tucson furnished battle space for the newly arrived 13th MEU elements. Major General Huck charged it with interdicting smugglers and insurgents operating in the vast area between ar-Rutbah in the west and al-Muhammadi in the east, where Iraqi Route 10 approaches its junction with Route 12 (the main route running the right bank of the Euphrates from Hit to al-Qaim). Because of the frequent assignments of the LAR battalions to operations in the western Euphrates River valley throughout the campaign, Marines had spent little time covering the valley to date. Colonel La Vine established his headquarters at al-Asad Air Base, where his Medium Helicopter Squadron 163 worked under the direction of 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. He detailed 2d Battalion, 1st Marines to Rutbah on 26 October, where it operated out of Camp Korean Village. At the other extremity of AO Tucson, Battery C, 1st Battalion, 11th Marines, which was an artillery battery made into a provisional rifle company, covered the intersection of the two highways, taking its direction directly from Colonel La Vine's command post. This security mission also served to prepare 13th MEU for its major contribution the next month in Operation Steel Curtain.[157]

The II MEF staff also worked to support the new "Desert Protector" program, used as a form of tribal engagement to produce reliable scouts in the province. The initial cohort came from the Albu Mahal tribe of al-Qaim. They were sent to the East Fallujah Iraqi Army Camp for two weeks of training and then returned to al-Qaim to work with special operations units as scouts. Coalition and Iraqi commands released little information about special forces' missions in Iraq, but 2d Division monthly summaries indicated Army, Navy, and Iraqi special forces' missions excluding AO Biloxi.[158]

In the aftermath of the referendum, where the aim of II MEF actions focused upon the main population centers, the moment finally arrived to pacify the tumultuous border towns around al-Qaim. Operation Steel Curtain (al-Hajip Elfulathi) occurred in Husaybah, Karabilah, and Ubaydi from 3 to 22 November and marked the first large-scale employment of multiple battalion-sized units of Iraqi Army forces in combined operations with Coalition Forces since the Second Fallujah Bat-

Governorate	Demographics	Votes	Percentage For	Percentage Against
Karbala	Shi'a Arab majority	264,674	96.58	3.42
An Najaf	Shi'a Arab majority	299,420	95.82	4.18
Al-Anbar	Sunni Arab majority	259,919	3.04	96.9
Total		9,852,291	78.59	21.41

tle. The objective was to restore Iraqi sovereign control along the Iraq-Syria border and to destroy foreign fighters operating throughout the al-Qaim region. Beginning in the summer, the combat capabilities of the Iraqi forces in al-Anbar Province had grown, approaching the numerical equivalent of two full infantry divisions of Iraqi Army soldiers. Iraqi soldiers now worked alongside soldiers and Marines in detailed clearing missions. In addition, Iraqi Army soldiers provided security and helped facilitate the care and well-being of residents displaced from their homes because of the operation. They provided perimeter security and screened displaced civilians to detect foreign fighters trying to infiltrate the shelter areas or to escape cordons. They also helped to distribute thousands of meals, blankets, and health and sanitation items to their fellow citizens. Operation Steel Curtain also saw the employment of locally recruited and specially trained scout platoons. The Desert Protectors assisted the combat units clearing the city. Because of their familiarity with the region, the local tribes, and the local dialects, these scouts could detect suspicious individuals, including a terrorist attempting to evade identification by wearing women's clothing, and 21 suspected insurgents hiding amongst the civilians in a displacement camp near Ubaydi.

Assembling over 4,500 Marines sailors and soldiers, for the largest Marine Corps operation since the second Fallujah battle, Colonel Davis' RCT-2 began Steel Curtain with a clearing of Husaybah. His task organization for the operation included 3d Battalion, 6th Marines; Battalion Landing Team 2d Battalion; 1st Marines from 13th MEU; 1st LAR Battalion; 2d Force Reconnaissance Company; 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry; 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry; and the Iraqi 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Division (later joined by 2d and 3d Battalions). Moving in the early hours of 1 November, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines concentrated its three rifle companies at Camp Gannon facing the town with the Syrian frontier to the rear. Effecting a lodgment in the town's northwestern corner at 0400 hours on 5 Novembers and then joined by a company of the Iraqi 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, the battalion held while 2d Battalion, 1st Marines and another Iraqi company moved into the southwest quadrant of the town and came abreast at about 1000 hours. Together, the two battalions then advanced to clear every structure in Husaybah, from west to east. By the end of the first day, the two battalions held a quarter of the town, inflicting several casualties on the insurgents and foreign fighters, who defended with small arms, rocket launchers, and explosive devices. In three days, the two battalions cleared the town and encamped on its eastern limits, having killed dozens of enemy and detaining over two hundred more suspects while other elements of RCT-2 gathered several hundred displaced persons into holding areas where they received food, water, and medical attention, and processing.

The two battalions continued across an open triangular area between Husabayah and the next objective, western Karabalah, clearing houses and encountering explosive devices and mines the next two days, 8–9 November. Shifting to the north, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines cleared western Karibalah from north to south in three days, encountering mostly mines and booby traps, while 2d Battalion, 1st Marines moved west to east in coordination. By 12 November, both of these towns had been cleared of enemy insurgents, foreign fighters, and their explosive devices.

Leaving 3d Battalion, 6th Marines holding the two cleared towns, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines and the Army parachute infantry battalion shifted east to repeat the clearing operation, this time at Ubaydi. Beginning in the early morning of 14 November, the Army paratroopers cleared Old Ubaydi in a day, while 2d Battalion, 1st Marines took two days to clear New Ubaydi against stiff opposition. The 2d and 3rd Battalions of the Iraqi 1st Brigade also provided a company each in the clearing of this, the last targeted town of the operation. With the occupation of a battle position in Ubaydi by Weapons Company, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines all three towns had been cleared. As Lieutenant Colonel Alford characterized it to a combat correspondent on 20 November, "This place has needed to be cleaned out for awhile."

The two Marine Corps assault battalions lost 10 men killed in the operation, and a total of 59 Army and Marine Corps and nine Iraqi Army wounded as opposed to the reported 139 enemy killed and one wounded prisoner. A further 388 suspected insurgents became detainees and over a thousand displaced persons entered Coalition humanitarian relief facilities from both Husabayah and Ubaiydi. Operation Steel Curtain saw nearly continuous air support, with 67 air strikes called in by controllers. Over 100 precision-guided munitions were employed during this operation. Avi-

Table 10-1 Operation Sayaid 2004–2005 Summary[162]

II MEF Direct Action	Enemy Direct Action	Casualty Summary
176 Air Strikes	26 Complex Attacks	
2 Ground guided missile Strikes	315 Indirect Fire Attacks	50 U.S. Killed
279 Engagments of Enemy actions	310 Total Explosive/Mine Attacks	324 U.S. Wounded
678 IED and Mine Discoveries	241 Explosives Attacks	57 U.S. Non-battle Injuries
20 Vehicle Bomb Discoveries	3 Vehicle Bomb Attacks	4 U.S. Non-battle Deaths
499 Cache Discoveries	12 Suicide Vehicle Bomb Attacks	15 Iraqi Forces Killed
509 Detainee Events = 2308 detainees	53 Mine Attacks	89 Iraqi Forces Wounded
633 escalation of force incidents	1 Suicide Vest Bomber	1 Iraqi Force Non-battle deaths
11 Battalion Level Operations	310 Small Arms/Rocket Attacks	5 Iraqi Forces Non-battle injuries
5 Recuiting Events = 150 recruits		757 Enemy Killed
34 Raids, targeted		64 Enemy Wounded
17 Mosque Enteries		
16 Cordon and Search, targeted		
2,430,000 Leaflets Dropped		

ation also played a key role by providing combat re-supply of tank ammunition and water as well as multiple casualty evacuation missions.[159]

In the aftermath of Operation Steel Curtain, the Iraqi 1st Brigade began to establish itself with its headquarters at al-Qaim. As the soldiers of its 1st Battalion patrolled the streets of Husaybay, Karabilah and Ubaydi, the 3d Battalion occupied the newly built northern combat outpost on 30 November, partnering with 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry in backing up the reoccupied border forts to the north of the Euphrates, and 2d the Battalion occupied the southern combat outpost on 14 November, although then only 15 percent complete. [160]

The employment of 2d Battalion, 1st Marines in Operation Steel Curtain came with no relief for the 13th MEU mission in AO Tucson, and the battalion's alternate command group continued to operate from Camp Korean Village with the assault amphibian vehicle and light armored reconnaissance platoons. The upcoming rotation of the Army's 155th Brigade signified that a relief of its 2d Battalion, 114th Field Artillery at Hit would become necessary. The Army declined to replace the battalion, so the II MEF and 2d Marine Division commanders alerted Colonel La Vine that 13th MEU would take responsibility for Hit and its surrounding battle space. On 23 November, Colonel La Vine assumed tactical control of the Army battalion, the Iraqi 1st Battalion, 2d Brigade, 7th Division, and a new area of operation "Fairbanks." This area assigned not only Hit to the 13th MEU but also maintained much of the eastern portion of former AO Tucson now disestablished. After a brief period of reconstitution, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines relieved the Army unit at Hit, supported by Lieutenant Colonel Donald J. Liles' MEU Service Support Group 13, with a transfer of authority on 10 December. As the national election approached, the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines undertook a clearing action across the Euphrates from Hit in Operation Iron Hammer (Matraqa Hadidia) during 30 November to 4 December. While the 2d Battalion, 114th Field Artillery and 1st Battalion, 2d Brigade, 7th Division maintained security in Hit itself, the Marine battalion, the 1st Company of the Iraqi battalion, and 30 desert protector scouts crossed to clear the Hai Al Becker district and to establish a base for the Iraqi battalion to occupy, thereby securing the eastern side of the city. With this improvement of security, the Hit Bridge was opened to foot traffic. During this operation, troops destroyed five explosive devices and detained 19 suspected insurgents.[161]

During the same month, RCT-8, now under command of Colonel David H. Berger, conducted its Operation Trifecta (10–20 November) to disrupt insurgent activity in the Ziadon area; this operation included aviation support with a simultaneous insert of 144 Marines into three landing zones. The 2d Battalion, 2d Marines conducted a heliborne cordon of Sadan Market while follow on forces conducted the sweep. This rapid cordon prevented insurgents from escaping, and this cor-

don and knock operation also integrated communications jamming by EA-6B aircraft. The 1st Reconnaissance Battalion also conducted a helicopter insert to support its Operation Southern Hunter. These battalion sweeps resulted in the capture of numerous arms caches and detainees, but no close combat occurred. The reconnaissance battalion also received dedicated utility helicopter support on strip alert if its sniper teams were compromised. These aircraft also performed other missions, but launched with the sniper extract locations in case they were needed. Ongoing missions included company-sized raids, cordon and knock operations, and convoy escort. For example, on 1 December, a sniper attack on civilians produced a two-company sweep by 2d Battalion, 6th Marines aided by Iraqi Army search teams and a FAST platoon (Fleet Antiterroist Security Team) through the city zones 51 and 52 to find and to kill the snipers.[163]

The 2d Brigade, 28th Infantry Division conducted Operation Tigers (25–26 November), a clearing operation in the Mulaab District of eastern Ramadi with both fixed and rotary wing aircraft in support. Colonel Gronski then sent the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines and the 2d Battalion, 1st Brigade, 7th Division against the same area for a cordon and search operation and targeted raids, continuing into the adjacent al-Dubaht District in his Operation Shank (Harba) during 2–3 December to find weapons caches and to disrupt enemy activity. Similar operations covered most other districts of the city, along with an intensive route clearance effort and several terrain-denial artillery missions, all in late November through mid-December. In a local setback, soldiers had to raid the home of Brigadier General Shakir to recover the Iraqi Police payroll on 4 November. New Iraqi units arrived in Ramadi, including the 2d Special Police Commando Brigade on 7 December and the 1st Company, 9th Tank Battalion, equipped with T-55 tanks, on 10 December, indicating the importance of taming this most dangerous Iraqi city.[164]

Supporting the National Election (15 December 2005)

Marine Corps and Army commanders in al-Anbar Province benefited greatly from the previous experiences with election security and support. Planning for the national election in December now incorporated the contingencies of adjusting to frequent and unpredictable changes in the concept for conduct of the election by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq. This aspect bore fruit right away because the commission this time permited the local citizens of Ramadi to provide security for the polling sites within the provincial capitol and the surrounding area. Ultimately, this concept provided an expanded voting opportunity for the citizens of Ramadi by expanding the number of polling sites on election day. The Ramadi Action Plan to increase Sunni participation in Ramadi from only two percent for the October 15 Referendum was based on the assumption that intimidation by al-Qaeda of Iraq and other extremist and foreign groups was the principal cause of the province's chaos. The plan's countermeasures included the assignment of the 2d Special Police Commando Brigade and the Iraqi Army tank company to Ramadi to assist in bolstering official Iraqi presence in the city.

As before, the 2d Marine Division and 155th Brigade began securing polling sites on 12 December and transporting polling workers and polling material from forward bases to polling sites. In eastern Anbar, U.S. and Iraqi forces provided area security and limited logistics support for the 113 Independent Election Commission-established polling centers. In western al-Anbar Province the Coalition forces provided both area and point security and logistics support for 30 Coalition-established polling sites. By noon on 14 December, troops or police had secured all polling centers throughout al-Anbar Province with their polling workers inside.

To facilitate the vote and to aid security measures, the Iraqi government declared a national holiday during 13–15 December, a nationwide curfew for 13–17 December from 2200 to 0600, and a prohibition on carrying of weapons, even with a valid weapons card, during 13–17 December. In addition, the government closed international and provincial borders, except for fuel, food, and medical vehicles; closed international airports; placed all security forces on full standby status; and prohibited vehicular movement during 14–17 December except for security forces and vehicles with placards issued by the Ministry of Interior.[165]

Essentially, the U.S. forces in al-Anbar Province employed the same measures for air support, electronic support, and surveillance as in the October referendum, achieving at least equal success. Approximately 800 polling workers and election support team members were flown by helicopter

between the transit centers, e.g., al-Asad Air Base, and nine different outlying sites. While complex, the air movements were executed smoothly because lift requirements and movement plans were identified and coordinated with higher headquarters early in the planning process and then synchronized daily with subordinate units. Additionally, back up ground movement plans were developed if inclement weather precluded air operations. Providing contracted hot meals for polling workers helped to maintain morale and to alleviate behavior problems. Additionally, commission officials billeted at the command and control locations for extended periods required sustenance. In eastern al-Anbar Province, Coalition and Iraqi Army Forces provided area security, while Iraqi police and local guards provided point security. In western al-Anbar Province, Coalition and Iraqi security forces provided point and area security. The troop commitments required for security in western al-Anbar Province limited the number of polling sites the division could establish.

Only two attacks by indirect fire occurred during the national election, compared to the 10 such attacks during the referendum. By almost every measure, the 15 December election succeeded in al-Anbar Province beyond expectations. Sunnis turned out in such large numbers that additional ballot materials had to be provided from reserves held by the regiment and brigade commanders in each area of operations.

Turnout for the election was reported to be high, and just over 12 million people voted, which was 75 percent of the electorate. Sunnis in particular voted in much greater numbers than in January, and perhaps more than in the October election judging by the temporary ballot shortages in al-Anbar Province. Some insurgent groups apparently kept their promised election day moratorium on attacks, even going so far as to guard the voters from attack. As reported in the U.S. press:

> The story was the Sunni vote. In Ramadi, a provincial capital reduced to cratered buildings and empty streets by two years of warfare between insurgents and U.S. forces, fighting on the day of Iraq's Oct. 15 constitutional referendum kept turnout below 2 percent. More than 80 percent turned out Thursday in Ramadi and other insurgent strongholds in far western Iraq's Upper Euphrates valley, estimated a Ramadi election official, Yaseen Nouri. The exceptions were towns along the Syrian border, he said, where U.S. military operations against insurgents had made refugees of local people.
>
> Long lines formed outside voting centers in Ramadi on Thursday despite an insurgent bombing at 7 a.m., when pollings opened nationwide. Masked guerrillas of the anti-U.S. Iraqi Islamic Army movement, wearing tracksuits and toting AK-47 assault rifles, went out among houses to encourage people to vote. Witnesses said the guerrillas told them: Do not be afraid, we will protect you.
>
> In Fallujah, children played soccer in the streets and crowds gathered in and around polling places, enjoying the three-day traffic ban and the release brought by voting. "Right now, the city is experiencing a democratic celebration," said Dari Abdul Hadi Zubaie, the mayor, who compared it to a wedding. Many of those who cast ballots in the city of about 250,000, west of Baghdad in Anbar province, said they considered voting an act of resistance against the continued presence of U.S. Marines in Fallujah. On Thursday, polling sites were protected by Iraqi police, while Marines withdrew to a perimeter no closer than 100 yards away.

Six months after the election, negotiations for a "government of national unity" succeeded and a political Coalition supported it under the leadership of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.[166]

Closing Out 2005: Counterinsurgency Operations and Force Realignments

With the completion of the national election, Operation Liberty Express terminated on 22 December. That day also marked the official end of Operation Sayaid. The Iraqi government had announced the restoration of control of its borders on 30 November, with a celebration conducted for the benefit of the media. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines participated in a flag raising ceremony at battle position Hue at Husaybah, signifying the transfer of control of the area from U.S. to Iraqi forces. General Casey attended, as senior U.S. commander in Iraq, accompanied by the Iraqi defense and interior ministers, and the battalion provided a rifle company reinforced by tanks as security, which also included continuous air coverage. In

the view of the II MEF commander, Major General Johnson, "This is a significant milestone that will highlight the initial progress to date in border defenses, training of Department of Border Enforcement personnel, and the commitment and growing capability of the Iraqi government and its security forces." Although Border Forts 4 through 6 remained incomplete at the end of the year, Iraqi Army units had already moved into border town garrisons and had manned the combat outposts north and south of the Euphrates. Construction would begin before year's end in refurbishing the former port of entry at Husaybah. In December, however, the II MEF staff urged higher headquarters to first upgrade the ports of entry at Waleed and Trebil before opening the port of entry in the al-Qaim zone.[167]

Very few "named" counterinsurgency operations occurred in the immediate aftermath of the December election, but the ongoing operations sufficed to keep order in the province, and a certain euphoria could be noticed among the population as well as the U.S. and Coalition fighting forces. In the Hadithah area, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines ran some sweeps through suspected cache sites in Operation Red Bull (20–31 December). A similar operation, Operation Green Trident (23–31 December), saw 1st Reconnaissance Battalion sweeping around the Coalition logistics base area Dogwood and uncovering numerous caches. Outside Ramadi, 1st Battalion, 172d Armor cleared Tammin and Jazirah on the eastern and northern outskirts as a disruption effort in Operation Bulldog (28–31 December) but in this case fought four engagements, taking 17 detainees and had two attacks each by indirect fire and explosive devices. Clearly, Ramadi remained dangerous.[170]

The final tally for the long-term umbrella Operation Sayaid reported by II MEF summarized the results of the 3,840 actions it encompassed during the second half of 2005, reflecting the vastness of western al-Anbar Province inself as well as the absence of control over it.

At the same time that II MEF's staff reported these accomplishments, it began to adjust to reductions in its forces in the aftermath of the elections and the focus of effort that Ramadi and Fallujah had attracted from the Multinational Corps-Iraq.

The pending rotation of the Army's 2d Battalion, 112th Infantry in December left al-Taqaddum without a local security infantry unit, and the Army offered no replacement for it. The same applied to the 3d Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, which had served in the 2d Marine Division only as part of the Operation Sayaid reinforcements received with the return of area Saber in October. The II MEF planners began to study base consolidation as a way to continuing operations with fewer units, although the Iraqi Army forces at year's end began to approach what the campaign plan had envisioned as the minimum requirement for success. In the end, the Army made available for al-Taqaddum the Illinois National Guard 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, one of many units the Army began to extend to meet increasing manpower needs. The future was clear for succeeding Marine Corps deployments: more and more of these security unit assignments would come from Marine Corps commands.[172]

One reduction in II MEF responsibilities came with the decision by the Multinational Corps commander to realign the provinces of Karabala, Najaf, and northern Babil Province under the Multinational Division-Baghdad, commencing with the relief of the 155th Brigade and the transfer of its authority to the incoming 2d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division on 5 January 2006. Henceforth, the Marine Corps contingent took exclusive responsibility in Iraq for al-Anbar Province.

The expiration of the period that 13th MEU had been assigned to Iraq by General Abizaid's Central Command drew closer, but the incoming 22d MEU had been made available for employment in al-Anbar Province in time for a relief by like units in AO Fairbanks. The decision by General Abizaid to permit the 13th MEU to remain ashore in Hit through mid-February allowed for its relief to be incorporated into the rotation of the entire II MEF in 2006. Accordingly, Colonel Kenneth F. McKenzie reported with his 22d MEU to 2d Marine Division on 17 December and relieved 13th MEU on 27 December. Only two more months remained for the II MEF campaign at this point. Since late 2003, 470 Marines had been killed in action and 4,823 wounded in action in Iraq.[173]

CHAPTER 11:

Redeployment and Relief

Although the previously held illusions of success in 2004 after the Second Battle of Fallujah and January 2005 elections had faded for the Marines of II MEF, indications suggested again in early 2006 that the insurgency had passed its apogee and that self-government and security for Iraq would be obtained in the near future. The culmination of these forces most likely would occur in the next year's rotation of U.S. forces, and the incoming I MEF forces might just become the last vestige of Multinational Forces-West in Iraq.[174]

In addition to the December 2005 national election and the noteworthy Sunni participation that took place, Marines and soldiers also took heart in the long-awaited arrival of new Iraqi military and security forces in al-Anbar Province. The Iraqi divisions and brigades even began to take over forward operating bases previously manned by U.S. forces and emboldened thoughts that the they would replace American forces in their roles and tasks as well. Although fielding an effective police force remained a difficult objective, planners sought to produce a new police force in the same manner that an effective national Army seemed to be taking form.

II MEF Assesses the Near Term Missions

Major General Johnson and his staff presented his assessment to the incoming Multinational Corps-Iraq commander, Lieutenant General Peter W. Chiarelli, and his V Corps staff in January. Although Marines and soldiers had registered success in 2005, al-Anbar Province remained a dangerous place with a local active Sunni insurgency as well as sharing the nationwide insurgency. A persistent and permanent presence of Coalition troops continued as a requirement for future success. Only with such a sound military presence could the development of the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police forces be undertaken. After fielding the Iraqi military and police units required Coalition force partners as backups and for further training to make them effective forces.

Operating in tandem, Coalition and Iraqi forces needed both experience and numbers to carry the fight to the enemy and deny it sanctuary and freedom of movement. Only when augmented by sufficient and capable Iraqi forces would the Coalition begin to provide for the local interaction of the civilian population. Thus, no reductions in force levels for the foreseeable future would be considered. Rather, the existing Coalition forces had to maintain their presence and to exploit the successes claimed for Operation Sayaid.

The enemy situation by year's end indicated that a change of the Sunni resistance in the province might be occurring. The insurgency formed part of the larger and complex Sunni-based threat across Iraq. It continued to demonstrate resiliency with the ability to re-arm and re-constitute forces and to fund itself. Filling the power vacuum left by the removal of Saddam Hussein, five major groupings of Sunni insurgents continued to operate, estimated in proportions as Sunni religious extremists (30%), former regime elements (10%), emerging elites (7%), and tribes and criminals (50%).

The oft-touted foreign fighter element in the overall insurgency posed less of an immediate problem. In all of 2005, forces under II MEF had detained 9,695 Iraqis as suspected insurrectionists, some 40 percent of those captured nationally, compared to only 141 third country nationals detained or killed, amounting to 30 percent of those taken across Iraq.

Marines and soldiers at the forward operating bases had reported incidents of combat between competing insurgent groups during the year. Analysts determined that the second half of 2005 had seen a widening schism developing. Extremists and moderate Iraqi groups pursued divergent agendas, mainly over the alternatives of participating in the Iraq political process or in continuing to wage war. The Sunni who had previously rejected the political alternative began perceptibly to see political participation as a means to counter the growing Shi'a threat they perceived and to restore Sunni power and influence in what seemed now an emerging, democratic Iraqi state.

If the Coalition forces could demonstrate the power to restore at last the damaged infrastructure and to provide local security for the population, U.S. analysts foresaw a possible weaning of the Iraqi insurgents from violence and redirectiong them into supporting the political processes.

The reconstruction effort in al-Anbar Province drew from a fiscal pooling of $202.5 mil-

lion from the Iraq relief and Reconstruction Relief Fund, $65.5 million of the Development Fund for Iraq and $92.3 million of the Commander's Emergency Response Program. The first two programs supported 239 projects in al-Anbar Province, all but 10 under contract by 10 January 2006. Those projects completed by then amounted to the following:

Amount ($million)	Project
33 (25%)	electrical substations and distribution
39 (30%)	potable water; wastewater systems
26 (20%)	healthcare and education facilities
28 (20%)	police and fire stations; Army and border enforcement
8 (5%)	roads and bridges

The Commander's Emergency Response Program added local projects reported in separate categories:

Water and Sanitation	$26.1 million
Telecommunication	$11.4 million
Education	$9.2 million
Healthcare	$5.8 million
Others	$39.8 million

During the same year, the fielding of Iraqi security forces to al-Anbar Province had improved markedly:

Nov 04	No effective forces
Mar 05	2,829 Personnel
Jan 06	19,000 Personnel
Mar 06	Projected: 21,000 Personnel 2 Division headquarters 7 Army brigades (21 Battalions) 2 Special Police battalions 7 Border Defense Force battalions 1,700 Fallujah Police

The missing link at this juncture was the police forces required for the Euphrates River valley west of Fallujah.[175]

The "Year of the Police" in al-Anbar Province, 2006

The Marine Corps commanders and their planners saw the solution of the problem of establishing a police force, based on the model used in Fallujah. Beginning in al-Qaim and working through the Hadithah-Hit corridor, assessment teams engaged the local leadership to determine their level of support, calculating numbers of former police officers, equipment and infrastructure remaining and required for each town and village. The teams included engineers able to assess station suitability and actually begin drafting the renovation projects. After finishing their surveys, the teams returned to al-Qaim and began screening candidates for the police academy. Police transition teams then took over and sustained the process.

The fielding of an effective police force in al-Anbar Province was the priority task for the Multinational Force-West during 2006: the goal was to transition from Coalition and Iraqi security forces to civilian police. The plan for reconstruction of the police sought to establish nine Iraqi police districts deploying 11,330 policemen in the province, with the main concentrations at these locatins:

al-Qa'im and Hussayba	2,000
Hadithah	800
Hit	900
Ramadi	4,000
Fallujah	1,700

(other districts were ar-Rutbah, Rawah, Anah, and Habbaniyah)

The "Fallujah Model" consisted of screening and vetting the candidates and training them at the Baghdad or Joint Iraqi Police Center. After their training and equipping, the police units would deploy with advisors, local military assistance, and with a system of mentoring and partnering with experienced police officers including transition teams from Coalition nations. Ongoing assessment and retraining remained the last crucial parts of the model.

The establishment of local police would signal the ability of Iraqi security forces to at last take the lead in providing local security, freeing U.S. and Coalition forces for purely military operations to support the pacification of the province.[176]

Combat Operations Continue with the Rotation of Forces

Operations in al-Anbar Province in the first two months of 2006, leading up to the relief of II MEF by the incoming I MEF forces, fell under Operation Patriot Shield II (2 January–4 April 2006). Because of the almost continuous rotation of battalions and squadrons during the period, no ma-

jor operations occurred in January and February. The operational objective remained to disrupt, to neutralize, and to interdict insurgent operations in every area of operations while the reliefs took place.

In a single month, therefore, the division's units conducted the following operations:

Jan 2006	Operation	Unit
4–8	Morgan	4/14th Cavalry
4–14	Bullshark	3d Battalion, 1st Marines; Dam Security Unit
6–10	Hedgehog	1st Battalion, 2d Marines
9–25	Sky Train	1/506th Infantry
14–25	Red Bull II	3d Battalion, 1st Marines
15–26	Koa Canyon	1st Battalion, 2nd Marines
16–25	Cache Sweeps	2d Battalion, 2d Marines
18–25	Western Shield	1st LAR Battalion
22–29	Lakota Sunrise	1st Reconnaissance Battalion
23–24	Arabian	4/14th Cavalry

A few examples must suffice of the many reported in the period. Operation Red Bull II teamed 3d Battalion, 1st Marines with the Iraqi 2d Battalion, 2d Brigade in counterinsurgency operations aimed at three towns downstream from the Hadithah Dam. Beginning on 14 January, companies and sniper teams moved into assigned zones and then commenced clearing operations simultaneously in four zones. Company K cleared South Dam Village, while Companies I and L and the Mobile Assault Company cleared Senjick, Khaffayrah and the nearby train station. The last phase, ending on 25 January, saw companies L and I clearing each side of the river up to the AO Fairbanks boundary with 22d MEU. The operation netted only one detainee but uncovered 31 caches and two explosive devices.

At nearly the same time, Colonel McKenzie's 22d MEU launched 1st Battalion, 2d Marines in Operation Koa Canyon (15–26 January), a combined sweep on both sides of the Euphrates with the Iraqi 1st Battalion, 2d Brigade moving north to south from Jubbah to the Hit operating base. The operation resulted in 20 detainees and the discovery of three explosive devices while uncovering 44 caches of weapons and ordnance.

Far to the west, the 1st LAR Battalion conducted a novel isolation action on ar-Rutbah in Operation western Shield (16–25 January). After establishing three traffic control points and battle positions, Lieutenant Colonel Robert R. Kosid's Marines brought in three teams of four bulldozers each and progressively excavated a berm surrounding the town, thus preventing any traffic from entering or departing except through the control points. This effort considerably reduced the city's value as a logistical haven for insurgents.

North of Fallujah, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion inserted teams by helicopter to scout suspected insurgent locations and to disrupt activities during the changeover of an infantry battalion in the city. Dubbed Operation Lakota Sunrise (22-29 January), the effort sent teams ranging widely in a cordon and search southward from the shore of Lake Thar Thar and also in interdiction operations along an east-west corridor some 20 kilometers north of the city.[177]

The relief of II MEF by I MEF in early 2006 demonstrated once again the value of replacing like organizations as well as indicating some new aspects of the deployment effort in the continuing campaign for al-Anbar Province. Although relieved of its operational responsibility for an-Najaf and Karbala Provinces upon the departure of the 155th Brigade, Major General Johnson negotiated with the Army commands for specific replacements for the 22d MEU, 1st Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry at Ramadi, and Task Force Phantom. Although not successful in replacing the last, a highly specialized unit, he did receive assurance by 20 January that the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry would replace the 22d MEU in AO Fairbanks and that the airborne battalion would not depart its current Ramadi assignment.[178]

The combat power fielded by II MEF, with the departure of the 155th Brigade, now became the following for 2006, intermittently swelling by the addition of a Marine Expeditionary Unit *(see table 11-1 page 114)*

The relief of the 2d Battalion, 69th Armor by the 1st Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry in the 2d Brigade, 28th Infantry Division at Ramadi officially began the 2006 transfer of authority effort, and the first Marine Corps organizations to participate in the process executed their transfers on 23 January 2006, when the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines turned over its sector in Fallujah to the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines newly arrived on its third rotation to Iraq.

In contrast to previous turnovers of Marine Corps forces in Iraq, the transfer of authority between II and I MEF lasted over three instead of two months. The last unit of the 2d Marine Di-

Table 11-1: II MEF Combat Power, January 2006[179]

Combat Power (Air)					
AH-1W	AV-8B	CH-46E	CH-53E	EA-6B	FA-18A+
25/19	10/6	35/33	16/14	5/4	11/10
76%	60%	94%	88%	80%	91%
KC-130	RQ-2B	UC-35b	UH-1N		
6/5	8/7	1/1	11/9		
83%	88%	100%	82%		
Combat Power (Air) (22d MEU)					
AH-1W	UN-1H	CH-46E	CH-53E	AV-8B	
4/2	2/2	12/11	4/4	6/5	
50%	100%	92%	100%	83%	
Combat Power (Ground) (USMC)					
Tank Combat	LAV FOV	AAV FOV	Howitzer M198	HMMWV Hardback	UAH M1114
33/27	75/73	94/92	12/12	313/293	709/661
82%	97%	98%	100%	94%	93%
Combat Power (Ground) (2d Brigade)					
M1A1/A2	M2/M3	TRK Mortar	Howitzer M109A6	Scout HMMWV Armored	UAH M114
43/43	50/45	16/16	8/8	177/170	279/270
100%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Combat Power (Ground) (22d MEU)					
Tank combat	LAV FOV	AAV FOV	Howitzer M109A6	HMMWV Hardback	
4/3	5/4	15/14	6/4	18/16	
75%	80%	93%	67%	89%	

vision departed Iraq in mid-April: Company A, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion. In particular, the aircraft squadrons arrived and departed with little or no overlap, and the gaps in the Marine Corps air order of battle perhaps reflected the global demands upon the aviation arm. When Colonel Jonathan G. Miclot relieved Brigadier General Milstead as aviation component commander on 8 February 2006 at al-Asad Air Base, his 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) only had ground support units, and both his wing staff and that of Marine Aircraft Group 16, which had relieved Marine Aircraft Group 26 on 7 February, operated at half-strength until more personnel arrived from the United States. Effectively, this measure guarded against a perceived personnel manning trend of major rotations occurring increasingly early in the calendar year. All of Colonel Miclot's aircraft squadrons, however, continued en route to the theater of operations, and squadrons of the

Table 11-2: Ground Combat Turnover January–April 2006

Initial Deployment	Replacement Unit	Base	Transfer of Authority
2-69th Armor	1-506th Inf	Ramadi	4 Jan
2d Bn, 7th Mar	3d Bn, 5th Mar	Fallujah	23 Jan
2d Bn, 2d Mar	1st Bn, 1st Mar	Fallujah	5 Feb
22d MEU	1-36th Inf	Fairbanks	14 Feb
RCT-2	RCT-7	Denver	16 Feb
RCT-8	RCT-5	Topeka	21 Feb
3d Bn, 6th Mar	1st Bn, 7th Mar	Denver	16 Mar
1st LAR (-)	3d LAR (-)	Denver	21 Mar
3d Bn, 7th Mar	3d Bn, 8th Mar	Topeka	25 Mar
3d Bn, 1st Mar	3d Bn, 3d Mar	Denver	26 Mar
2nd Bn, 6th Mar	1st Bn, 25th Mar*	Fallujah	7 Apr
1st Recon Bn	2d Recon Bn	Fallujah	11 Apr

* Of the Marine Corps Reserve infantry battalions, the 1st Bn, 25th Mar became the first to deploy for a second tour in Iraq, March 2006.

Table 11-3: Aviation Turnover January-April 2006

Departing II MEF	Incoming I MEF	Base	Present at MEF transfer 28 Feb
VMFA-332	VMFA-533	al-Asad	VMFA-533
HMM-266	2d Bn, 224th Avn (ANG)	al-Asad	—
VMGR-252(-)	VMGR-352	al-Asad	VMGR-252/352
HMLA-167	HMLA-269	al-Asad	—
HMM-161	HMM-268	TQ	—
VMA-223	VMA-513	al-Asad	VMA-223
VMU-1	VMU-2	Taqaddum	VMU-1
HMH-466	HMH-361	al-Asad	HMH-466
HMM-774	HMH-463	al-Asad	HMM-774
HMLA-369	HMLA-169	Taqaddum	HMLA-369

Table 11-4: Casualties Reported by II MEF During 2005–2006[184]

	Killed	Wounded	Non-battle death	Non-battle injuries
Marine Corps/Navy	175	1568	13	150
Army	73	507	8	46
Iraqi Forces	72	315	2	13
Total	320	2390	23	209

2d Wing's order of battle maintained the required functions. Such flexibility remained characteristic of Marine Corps aviation, but there was more variation: two of the usual three medium helicopter squadrons in the Marine aviation order of battle were replaced in this period by a heavy helicopter squadron of CH-53D helicopters and a Virginia Air National Guard helicopter battalion that operated the UH-60 series Blackhawk helicopters.

This turnover also maintained an element of continuing Army ground reinforcement in the province, but it could only be a temporary one until the Army spring rotations were completed. The Army, equally strained as the Marine Corps, could not leave all its units in Iraq—most would have to rotate to the United States following their normal rotation schedule. The Army units in areas of operations Saber and Fairbanks under RCT-2 continued to operate until their rotation dates to the United States, extended in some instances, but in the end I MEF would find itself only with the Army brigade at Ramadi as in its original campaign in al-Anbar Province.

The last turnover of major subordinate commands under the two Marine expeditionary forces came on 14 February when Colonel David M. Richtsmeier's 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) relieved Brigadier General Wissler and his 2d Group at Taqaddum. No changeover between divisions occurred because the 2d Marine Division headquarters departed Iraq during February, and the 1st Marine Division headquarters did not deploy to Iraq with I MEF. Major General Huck took command of II MEF and the Multinational Force-West on 31 January.[180]

This unusual departure from standard Marine Corps organization and doctrine began with the consolidation of the 2d Marine Division and II MEF staffs and operations centers at Camp Fallujah on 31 January 2006. The measure had its origins in 2004, when Major General Mattis assumed responsibility from the 82d Airborne Division and noted how that division handled the ground command and control requirements—specifically, the Army's method was to detail a commanding general and two deputy commanders for maneuver and support. He also sensed that the physical division of Marine Corps headquarters staffs between Camp Fallujah and Camp Blue Diamond might not be efficient. "This was a ground intensive campaign, with no deep battle and only limited aviation play, apart from the persistent interest of USAF commands in the use of USMC aviation. On the other hand, the support function remained as intensive as any corps level operation. It made little sense to have layers of command and we could make economies." Major General Mattis approached the Commandant, General Hagee, with his ideas, and the concept lay fallow until the following year. During his visit of April 2005, the Commandant asked Major Gen-

eral Johnson to study such manpower savings between the two staffs. After planning discussions with Major General Huck and staff lasting two months, Major General Johnson assured General Hagee that they could consolidate the staffs early enough such that I MEF would be able to duplicate the structure upon arrival. The restructuring of the II MEF command element provided a single staff capable of functioning both in the MEF role of Multinational Force-West and in directing the ground war as had the staff of the Marine division.[181]

The resulting organization essentially charged the II MEF "current operations" staff section with performing the daily ground operations coordination among the remaining ground combat elements, two regiments and an Army brigade combat team. The commanding general of the MEF received two deputy commanders, one for operations and the other for logistics. These actions reorganized the MEF command element structure and functioning more toward that of an Army ground corps headquarters. The resulting economies in manpower and materiel could be realized in this instance only because of the much less demanding air-ground coordination and the fixed set of military requirements in the current counterinsurgency campaign. In the end, the incoming I MEF command headquarters exercised control over three regimental-sized ground combat elements, an aircraft wing, and a logistics group.

Accordingly, when I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) reported for operations in Iraq, at its head stood neither Lieutenant General Sattler nor his deputy I MEF commander but instead Major General Richard C. Zilmer, commanding general of the forward command element, assisted by Deputy Commanding General for Operations, Brigadier General Robert B. Neller, and Deputy Commanding General for Support, Brigadier General David G. Reist, the commanding general, 1st Marine Logistics Group.[182]

Major General Huck relinquished his responsibilities to Major General Zilmer as Commanding General, Multinational Force-West, on 28 February 2006. The first campaign of II MEF in Iraq had come to its conclusion.

Major General Johnson shared his thoughts on his command's accomplishments during a 6 January 2006 video briefing he conducted from his headquarters for a Pentagon press conference in Washington DC [see sidebar below].[183]

As the first units of II MEF began to redeploy to their home bases at the end of January, the final tally of operations showed that its Marines sailors and soldiers had conducted 9,476 direct actions consisting of the following: (1) discovering and destroying 2,141 improvised explosive devices; (2) destroying 1,950 arms caches; (3) taking 4,607 offensive actions of various types; (4) firing 638 counter-battery fire missions; and (5) conducting 140 formal operations. These actions killed 1,702 and wounded 405 insurgents, and detained 10,578 suspected insurgents.

The human cost to friendly forces was heavy. During this initial campaign in Iraq of the II MEF, its assigned Coalition forces sustained some 2,942 casualties.

At the time of the transfer of authority between Major Generals Huck and Zilmer on 28

Briefing by Major General Stephen T. Johnson Commanding General, Multinational Force-West and II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) 6 January 2006

I believe 2006 is going to be another decisive year for Iraq and for her people. They'll begin to see the benefits of the recent election and the increased capability and strength of their developing security forces. Since I last briefed you, the Iraqis of al-Anbar have stepped forward and exercised their right to vote in unprecedented numbers. al-Anbar saw more than 250,000 Sunnis vote in the October referendum and approximately 370,000 in the December election. The people have shown their resolve by participating in a new and unfamiliar process, but one that offers hope for the citizens of Iraq.

If you look back over the past year at al-Anbar Province, the growth of the Iraqi Army in size, capability and professionalism has been quite remarkable. Last April, there were two Iraqi Army

brigades in al-Anbar Province. Today, partnered with Multinational Force-West units, we have two divisions of the Iraqi Army that comprise nearly 20,000 soldiers. Currently three brigades have the lead in counterinsurgency operations in their own area, and across the region, Iraqi Army battalions are bearing an increasingly larger share of the counterinsurgency fight. Along the entire border with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria, construction is complete on all but a few of the forts, and the soldiers of the Iraqi border forces are patrolling and providing security.

In the coming year in al-Anbar Province, I think you're going to see continued progress in four key areas. First, that of presence. After the recent and successful operations along the western Euphrates River Valley, a persistent presence has been established at key points with Coalition forces and increasingly capable Iraqi Army forces. This presence is providing the conditions under which Iraqi police will be introduced and assist the local governments in assuming a greater role in providing services to their people.

Secondly, Coalition force partnering with the Iraqi security forces will be key. Coalition partnership with Iraqi security forces for training of operations is key to their continued growth. Through this partnership, Iraqi security forces and readiness will grow, security conditions will improve, and opportunities for good governance, reconstruction and economic development will appear.

Third, police. The reestablishment of Iraqi police in Fallujah has been a success story. With 1,200 trained police on the streets supported by limited numbers of Iraqi Army and Coalition forces, Fallujans were able to vote safely and in large numbers in the recent election and the referendum. With 350 locally recruited police in training and 160 more in training, the force will soon reach its authorized strength of 1,700.

In other parts of the province, an assessment of conditions conducive to the introduction of police in towns and cities is under way. Police stations are being identified for repair. The local police chief has been nominated in the al-Qaim region, and Iraqis are screening and recruiting potential policemen. The reintroduction of a professional police force in al-Anbar will provide local leaders with security and stability that they need to take care of their own. These police will start to be introduced over the coming months in conjunction with the completion of their training. And finally, the political process. As a result of the recent elections and increased persistence conditions are favorable for change and for providing Iraqis with an opportunity to take advantage of the choices that are before them.

We are hearing an increasingly larger number of moderate voices. We want to give the political opportunities, political process a chance. The people want an inclusive government that provides an alternative to the violence like we saw yesterday in Ramadi and to sectarian divisiveness. They want to focus on the needs of their community: schools, hospitals, jobs and their families.

We're continuing to see a Sunni insurgency in al-Anbar Province, and I think we will continue to see it manifested until the political process has time to develop. The people have gone to the pollings and voted. They've elected officials. Those officials will be seated and that process will allow people to see that they have the opportunity for success, that they have the opportunity to be heard, and that there are alternatives to violence.

The detainees that we take in this province are primarily local. They are people who live in the towns in the Euphrates River Valley. When we fight them, we fight them locally. That's where they live, and that's where they come from. The vast majority is local. And while there is an element of foreign fighters who influence or who try to influence the local insurgency, it's a very, very small part of the insurgency.

Ramadi is not in flames. There are key places where there are more insurgents than are others, and we, along with our Iraqi security force partners, are going after them. But I do not see that Ramadi has become a place where they are focusing a lot more effort. I think, again, it is local people, local insurgents, primarily, who are causing the difficulties in key places, not the entire town of Ramadi.

As far as turning it over [to Iraqi forces], our forces are still partnered with those Iraqi security forces. We still provide support — logistics support, communication support and so forth, and we still work very closely with them. But they're taking the lead in planning in a number of areas. Also, where and when those forces take over is a function of how long they have been together, how long their training is — or how long have they been functioning together. Some have only come out of training since September, those in the western Euphrates primarily, and those to the east are a little more mature. One size doesn't fit all with the Iraqi security forces. Some will mature more quickly, and others will take longer. I suspect within the next — probably in the next four to six months you're going to see a number of forces who will be able to take an increasing role in the lead or increasing lead here in this area, down here in the Fallujah-Ramadi area, and it'll take a little longer for those that are newer out in the Euphrates River Valley to assume a greater role in their area. But I think in 2006 you will see a continuation and a continuing to mature of these forces throughout the battlespace.

February, the combat losses to the I and II MEF in Iraq since the first departure of forces in September, 2003 now totaled 5,541 (500 killed in action and 5,041 wounded in action).[185]

CHAPTER 12:

Continuous Operations

Although no large urban battle occurred in the II MEF campaign in Iraq, the myriad tasks confronting its soldiers, sailors and Marines differed little from the previous year's effort. The immediate military tasks included the continuous requirements for military checkpoints, patrols, police patrols, road sweeps, offensive missions, raids, cordons, and searches. The force protection requirements were equally large, and the additional penetration by 2d Marine Division units into the towns and villages surrounding the major cities and in the western Euphrates River valley multiplied greatly the number of camps, forward operating bases, and camps requiring garrisons and guards.

These continuous missions required everyone to perform typical infantry roles and tasks regardless of the type of unit or its members' Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs). Units past and present were expected to provide their own security; the degree to which most organizations undertook counterinsurgency operations exceeded past requirements, however, thus affecting the ability of units to provide force protection. Everybody had his or her duty manning guard posts and check points, mounting convoy security, and conducting all kinds of surveillance. Proper force protection in populated areas, however, required more than sentry duty; it also required frequent sweeps well outside the perimeter; local counterinsurgency measures; and serving in quick reaction forces designated for responses both inside and outside the camps. Marines and soldiers of all MOSs found themselves conducting offensive missions such as raids and neighborhood sweeps. Because of the shortage of women in the combat units who could be used to search female civilians, suspects, and detainees, most female Marines, sailors, and soldiers in the force found themselves searching such females.

In addition, the Marine Corps employed many units in the Iraq campaign in "provisional" roles, i.e., performing missions they were not trained or meant to perform. Combat engineer, amphibious assault, and artillery units were often used as provisional infantry units in the Marine Corps and other services. The Iraq campaign saw the fielding of provisional units in an increasingly widespread fashion. The initial employment of the entire 3d Battalion, 11th Marines—an artillery battalion—as a provisional military police battalion in 2004 set the mark for using artillery units in other roles, such as provisional military police units. What followed were widespread use of artillery units as well as headquarters and line companies from 4th Tank and 4th Assault Amphibian Battalions as provisional military police units. Provisional small boat detachments for Haditha Dam security came from assault amphibian, reconnaissance, light armored reconnaissance units, and an infantry regiment headquarters. In the Marine aircraft wings, the 2d and 4th Light Antiaircraft Defense Battalions were employed as provisional infantry battalions defending al-Asad Air Base. Antitank platoons, not needed as such, were used as convoy escorts and mobile reaction forces. The scarcity of civil affairs units and graves registration or personnel remains platoons caused the formation of provisional units to perform these tasks as well, drawing from various organizations of the Marine Corps Reserve.

Civil Affairs in the II MEF Campaign

One of the most predictable aspects in the Marine Corps campaign in Iraq remained the continuing scarcity of civil affairs organizations available for employment. The Marine Corps had only two Civil Affairs Groups, both comprised of the Selected Marine Corps Reservists: 3d Civil Affairs Group based at Camp Pendleton, CA and 4th Civil Affairs Group based at Anacostia, Washington, DC. As the campaign in Iraq entered its third year, the tempo and duration of operations made clear that the 3d and 4th Groups would deploy to Iraq every seven months. Accordingly, the Commandant approved establishing two provisional Civil Affairs Groups to provide operational and personnel relief for the two existing groups. These two units were designated the 5th and 6th Civil Affairs Groups (Provisional). On 4 January 2005, the Marine Corps activated the 5th Civil Affairs Group (Provisional), using cadre drawn primarily from the 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 4th Marine Division and deployed it to Iraq from March to September 2005 with the initial II MEF contingent.

Planning continued to prepare and to activate the 6th Civil Affairs Group (Provisional) to provide civil affairs support for the second increment of the II MEF in Iraq slated for deployment in

September. The 6th Civil Affairs Group was activated on 1 June 2005, less than a month after it had been established, using cadre drawn principally from the 4th Maintenance Battalion.

In each case, the challenge remained to identify over one hundred ninety Marines and sailors from Marine Corps Reserve Forces to comprise a complete group and to qualify most of them in the civil affairs military occupational specialties required for officers and noncommissioned officers. For instance, only the commanding officer and fourteen Marines joined the 6th Civil Affairs Group with civil affairs qualifications, and the remainder of the unit's members had to qualify for civil affairs. This civil affairs training greatly complicated existing requirements to complete other required combat skills training they would need for deployment to Iraq.

Civil affairs training began using mobile training teams formed by the 3d and 4th Groups after their return from Iraq. As a result of their experiences, the training teams brought not only "book" training to the provisional Civil Affairs Groups, they also brought recent experience and "lessons learned" from their tours of duty in Iraq. The training covered a full range of civil affairs topics: roles and missions units; civil military operations; the Iraqi Transitional Government; and interactions with U.S. government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the media. Additional training focused on the law of war, information operations, psychological operations, human exploitation teams, interpreters, negotiations, and mediations. In addition to the classroom training, the Marines of the provisional groups participated in practical exercises such as how to hold town meetings and to manage crowds while conducting patrols. The civil affairs training conducted by the 3d and 4th Civil Affairs Group teams, combined with the mandatory completion of the U.S. Army correspondence course and three months "on the job training," finished the necessary qualification of the provisional groups.

Each civil affairs group organized personnel into a headquarters detachment and four civil affairs detachments. Detachment 1 comprised the government support team and the Marines who would man the civil-military operations center colocated with the II MEF operations center in Fallujah. Detachments 2, 3, and 4 would support the ground combat elements in the field. Each detachment comprised five civil affairs teams with six to seven Marines in a team.

The 5th Civil Affairs Group deployed to Iraq with II MEF and relieved the 4th Civil Affairs Group at Fallujah on 10 March 2005. It immediately began to work with the Temporary Fallujah City Council, established a temporary civil-military operations center in al-Karmah, and began to facilitate completion of key projects, such as reopening the Ramadi Glass Factory. In western al-Anbar Province, teams worked with RCT-2 to support operations. During June, the Group was reassigned to the 2d Marine Division because it contained most of the key civil affairs functions. The 5th Civil Affairs Group formed the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee, and a new provincial civil-military operations center opened at Ar Ramadi. On 21 September, the 6th Civil Affairs Group took over the civil affairs functions and continued the mission, with increasing attention to the pending constitutional and national elections

The 6th Civil Affairs Group continued to maintain its Headquarters Detachment with the 2d Marine Division headquarters at Camp Blue Diamond. A civil affairs "cell" of 10 Marines from the Group served in the G-5 (Plans) staff section of the II MEF command group at Camp Fallujah, where Detachment 1 operated the government support team and civil-military operations center at al-Fallujah and the second (provincial) center at ar-Ramadi in the governor's complex. Detachment 2 supported the Army brigade in Ramadi. Detachment 3 supported RCT-2 operations in the western al-Anbar Province. Detachment 4 remained at Camp Fallujah to support RCT-8 in area of operations (AO) Raleigh. Between September and December 2005, three events influenced the 6th Civil Affairs Group's operations and civil affairs operations: Operation Sayaid; the constitutional referendum on 15 October 2005; and the election of the permanent Iraqi National Assembly on 15 December 2005.[186]

The civil affairs groups provided military support for the provincial and local governments critical to the success of the Coalition throughout al-Anbar Province. Before 2005 the provincial government of al-Anbar Province and the city councils of most major cities in the province remained mostly ineffective. Insurgents continued to intimidate and infiltrate these bodies. Al-Fallujah remained the sole major exception, where the

insurgents had been removed, and the citizens were attempting to begin self-governance. During 2005 the 2d Marine Division strove to remove the insurgents from all the major cities: ar-Ramadi, Habbaniyah, al-Qaim, and Rutbah. In the process several smaller towns became safer. Immediately after each city or town was cleared of insurgents the civil affairs detachments began to work with the leadership of the city. The civil affairs Marines talked continuouslsy with local officials to address their needs and to determine priorities for projects to improve the quality of life for civilian inhabitants.

Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division installed a communications network at the Provincial Civil Military Operations Center at Ramadi to support the Iraqi Transitional Government. This service helped facilitate a more expeditious flow of information to research and staff reconstruction projects for the province. The civil affairs detachment supporting RCT-8 rehabilitated the al-Fallujah mayor's building. This building was to become the center for the ongoing efforts by local officials to make al-Fallujah autonomous and self-sufficient in governmental matters.

A key civil affairs function in every operation in the Marine Corps campaign in Iraq aimed at building positive relationships and securing the trust of Iraqi citizens and influential local officials. This process began with by distributing 150 billion Iraqi dinars as financial compensation for damages and loss caused by the insurgents and operations against them. The Iraqi Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee promoted provincial government capability and legitimacy as it acted to determine the allocation of Coalition projects. Two water treatment facilities were restored in addition to constructing five water treatment facilities for villages in al-Anbar Province that provided fresh water for over 100,000 people. The civil affairs relationship with electrical representatives brought improvements to three substations, and the installation of additional electrical transformers increasing electrical output. Using funds from the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) allowed the refurbishing of over 25 schools for use by more than 10,000 students as well as providing medical supplies, incubators, and funding for new medical clinics. Civil affairs Marines provided food, water, shelter, clothing, blankets, and medical assistance to 4,000 displaced persons in al-Ubaydi. In the Hit area they provided 1,200 hygiene kits, 2,000 water buckets, 1,600 kerosene heaters, 1,700 sweaters and 10,000 blankets and several thousand pounds of food items. Additionally, civil affairs personnel delivered 39 primary care health care kits enabling the Iraqi Ministry of Health to provide service to 1.5 million citizens of al-Anbar Province. The overall reconstruction efforts resulted in completing 483 projects worth $18.3 million with 183 projects valued at $13.3 million in progress.

The civil affairs effort discovered the absence of a functioning plan for economic development. Utilizing key individuals, a plan was developed to engage U.S. agencies to determine programs for economic development and what funding was available to move an economic plan forward. An engagement plan was developed to begin pursing an economic development plan in al-Fallujah. Al-Fallujah was chosen based on the improved security situation. Execution typically began with a simple meeting with Iraqi businessmen and quickly grew to include more businessmen, key leaders, representatives from the United States Agency for International Development, the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office, and nongovernmental organizations. Civil affairs Marines developed relationships to fund a micro-financing program and to develop a business center to promote economic growth, training, and better business practices. The plan injected more than $5.0 million in Iraq Reconstruction Management Office funds for micro-financing in al-Anbar Province. From this beginning in Fallujah, the same plan was moved to Ramadi where 6th Civil Affairs Group began developing a business center and a systematic micro-financing. Civil affairs actions also established an agriculture development plan addressing irrigation as the primary means to improve crop production. Utilizing primarily the United States Agency for International Development Office of Transitional Initiative Funds, canals were cleared of debris.

The Regional Reconstruction Operation Center supported II MEF, the Iraqi government, the U.S. Embassy, and all organizations involved in reconstructing of Iraq by coordinating reconstruction efforts, information, logistics, and security between the contracting community, military, and Iraqi government. The reconstruction program included 531 projects in al-Anbar Province, valued at $440 million with 92 percent contracted and

45 percent work-in-place by February 2006. The reconstruction projects restored essential services in several infrastructure sectors including electrical, water, wastewater, health, education, security, justice, transportation, and communication.[187]

Aviation Support

The chief aviation challenge in 2005 continued to be the excessive operation of aircraft, largely because of the continuous need for numerous specific mission types. The daily routine support of personnel and cargo movements directly supporting combat operations required strip alert aircraft constantly ready to provide casualty evacuation, medical evacuation, tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel, quick reaction forces, and both rotary-wing and fixed wing close air support responding to "troops in contact." Other mainstay missions, usually conducted daily, included convoy escort, armed reconnaissance, intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance over-watch of critical areas and routes, fixed-wing aerial refueling, and radio relay.

Specialized missions included electronic surveillance and jamming missions flown by Marine Corps and Navy detachments of EA-6B aircraft in frequent rotation from bases in the United States to al-Asad Air Base. While technical details and capabilities remain classified, the efforts of the detachments and aircrews frequently required 14 hours per day of coverage of priority areas such as Ramadi and important surface routes.

In general, aircraft of all types under control of 2d Marine Aircraft Wing during the 2005–2006 campaign operated at 2.5 times greater than acceptable usage specified in technical documentation. Few measures existed to reduce this high usage rate given the global commitments of Marine Corps aviation and the high priorities of almost all the missions being flown. One possible remedy remained the unmanned aerial vehicle program, the drones flown by Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadrons One and Two. Only two of these squadrons, each comprising three detachments, existed in the Marine Corps, however, and their Pioneer and Scan Eagle drones already flew to the maximum extent that the craft and their operators could sustain, exceeding 1,100 hours a month, using over a dozen of these devices. Ironically, more mission capabilities and new technical upgrades had been developed and introduced by operators since 2004, which increased the demand for the drones, now employed day and night.[188]

Second Marine Aircraft Wing's close air support remained highly valuable on the battlefield. In an action typical of the larger, multi-battalion operations, the week-long combat of Task Force 3d Battalion, 2d Marines in Operation Matador (May 2005), numerous air strikes contributed to success in battle: strikes from one armed drone, 12 helicopters, and 16 fighter-bombers damaged enemy forces during the action.[189]

As the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing and Marine Aircraft Group 26 prepared to relinquish operations to the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing in 2006, the tabulated statistics below showed of the pace of aviation operations in the first II MEF campaign in Iraq:

Total Sorties	56,267 (102,797 flight hours)
Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Sorties	1,997 (10,847 flight hours)
Air Traffic Control Actions	297,633
Casualty and Medical Evacuations	4,417
Passengers carried	164,349
Cargo lifted	9,080 short tons
Tactical air requests completed	12,038
Air support requests completed	40,810

In executing the tactical air requests, the aircraft, both fixed and rotary-wing, expended 209 tons of ordnance, including 3,176 rockets and 614 precision guided munitions. The Wing's aircraft flew some 3,900 convoy escort missions and the ground support services pumped 64 million gallons of aviation fuel, while another 30 million gallons were used in aerial refueling.[190]

Logistics Operations

The unhealded science of logistics remained at the heart of the II MEF campaign in Iraq, however overlooked by the combat reports and publicity. The new look in task organized combat logistics regiments and battalions in the old Marine Corps force service support groups proved itself in the caldrons of the 2005 campaign. The redesignation of II MEF's force service support group as the 2d Marine Logistics Group on 9 November signaled the culmination of this important organizational evolution.

The activities of the Brigadier General Wissler's 2d Force Service Support Group, redesignated 2d

Marine Logistics Group, at the al-Taqqadum Air Base centered on the overall coordination of non-aviation logistics activities in AO Atlanta, including theater responsibilities for route and convoy security; support to almost all Coalition forces in the area of operations; operations and security of Camp al-Taqqadum; and supervising tenant activities supporting II MEF. The principal subordinate units (8th Engineer Support Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 25 and Combat Logistics Battalions 2 and 8) all executed continuing and special tasks specific to their missions and assigned areas. These units provided the critical and continuous logistic support to the 2d Marine Division and all its attached units and partially to the Army's 155th Brigade as well. Related tasks included convoy and route security, road sweeps and repair and explosive ordnance disposal support, aided in the last three functions by companies of the 8th Engineer Support Battalion, usually in direct support to the combat logistics battalions.

Locally at Camp Taqqadum, the Marine Armor Installation Site operated throughout the year installing kits and new protective features on the wheeled tactical vehicles of the force, principally Humvees and seven-ton trucks. Although the rate of installation increased, the continued turnover of vehicles gave an endless aspect to this work. Improvement of the cargo and personnel capacity of the airfield came with the completion of the Joint Air Cargo Operations Terminal in late June 2005. The consolidated passenger and air cargo facility improved the ability of Taqqadum to function as an air logistics hub. Because of the growing threat to ground transportation, air transportation continued to grow in priority and quantity through the campaign. The group engineers also consolidated the use of Taqqadum as a primary stop in the theater ground resupply system operated by the Army support system. A convoy marshalling yard entered service the same month, a vast graveled lot suitable for handling the new convoy routes also introduced in the theater.

The theater transportation network also depended to a great extent on privately contracted flat-bed delivery systems, drivers, and other commercial equipment items supplied by the principal contractor, Kellog, Brown and Root. By December 2005, the contracted support was so inadequate that 2d Marine Logistics Group had to employ organic tactical vehicles and engage in open contracting of third country national equipment and drivers. The demands in December grew partly from the national election support but also from the decision made by the commander, Multinational Corps-Iraq, to close the Coalition logistics base at Camp Dogwood, further ordering II MEF to effect the transfer of U.S. equipment, munitions and supplies to Taqqadum. On 28 December the last convoy departed Dogwood for Taqqadum, completing the movement of 599 tractor-trailers in the month.

Related to all the reshuffling of storage capacity, the Group completed the enlargement of Taqqadum's field ammunition storage point in December to a new explosive weight of 35 million pounds, adding seven new magazines. An equally important task performed by the Group came in the maintenance retrograde of worn equipment to the Arifjan, Kuwait rework facility operated by Commander, Marine Forces Central Command, and to the depots in the United States. A constant flow of generators, material-handling equipment, construction equipment, and combat systems flowed by air and ground transportation in and out of Iraq.

Security at Taqqadum largely centered around the assigned infantry battalion provided by the Army: first by the 2d Battalion, 112th Infantry of the Texas National Guard and then by the 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry from the Illinois National Guard. These soldiers not only provided point defense of the base and related facilities but also mounted most of the essential security patrols in the surrounding areas required to stop insurgents capable of firing mortar shells and rockets into the base or firing hand-held missiles at aircraft using the base

In the field, Colonel Robert Destafney's Combat Logistics Regiment 25, based at Camp Fallujah, performed the general support logistics missions for the Group, essentially provisioning the two direct support combat logistics battalions supporting RCT-2 and -8 and the Army brigade at ar-Ramadi. The primary means for the resupply was by convoy in the eastern part of AO Atlanta and by air in western al-Anbar Province. The latter effort required a daily C-130 sortie dedicated to the regiment's requirements, but occasionally the support of operations in the west required up to three daily flights as well as ground convoys sent as far as Camp Korean Village.

The situation for the two direct support battalions varied drastically with the terrain and sup-

ported organizations. At Camp Fallujah, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick N. Kelleher directed his Combat Logistics Battalion 8 out of Camp Fallujah to support RCT-8 and the Army brigade at ar-Ramadi, especially its attached Marine Corps infantry battalion, with occasional missions supporting the 155th Brigade in AO Biloxi. In a typical month, the battalion dispatched up to 100 supply convoys, also termed 'combat logistics patrols' in the new vernacular, to supported units as well as hundreds of crane and material handling missions. The military police and explosives ordnance disposal platoons performed dozens of convoy escort, road sweep, road repair, and explosives disposal missions each week. The battalion maintenance company provided dozens of vehicle recovery missions and contact team visits each week, including several dozen "rapid requests" in the same interval. The battalion also coordinated explosive ordnance disposal for the region, handling responses called in on the telephone hotlines for that purpose. Because of its personnel composition, the battalion also provided a squad of female Marines each day for duty with RCT-8 entry control points and checkpoints to assist in screening and searching Iraqi women. Engineers of the battalion constructed several of the control and checkpoints for RCT-8 and provided engineer support to RCT-8, the II MEF headquarters group, and Iraqi security forces in AO Raleigh.

In the non-urban "wild west" of al-Anbar Province, Colonel William S. Aitkin's Combat Logistics Battalion 2 relied much more on aviation support in performing its mission as well as using three ground supply routes while supporting RCT-2 and its units from al-Asad Air Base. With Company A, 8th Engineer Support Battalion in direct support, the battalion also undertook road sweeps, road repair and explosives disposal tasks throughout AO Denver. The surface convoys, several dozen per month, drove to Korean Village, Hit, Hadithah and al-Qaim initially, expanding their routes as other towns came under control of RCT-2 and Iraqi forces. The initial airdrops began in April and became a regular adjunct to helicopter support to the outlying operating bases. The frequency varied according to operations, but the routine became three helicopter missions and two airdrops to al-Qaim per week with one additional airdrop to Camp Korean Village. The engineers of the battalion and attached engineer support company worked to expand the al-Asad Air Base ammunition capacity and found considerable work constructing forward operating bases, permanent bases, and platoon battle positions in the area as more towns and villages came under continuing presence and control of U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Because of the distances involved and relative scarcity of quick reaction forces, the convoys and road sweeps of Combat Logistics Battalion 2 and its attachments almost always relied upon reconnaissance, escort, and close air support by light and attack helicopters of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. The air logistics effort in Al-Anbar province supporting II MEF forces contributed in no small way to the high operating tempo of the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. At the end, the 2d Marine Logistics Group staff calculated that it had saved 3,115 outbound and 5,034 inbound tractor-trailer equivalent loads of cargo by employing air transportation. Using aircraft to move supplies undoubtedly prevented many casualties that many have been incurred in ground transportation especially given the increasing mine and improvised explosive device threat in theater.[191]

In summarizing its activities in this first II MEF campaign in Iraq, the 2d Marine Logistics Group noted that it had completed the following:

Activity	Number
combat logistics patrols	3,900
security and transportation escorts	17,500
miles driven	2,800,000
explosive ordnance disposal calls	4,937
patients treated at six trauma centers	20,380
dental patients attended	23,390
surgeries performed	818
units of blood transfused	1211
route repairs	1,126
gallons of fuel dispensed from 16 sites	138,756,000
short tons of ammunition distributed	1,230
supply transactions handled	2,325,000
short tons of mail delivered	10,847

The 30th Naval Construction Regiment used its considerable construction capabilities to improve camps and facilities throughout the II MEF area. Typical contributions included electrical and force protection upgrades to existing buildings, constructing roads and berms, runway repairs, and building camps for Iraqi security forces rang-

ing from the 670-man combat outpost south in the border defense scheme to the Iraqi 1st Division's headquarters camp at ar-Ramadi for 2,100 persons.[192]

Institutional Infrastructure for the Marine Corps

At the conclusion of the II MEF campaign of 2005–2006, the Marine Corps itself demonstrated the changing circumstances of the conflict, and one notes a perceptible shift between the initial planning for forces for Iraq to a new recognition that the campaign had no clear endpoint. Marine Corps forces could count on taking responsibility for al-Anbar Province for the foreseeable future. Among the institutional changes most in evidence were the enlargement of Marine Corps staffing with Central Command, creating Marine Corps Special Operations Command, and Deactivating the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorist).

On 3 August 2005, Lieutenant General Sattler assumed command of Marine Corps Forces Central Command (MARFORCENT) in a new headquarters at Tampa manned with a separate staff, standing alone from his I MEF headquarters at Camp Pendleton. The previous Marine Corps component of CENTCOM was also MARFORCENT, but MARFORCENT at that time was a part of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC) and a "subsidiary" of MARFORPAC that was activated only when needed. When activated, MARFORCENT was staffed by MARFORPAC personnel and became the Marine component of CENTCOM.

Given the large number off responsibilities that MARFORPAC and its commander already had, the ad hoc creation of the Marine component for CENTCOM from MARFORPAC assets was deemed no longer practical or functional. Accordingly, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command became its own organization, "breaking away" from MARFORPAC; the two organizations were no longer related.

A major commitment of personnel and resources were required for this change. Brigadier General Anthony L. Jackson became Lieutenant General Sattler's deputy commander and managed the MARFORCENT staff, which occupied buildings adjacent Central Command's headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa, Florida. In addition, a permanent MARFORCENT staff organization better met the requirements of a service component under a combatant command such as CENTCOM rather than the ad hoc contingent activated using MARFORPAC personnel "diverted" to become the nucleus of the MARFORCENT component. The key functions for MARFORCENT at MacDill comprised plans, operations, command and control, and support. MARFORCENT exercised operational control over approximately 23,000–29,000 Marines and Sailors spread from Djibouti to Afghanistan. A forward staff continued to operate at Bahrain but now as a sub-unit of a permanent component staff—MARFORCENT—for that theater, not as part of a component staff created and manned by MARFORPAC personnel who "converted" into a MARFORCENT staff.[193]

The increasing commitment of U.S. forces against terrorist and other irregular forces in 2001 brought increased pressure on the Marine Corps to contribute more manpower and materiel to the structure of the U.S. Special Operations Command. After consultations, the Commandant agreed on 9 November 2001 to re-establish the Special Operations Command-Marine Corps Board to examine enhanced inter-operability between the two entities. On 4 December 2002, General Hagee directed the activation of a Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment for a two-year proof-of-concept operation with Special Operations Command. Personnel began reporting to the new unit in March, and on 20 June 2003 Detachment One activated at a new compound located at Camp Del Mar, Camp Pendleton, California. This detachment reported to the commander, Naval Special Warfare Command for operations on 1 December and deployed to Iraq on 6 April 2004 establishing a base of operations near Baghdad International Airport. Selected personnel from the intelligence element of Detachment One served with outlying task units and with other government agencies, and the remainder formed Task Unit Raider under Naval Special Warfare Task Group-Arabian Peninsula and commenced direct action raids and other operations. On 2 October 2004, the Naval Special Warfare Task Group-Arabian Peninsula closed its operations and Detachment One returned to Camp Pendleton.

The proof of concept undertaken by Detachment One spawned continuing interest in a Marine Corps component for the joint command, leading to a positive decision by the secretary of defense. Accordingly, on 24 February 2006 the

Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command was established at Camp Lejeune under the operational control of the Combatant Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.[194]

The activation of the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command paralleled the simultaneous deactivation of the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism) (4th MEB [AT]) at Camp Lejeune. Although deactivation was necessary to provide personnel for the new command, it also terminated the existence of an unusual Marine Corps initiative forged in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist strikes on the U.S. in 2001. The brigade had not existed since the institutional abandonment of the permanent Marine expeditionary brigade headquarters by the Marine Corps in 1992. Its reactivation on 29 October 2001 at Camp Lejeune represented a change of the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) doctrine of the 1980s.

EPILOGUE:

New and Old

The 2004–2005 security and stability campaign by Marine Corps forces in Iraq began with the objective of reversing the nascent Iraqi insurgency and beginning the process of rebuilding a shattered society. The emerging resistance against the allied Coalition that had defeated Iraq in 2003 took U.S. forces and civilian authorities by surprise. Higher authorities calculated that the extended presence of occupation forces, the persistent application of counterinsurgency and security techniques, and the fielding of Iraqi security forces would pacify the country. In parallel with the establishment of security, the U.S.-directed Coalition Provisional Authority projected the creation of a provisional Iraqi government and the facilitation of democratic elections at national and regional levels such that "governance" would be established within a year of the scheduled mid-2004 "reversion of sovereignty" to the Interim Iraqi Government.

In almost every aspect, the expectations of these higher civil and military authorities proved overly ambitious and, in effect, repeated their earlier underestimation of resistance and insurgency in Iraq. The U.S. military forces deployed in Iraq remained undermanned and thus incapable of maintaining the security presence in numerous Iraqi towns that could and did shelter dissident elements that plotted and executed violent attacks upon security forces and civilians alike. Predictably, hopes that an Iraqi constabulary could be formed failed when a large contingent of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps refused to participate in face of the Sunni revolt in al-Anbar Province and the al-Sadr uprising of April–August 2004 or otherwise failed to report for duty in assisting U.S. and Coalition forces in smaller scale security operations throughout Iraq. The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps had received too little basic training, no more than three to four weeks in duration, intended for the more benign environment expected in mid-2003. Instead, these newly formed and untested units faced insurgents and extremists that had gained combat experience fighting against well-armed and seasoned troops, mostly fielded by the United States. Nevertheless, when the first annual rotation of U.S. forces began in the spring of 2004, preparations continued to move the Iraqi security units into the towns and to shift the U.S. forces outside the urban areas in permanent base camps already under construction to replace the forward operating bases improvised from Iraqi military and government compounds.

Into this tenuous situation of early 2004 came Marines of the I Marine Expeditionary Force, returning after the brief and successful 2003 operation in which the Iraqi defenses had been overcome with such quick, decisive and violent action that vast areas and major cities fell with relative ease to U.S. and Coalition control. The summer and fall occupation duty experienced by approximately 8,000 Marines of the 1st Marine Division in the largely Shi'ite populated areas between Baghdad and Basra bore little resemblance to the challenges that the new campaign in al-Anbar Province would bring.

The Marines sailors and soldiers comprising the Multinational Force-West comprised by I MEF and its reinforcements came prepared for the challenges in the spring of 2004 and harbored no illusions that the "Sunni Triangle" would prove easy as a security and stabilization operation. The extent to which the various Sunni insurgencies and small foreign terrorist elements thrived in both urban and rural areas exceeded all predictions. Although leaders such as Lieutenant Generals Conway and Major General Mattis sensed that the larger numbers of infantry they introduced in the area of operations would significantly effect the security situation, the number of Marines remained woefully insufficient to cover an area of approximately 32 percent of Iraq's total surface area. To that end, the Marine Corps commanders saw only the possibility of applying the patience, persistence, and presence of their troops, and attacking the insurgent leadership when detected and raiding the sanctuaries of the insurgents to destabilize their activities.

These realities came to fruition very quickly in the spring of 2004. After a few sporadic encounters with insurgents in each of the regimental zones, the ambush and murders of the civilian contractors in Fallujah and the mutilation and display of their corpses brought the unwelcome orders to I MEF and 1st Marine Division compelling an impromptu urban clearing operation that exposed the scope and depth of the insurgencies in the province at large. The two Fallujah battles remained pivotal in the I MEF campaign of

2004–2005 although the successful measures for subduing that urban center could not be repeated because of the cost and destruction wrought in its execution. Even as the scheduled election of January 2005 took place, the situation faced by I MEF and the incoming II MEF that would replace it remained all too clear. Until some form of reliable Iraqi security forces could be established in sufficient numbers and competence, the U.S. Marine Corps forces in al-Anbar Province and some neighboring provinces would have to wage an aggressive campaign. The enemy had to be dug out of his enclaves and brought to battle but in selected cases and in situations in which the rest of the province would not suffer without sufficient security. At the same time, what few Iraqi security forces could be established had to be nurtured and mentored to the point that they could at least operate with U.S. forces such that the Coalition could begin to overcome the cultural barriers that separated the public from the Coalition forces that sought to protect it.

The firepower and military technology wielded by Marine Corps forces with all their training and expertise remained decisive, vital weapons when combat occurred: armored vehicles, artillery, and various forms of air support could and did dominate portions of the battlefield, but in the end the Marines soldiers and sailors used rifles, grenades, and explosives to confront insurgents at close quarters to eliminate their hold over the population. Such work did not always fall to the lot of the infantrymen, who remained sorely under strength for the distances and scope of the assignments. Many military personnel, regardless of specialty, found themselves engaged in routine scouting, patrolling, convoying, and screening tasks in which ambushes or other forms of combat led to counterattacks, pursuit, or search and clearing operations that many men and women of I and II MEF and other services experienced for the first time.

The progress in fielding an Iraqi security force proved maddenly slow. What the Marines of I MEF initially found in al-Anbar Province largely comprised only seven Iraqi Civil Defense Corps battalions, renamed Iraqi National Guard after the assumption of sovereignty by the Interim Iraqi Government. These units mostly comprised local Sunnis recruited and trained by the U.S. Army, and only one such unit could be moved from its recruiting locale. When added to what local police remained on duty, this force amounted to approximately 2,000 Iraqis. A reasonable formula for counterinsurgency would have required over thirty battalions of combat troops for al-Anbar Province. The I MEF was comprised of only eleven U.S. battalions, not counting provisional units employed for base defense, and the II MEF arrived in early 2005 with even fewer battalions.[196]

The Iraqi security units displayed key vulnerabilities: they were subject to local infiltration, intimidation, and threats by local Sunnis. Regardless of the degree of assistance provided by local Marine and Army units, even including the vaunted Combined Action Platoon doctrine used successfully by the Marine Corps in Vietnam, the Iraqi battalions failed to the point of wholesale breakdown. A few units manned by Shi'a or Kurdish soldiers, however, proved much less vulnerable to the Sunni insurgent intimidation tactics. In general, however, the Iraqi units fielded in 2004–2005 lacked strength, experience, and resilience to fight the insurgents or to continue operating for sustained periods of time. The Iraqi defense establishment also failed consistently to replace losses of Iraqi soldiers and to provide adequate equipment for their forces in al-Anbar Province. With the eventual arrival of over two divisions of the Iraqi Army in the province by early 2006 along with a marked improvement in the military competence of the Iraqi soldiers, the continuing problems of violence and insecurity in the Marine Corps' areas of responsibility began to dissipate. These units drew their soldiers largely from the Shi'a population but added somewhat to the existing discontent of the Sunni population of al-Anbar Province.

Improvements in security, realized by the end of the two year pacification campaign, meant that a certain part of the Sunni population could be persuaded to cooperate with governmental authorities and to participate in the basic restoration of Iraqi governance, rebuilding damaged towns and cities, and opposing the further use of violence. Results remained uneven, and already in early 2006, the continued evaluation of ar-Ramadi as one of—if not the most—dangerous cities in Iraq suggested that it, not the infamous al-Fallujah, functioned as the true center of the Sunni resistance and insurgency in the surrounding lands. The continuing campaign to gain control over ar-Ramadi, without resort to the devastation wrought against Fallujah, remained a slow and

often unrewarding process of vigilance, combat, and persistence. Aerial and artillery bombardment in many ways threatened to become counterproductive. The Sunni population continued to resent its lost status in the former regime, and local leaders were skeptical that U.S. forces would continue to fight insurgents and terrorists with vigor. The Sunni population also believed that the Iraqi national government would ever earn Sunni support and participation in moderate forms of political action.

For the men and women serving in the two Marine Expeditionary Forces and the periodically deploying Marine Expeditionary Units, the tasks at hand remained all too obvious and challenging. Marines could not engage in self-doubt or self-pity. All the day-to-day violence, aggravated by devastating explosions of improvised devices, mines, and suicide bombers, had to be endured with patience, resolve, and tactical savvy. They continued to treat the population as a peaceful entity, requiring the Marines' protection and vigilance. The dissident and insurgent elements required the use of violent force, but still preserving the essential humanity of the situation such that Marines soldiers and sailors could discern the boundaries between the violence of combat and the limitations posed by a nearby civilian populace that in the end had to be "won over" to the cause of the western occupier and the awkwardly functioning native government. For the Marines, soldiers, and sailors of the MEFs in Iraq, service there was their "finest hour," especially since it was under great military and political pressures such as being outnumbered at times; being watched from near and far for any signs of weakness; being second-guessed by military and civilian officials and the news mdia; operating under restrictive rules of engagement preventing them from using their full array of combat power and weaponry; and fighting an enemy, often at close quarters, who did not wear a uniform and who blended in the population of noncombatant civilians. In such an environment, the thought of failure or letting down one's fellow Marines remained, as it had historically, unthinkable, and on the contrary, the attitude and accomplishments of the Marines inspired new legendary feats of courage in the long history of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps forces in Iraq, with the reinforcing organizations that joined it in Multinational Force-West, operated with initial handicaps that could be overcome only by gaining experience and applying it at a rapid pace. The myriad tasks facing Marines in both urban and wide-open rural terrain almost defy description. A series of broken cities and communities literally lay at their feet, occupied by inhabitants thoroughly demoralized by the shock of war and occupation, lacking any level of experience in self-government and self-sufficiency to make a concerted effort at rebuilding. The Marines, however, did not, as other armies have done, celebrate victory with triumphant parades and speeches. their actions and attitudes were low key and those of professional warriors who had accomplished their missions to the best of their abilities. They did not treat the Iraqis as the enemy or a conquered people. They did not hoist American flags atop buildings in triumph.

In a remarkable series of events, the Marines and their comrades reached into themselves and drew upon their training, discipline, pride, dedication to duty, physical readiness, and fighting spirit to adapt to the novel conditions and dangers of counterinsurgency missions and executed them with steady resolve, overcoming setbacks and generally remaining benign in victory.

Those mission successes and achievements did not come without cost. During the campaign of 2004–2005, some 500 Marines of Multinational Force-West were killed while serving in Iraq with thousands more wounded—many grievously—in combat. Since 20 March 2004, elements of I and II MEF, augmented by the rest of the active and reserve establishments, have provided continuous presence in Iraq.

The new battle streamers on the MEFs' colors symbolize much. They represent more than a year of the lives and the service of the individual Marines and sailors. They recall the 500 fellow Marines and sailors who lost their lives for the mission and who made the journey home ahead of their comrades. They represent great courage in battle. They represent remarkable stamina over months and even years. They represent unshakable honor tested iin a war against a treacherous, often invisible enemy in the worst of conditions, just as previous generations of Marines and sailors did at Guadalcanal, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, the Chosin Reservoir, Khe Sanh, and Hue City. They represent immeasurable personal sacrifice by the MEFs' Marines and sailors and their families.

Endnotes

The principal sources for this and subsequent chapters are the official records and working papers held by the Marine Corps Archives, Gray Research Center, Marine Corps University located at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia. In addition, certain reference materials located at the Marine Corps Historical Center, Marine Corps University, have been used. Relevant Classified records held by the archives of the Gray Research Center were examined and catalogued by the author during 2006-2007. Because no formal inventory or finding aids have to date been produced by the archives, the classified records used herein are identified by use of their classified material control center (CMCC) registry number assigned by the CMCC, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, the cognizant security management authority. These registry numbers take the form of S-1234-06, in which the letter designates a classification of secret, the four numbers the sequential assignment of the item or document by the CMCC in its registry, and the last numbers the year of accession into the control system, I.e. not the date of the document concerned. Although less satisfactory than a true inventory, the use of the CMCC registry numbers permits the researcher to locate the requisite items.

The following types of documents most frequently proved useful in the compilation of this history:

Command Chronologies (ComdC)–the monthly, semi-annual or annual historical report required of all Marine Corps organizations under the Marine Corps Historical Program. Unclassified ComdC are filed by the archives by year and originating unit, and can be requested by researchers in the archives reading room.

Operations and Intelligence Summaries (OpSum, IntelSum) of various commands and units, usually classified.

Situation Reports and Intentions Messages (SitRep, Intentions) of various commands and units, usually classified.

Briefings, plans, and other working papers of operational units, gathered by field historians and, on occasion, forwarded by Marine Corps organizations, make up most of the remainder of the classified collection held by the archives at the Gray Research Center. These documents, as the case of the above classified files, most frequently appear in electronic files stored on CD-ROM and DVD storage discs. Apart from identifying them by title and provenance, where feasible, the remainder of the citation of such a document perforce consists of electronic location script following the CMCC registry number of the host disc.

For example, the Headquarters Marine Corps Operations Center (POC) "current operations brief" for 18 February 2004 (POC 040218) can be located thus: S-1767-06\Feb04. Easily done, in such a case, but a reader follows a more complex series to find a December 2004 command brief of Regimental Combat Team 1, cited in Chapter 5 thus: RCT-1 CommandBriefDec04, S-3925-06\1stDivChonologyDec04\RCT1 Jul Dec04 PartIV\I Tab. Note the run-together name of the file, shown in its electronic format, vice the more literary "RCT-1 Command Brief (December 2004)."

Chapter 1

1. MEF laydown 23Aug03 from "I MEF Operation Iraqi Freedom Brief 12 Dec03" (S-3937-06).

2. Colonel Nicholas E. Reynolds, Baghdad, Basra, and Beyond (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 147-56. This work serves to date as the Vol. I of the present series, preceding this volume; 1st Mar Div draft Operation Iraqi Freedom II 'book' (unpublished, undated) [hereafter 1MarDiv OIFII], Ch 1. This draft command narrative manuscript was intended to complement the volume written by the division staff on OIF I, later published as Lieutenant Colonelonel Micahel S. Groen, inter alia, With the 1st Marine Division in Iraq, 2003 (Quantico: History Division, Marine Corps University, 2006). After the departure of MajGen Mattis from the division, the OIF II book project became stillborn. Copies may be found in RefSect, and MCU S-0072-07\; HQMC PPO Ops Brief 7Nov03.

3.HQMC, EOS Update Briefing, 15Oct03; S-3991-06.

4. Marine Corps Historical Center, Hagee oral history, part I, 14 July 2005. Unedited and unreleased version provided by Dr. Fred Allison.

5. Marine Corps Chronology 2003, Reference Section, Marine Corps Historical Center [hereafter, RefSect].

6.Headquarters Marine Corps Operations Center (POC) "current operations brief" for 17 Dec03, 01Dec03, 23Feb04, S-1764 to 1816-06 [hereafter POC by dates as filed: e.g. 031217, 031201, 040223]; at this point, only five Marines remained to return from the 2003 campaign, the last of the special purpose Marine air-ground task force. There still remained Marines of Detachment B, 4th Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), the 5th Fleet Antiterrorist Support Team (FAST) platoon at the embassy, Marine Fighter Squadron 312 (VMFA-312) afloat nearby on board carrier USS Enterprise (CVN-65), and personnel serving in joint and special staffs in Iraq totaled 507 in the theater. The Marine Corps reached its lowest point in overseas deployments during 2003 in late November, just under 11,000 Marines excluding personnel permanently stationed overseas. (POC 031121)

7. Kenneth W. Estes, "1st Armored Division: Operation Iraqi Freedom, May 2004 -July 2004" (Wiesbaden: HQ 1st Arm Div, 2005); Charles E. Kirkpatrick, "V Corps Becomes CJTF-7: The Month of Plans and Decisions" (Heidelberg: HQ V Corps, draft Nov04).

8. 1MarDiv OIFII , Ch 1; POC 031121.

9. CG, 1stFSSG ltr 30Oct03, ComdC JD03.

10. 3MAW ComdC JD03.

11. 1MarDiv OIF II, Ch 2. Note on the "RPG" series rocket launcher: popularly referred to in open press and other sources as meaning 'rocket propelled grenade,' it remains less well known, but more properly, as a Russian acronym, Reaktivnyi Protivotankovyi Granatomet, meaning 'Rocket-propelled Anti-Tank Grenade Launcher.' Most such weapons encountered in Iraq were RPG-7 and RPG-16 marks]

12. "I MEF OIF II RFP MSG FINAL," S-3937-06\ Archived OIF-II-1 Files.

13. Last minute sourcing of 2 firing batteries of arty from MARCENT planning doc in "Matrix_ New_Baseline_09_JAN_2004_1100," showing no such batteries at that point; S-3937-06\Archived OIFII-1 Files; RCT-7 ComdC Feb-Mar04 shows E/2/11 arriving Kuwait 28Feb04, S-0306-06\1MarDiv Classified\Disk2\RCT-1 Mar04PartV\CC A/1/11 Feb-Mar04]

14. CG Talking Points–OIF II Update, Ground Dinner - 18 January 2004, S-3937-06.

15. Ibid.

Chapter 2

16. 1MarDiv OIF II, CH 2.

17. POC 040105, 040112, 040128; "Force Flow Update" 28 Jan 2004, S-3937-06.

18. 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04.

19. "Draft I MEF OM and RIP Frag 2/18/04," S-3937-06 \Archived OIF-II-1 files.

20. ComdC of 1MarDiv, 3rd MAW, 1st FSSG, 1st Marines 7th Marines 1st BSSG, all JJ04

21. RCT-1 ComdC Aug04.

22. "I MEF input DRAFT 2 MARCENT to CJTF 7 confirmation of dates" 23Jan04 in S-3937-06 \ RIP&TOA; 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04 (unclassified); "Sequential Listing of Significant Events (U)" S-3801-06\1MarDiv JJ04; 1FSSG ComdC JJ04; 3MAW (fwd) ComdC 10Feb-31Mar04.

23. "First 60," S-3937-06; From 1MarDiv OIF II, Ch 2: "The 15 plays developed as a result of discussions between the Chief of Staff Colonel Dunford, CG and Assistant Division Commander. Conceptually the 15 plays represented the scripted plays that a football team might use in the opening quarter of a football game. The San Francisco 49ers had successfully used the concept and the division staff felt that they could successfully exploit a similar construct. The assessment by the OPT and staff was that the Division would build upon the successes of the 82d Airborne Division. Indications were that the 82d had done a good job in establishing a secure environment in their zone. Division planners recognized that although the 82d had let some enemy sanctuaries remain, the bulk of the Divisions focus could be on the stability mission. The 15 Plays identified the opening actions required to support both the security and stability mission in the Al-Anbar Province. The weight of effort in the 15 Plays focused on the stability mission. Eventually the 15 Plays would develop into 18 actual plays and would be included and Annex X in the 1stMarDiv Operations Order (OpOrd)."

24. Operation Iraqi Freedom-II ASE Completion Schedule, System description, POC

040129; See also Lieutenant General Michael A. Hough, "State of Marine Aviation," Marine Corps Gazette 88 (May 2004), 5:11-27.

25. PPO 040129; USCENTCOM msg was his 040803ZJan04; CJTF-7 reported a shortfall of 2,780 uparmored HMMWVs in Iraq.

26. Brigadier General William D. Cato, "Rapid Acquisition in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II" Marine Corps Gazette 88 (May 2004), 5:48-50.

Chapter 3

27. RCT-7 ComdC Feb-Mar04

28. ComdC of 1MarDiv, 3rd MAW, 1st FSSG, 1st Marines 7th Marines 1st BSSG, all JJ04; pilot controller handbook 15 June 05, S-0265-06\FECC Encl\Air Web Page Files

29. POC 040418.

30. Combat Power 15Apr04; S-3937-06\I MEF Sitreps\SitrepOfficer\AsstSitrepOfficer\Combat Power.

31. Gretchen A. Sparkman "COLISEUM Requirement K506-04-0029-S," a contracted précis, S-4522-06\HistoricFiles\Al-Anbar Historical; Lewis Owen, "Tigris-Euphrates river system." Encyclopedia Britannica (2007) ; "2004 World Data," Encyclopedia Britannica (2006).

32. RCT-7 Intentions messages, 19-29Mar04 [hereafter by file date, e.g. 040319-29], S-3933-06\Intentions Mssg\Mar04\RCT-7 ; RCT-7 ComdC Feb-Mar04; 1MarDiv Sequential Listing of Events, S-3801-06. The TOW antitank missile was never named, leaving only the acronym for "tube-launched, optically-directed, wire-guided missile."

33. 1BCT Intention messages, 040321-30, S-3933-06\Intentions Mssg\Mar04\1BCT.

34. 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04; 1MarDiv Sequential Listing of Events, S-3801-06

35. Michael S. Groen, "The Tactical Fusion Center," Marine Corps Gazette 89 (April, 2005) 4, 59-63.

36. CG 1MarDiv Intentions 040327, 28 and 31; S-3933-06\Intentions Mssg\Mar04\March04 Intentions Messages.

Chapter 4

37. 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04; 1MarDiv OIF II, Ch4.

38. 1MarDiv CC JJ04; 1MarDiv Intentions 040401, S-3933-06\Intentions Mssg\Apr04.

39. 1MarDiv Intentions 040403.

40. 1MarDiv OIF II, Ch4; 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04; RCT-1 ComdC Apr04.

41. 1MarDiv Intentions 040401-8; RCT-1 ComdC Apr04.

42. "1/5 Frag Order 005-04" 11Apr04, Ref Sect, 1-5 Historical Docs OIF1-2.

43. 1st Bn, 2d Mar, 1st Bn, 5th Mar, A Battery, 1st Bn, 11th Mar, and RCT-1 Comd-CApr04.

44. U.S. Army National Ground Intelligence Center, "Complex Environments: Battle of Fallujah, 1 April 2004," S-4504-06.

45. 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04

46. J. Smith silver star citation, RefSect; Captain Smith and his company are also covered in the earlier fighting in Robert D. Kaplan's essay, "Five Days in Fallujah," The Atlantic Monthly 294 (July/August 2004), 1:116-26.

47. 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04; U.S. Army National Ground Intelligence Center, "Complex Environments: Battle of Fallujah 1, April 2004, S-4504-06.

48. CJTF-76 April FragO 581; Estes, "1st Armored Division: Operation Iraqi Freedom, May 2004 -July 2004" (Wiesbaden: HQ 1st Arm Div, 2005).

49. 1MarDiv 8 Apr Intentions, modified later to "our pending request to add a tank company, track [amphibious assault vehicle] company, and artillery battalion to our task organization"; 11Apr Intentions.

50. 2d Bn, 4th Mar Intsum 040406-7, S-0306-06\DiskFour\2-4Jan Apr(Sec)TabKS2\T\KS2\INTSUMS\APR; Morel and Copeland Navy Cross, Baptista, Bronzi and E. M. Smith silver star citations, RefSect.

51. 1MarDiv Intentions 13Apr07.

52. Ibid, 14Apr07

53. 1MarDiv 17Apr07 Intentions.

54. 1MarDiv Intentions Apr-May04; 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04; RCT-7 ComdC Apr and May 04.

55. 1MarDiv Intentions May-June04; 1MarDiv ComdC JJ04; CC RCT-1ComdC May and Jun04.

56. RCT-7, ComdC May and Jun04; silver star citation Matthew A Lopez, RefSect.

57. 1MarDiv Intentions 040426.

58. USMC Chronology, RefSect; POC 040518, 040621, 041004; 24 July report to 1stMarDiv by 24th MEU based upon 1MarDiv Intentions message that date.

59. POC 040518, 040621, 040720; CC 11 MEU JD04; G-3, I MEF, "Information Memorandum on Operations in An Najaf for the Period of 31 July 2004–28 August 2004," S-3810-06\Najaf Narrative v.III10Sept04.pdf; Perhaps the most important mosque in the world to Shiite Muslims, Imam Ali Shrine is the burial site of Mohammed's brother-in-law and successor, assassinated in 661 A.D.

60. S-3937-06\IMEF sitreps\Jul04\11th MEU sitrep 31Jul04.

61. Frank Kozlowski, John R. Way, and Bradford A. Wineman, " 'Whatever It Takes,' - U.S. Marines in the Battle of An Najaf, 2004" unpublished manuscript, (Quantico: Marine Corps Historical Center, 2007). For details of Generals Metz and Casey, see beginning of Chapter 7.

62. Jackson, 89; G-3 I MEF "Information Memorandum on Operations in An Najaf…"

63. POC 040604 cites USCENTCOM RFF Serial 325 (020847Zjun04; POC 040621 cites COMMARFORPAC DEPORD 151900ZJun04; 31 MEU ComdC JD04

64. POC 040720

Chapter 5

65. IMEF Cdr Update 11May, S-3709-06\CdrsUpdate Highlighted\May04.

66.MajGen Amos in IMEF Cdr Updates 5May, 20 May, S-3709-06\CdrsUpdate Highlighted\May04.

67. "Talking points for Fallujah Brigade Situation," S-3811-06\MEF Briefs; IMEF Cdr Updates 1May-1Sept04, S-3709-06\CdrsUpdate Highlighted\May04

68. "OIF II Aircraft loss Report (as of 14Sep04)" in POC 041001; Sitrep 092200Sep04, S-3709-06\IMEF Sitrep\Sep04.

69. Clifton Distinguished Flying Cross citation, RefSect.

70. Slide, "Laptop Standalone" (7Sep04) and briefing, "Shaping Fallujah" (9Sept04), S-3811-06\MEF Briefs for Historical Purposes\VIP briefs

71. "TF 6-26 Fallujah Shaping Operations" (27Sept04), S-3811-06\MEF Briefs for Historical Purposes\VIP briefs\Prospective Slides.

72. 1MarDiv Frag Orders 0295, 0300 and 0314-04, S-3925-06\1DivChron\DivClasChron IV items; 1MarDiv ComdC, JD04

73. POC 041001; 1stMarDiv ComdC, JD04; RCT-1 and RCT-7 ComdC, JD04; 31st MEU, "Operation Phantom Fury, Mission Analysis Briefing 28Oct04," S-3925-06\1stDivChronology\Ops History\ChronFileS3; On 13 September, Colonel Toolan relinquished his command of RCT-1 to Colonel Lawrence D. Nicholson, who a few hours later received wounds from an incoming shell on his convoy. Colonel Shupp (1st Marine Division assistant chief of staff, G-7) assumed command of 1st Marines the following day. Colonel Elvis Blumenstock, in his comment on the draft manuscript of 14 May 2008, clarified the confusing support arrangements for the 31st MEU and RCT-7 during their exchange of area responsibilities during Operation Phantom Fury.

74. App 11–Intell Est, RCT7 FragO 0220-04 31Oct04, S-3813-06\RCT-7 docs\Operation Phantom Fury CD

75."RCT-7 Mission Analysis and COA Development Fallujah 24Sep04," S-3815-06\Chessani\planning docs; cf. "Falluja II OPT" (1Oct04) RCT-1, S-3815-06\Chessani\planning docs.

76. 1MarDiv ComdC JD04.

77. Ibid.

78. RCT-1 "Air in Fallujah", S-4501-06; For details and illustrations, see "Aviation FiresConOps", S-3925-06\1stDivChronology Dec04\RCT1 Part IV\H Tab\"Phantom Fury Air Brief v.3.ppt" (11/2/2004). "I MEF OIF2.2 11 Sept for BG Mcabee," S-3811-06\MEF briefs historical\VIP briefs\VIP briefs for WEB. Fred Allison, "Urban CAS Marine Corps Style Fallujah 2004" unpublished essay, Marine Corps Historical Division (December, 2007).

79. 1MarDiv ComdC JD04.

80. MNF-I "Fallujah Strategic Mission Analysis Briefing (3Oct 04)," S-4501-06.

81. RCT-1 Intentions Messages, S-3925-06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\RCT1 Part III TAB C\November Intentions; RCT-7 Intentions messages, S-3925-06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\RCT-7 July-Dec04\RCT-7 Command Chrono\RCT-7\ November Supporting docs; Lee Silver Star citation, RefSect.

82. First noted on I MEF Sitrep of 9 November.

83. RCT-1 Intentions, S-3925-06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\RCT1 Part III TAB C\November Intentions; RCT-7 Intentions, S-3925-

06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\RCT-7 July-Dec04\RCT-7 Command Chrono\RCT-7\ November Supporting docs; 2-7 Cavalry, "Optimized Fallujah Storyboard, S-3925-06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\2-7 Cav; Adelsperger Navy Cross (posthumous) and Kirk Silver Star citations, RefSect.

84. RCT-1 Intentions 12 Nov04, S-3925-06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\RCT1 Part III TAB C\November Intentions;

85. RCT-1 Intentions (various), S-3925-06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\RCT1 Part III TAB C\November Intentions; RCT-7 Intentions (various), S-3925-06\1st Div Chronology Dec04\RCT-7 July-Dec04\RCT-7 Command Chrono\RCT-7\ November Supporting docs; RCT-1 intentions, 12Nov04; Kasal and Mitchell Navy Cross citations, Refsect.

86. I MEF sitreps, Nov-Dec 04; The RCT-1 ComdC Dec04 also notes 23 December as the beginning of Phase IV operation; Krafft and Workman Navy Cross citations, RefSect. Colonel John Ballard comments on draft manuscript, 11Jun08.

87. "Phantom Fury Phase IV" S-3815-06\Chessani\planning docs; also in RCT-1 Frag order 001(Phase IV) to OpOrd 003-04 (Phantom Fury), S-3815\RCT-1 FragOs.

88. 1MarDiv, "Phase IV ConOps" (11)ct04), S-4501-06; "Phantom Fury Phase IV" RCT-1, S-3815-06\Chessani\planning docs. For perhaps the best short essay on the Second Fallujah battle, see LtGen John F. Sattler and Lieutenant Colonelonel Daniel H. Wilson, "Operation Al Fajr: The Battle of Fallujah–Part II," Marine Corps Gazette 89 (July, 2005) 7:12-24.

89. "Intercept from Phantom Fury;" S-4501-06 - redacted for declassification purposes.

90. Majar A.R. Milburn "Lessons Learned; Operation Phantom Fury" 5 Jan 05, S-4501-06;

RCT-1 CommandBriefDec04, S-3925-06\1stDivChonologyDec04\RCT1 Jul Dec04 PartIV\I Tab.

91. RCT-1 "Air in Fallujah", S-4501-06; Artillery table from S-4501-06, unknown provenance.

92. As of 27 Dec 04, cited in POC 041227 "Source: HQMC CRC manpower officer."

93. POC 041227.

94. Significant sources for details of Second Fallujah include: 1MarDiv JJ04SignEvents, S-3801-06; Fallujah Capt Winslow\S-3515 to 3519-06; POC briefs, where avail; I MEF CC JD04\S-3925-06; I MEF OIF2\S-3933 to 3945-06; Of interest is Department of Defense "Fallujah Update 05 Nov 04" S-4503-06, copy of which has penned on the cover, "POTUS Brief", suggesting that it possibly was part of the final briefing given the president of the United States before the battle. "Optimized Train Station Reconnaissance Results," RCT-1, S-3815-06\Chessani\planning docs for photos of RCT-1 assembly areas, routes; See "Iraqi Order" RCT-1, S-3815-06\Chessani\planning docs for details of RCT-1 assault, plus detailing of Iraqi FOF for pacification, Phase IV.

Chapter 6

95. POC 041124 and 041209; 1MarDiv ComdC JD04.

96. POC 041209, 041222, 050202, 050207, 050211, 050218.

97. POC 050111, 050120, 050124.

98. "Election draft FragO" (MNF-I), S-4522-06\HistoricFiles\Elections; I MEF sitreps26-31Jan04.

99. I MEF sitrep, 30Jan04.

100. POC 051024.

101. 1MarDiv ComdC JJ05

102. Ibid.

103. I MEF, "Operation Iraqi Freedom II.2 August, 2004-March, 2005," author files.

104. 1MarDiv, 31st MEU and 7th Marines ComdC JJ05; POC 041209 contains CJSC 041329Z DEC 04 on the 45 Day extension; other details from POC 050124 and 050211.

105. POC 050329.

106. POC 050218.

107. "Thoughts on the Current Situation in Raleigh and Fallujah," S-3815-06\Chessani\Planning Docs.

Chapter 7

108. "CASB-12Jun04, with attached OPlan Sovereign Iraq (May04 draft)," S-4521-06\TOA and After.

109.Ibid.

110. 24Jun04 draft CMC planning guidance for Operation Iraqi Freedom III, CMC 081328ZJul04, and LOI for II MEF Operation Iraqi Freedom III OPT 2-20Aug04; S-4521-06\Operation Iraqi FreedomIII.

111. "AO Atlanta Assessment" in 2d Intel Battalion,"Operation Iraqi Freedom III OPB

040902" briefing, S-4521-06\Operation Iraqi Freedom III OPT.

112. POC daily briefings, Jan-Apr05.

113. 3d Bn, 25th Mar ComdC JJ05.

114. II MEF ComdC Feb-Apr05; 2nd AA Battalion ComdC JJ05; RCT-8 ComdC JJ05.

115. POC 050317.

116. Marine Corps Logistics Cmd, ComdC2004.

117. POC 050222.

118. POC 050317; II MEF ComdC Feb-Apr05.

119. RCT-2 ComdC JJ05; Note there was no artillery firing battery in RCT-2 in the Mar-Sep05 deployment. Davis comment on draft, 10Jun08.

120. 3d Bn, 8th Mar ComdC Jan05.

121. 3d Bn, 4th Mar ComdC Jan-Mar05; A/2d LAR Bn ComdC Jan-Apr05.

122. RCT-8 ComdC JJ05.

123. POC 050211-15; 155th BCT Sitrep 132000Feb05, S-4489-06\155BCT\05 Feb.

124. POC 050125, 050308, 050317, 050404,050407; 1st Bn, 1st Mar ComdC JJ05; MAG-26 ComdC, Mar and Apr05.

125. 2MarDiv Sitrep 050317, S-4489-06\2MarDiv Intentions Messages\05 Mar ; POC 050331 ; II MEF ComdC Feb-Apr05.

Chapter 8

126. 1stMarDiv Intentions 050221, S-4489-06\2dMarDiv\2dMarDiv Intentions.

127. RCT-2 ComdC JJ05; Steve Fainaru, "The Grim Reaper, Riding a Firetruck in Iraq: Marines Recount Dramatic Assault At Base Near Syria" Washington Post, (10Apr05), A1.

128. RCT-2 ComdC JJ05, 3d Bn, 25th ComdC Mar JJ05; for op order and maps, photos see S-4491-06\Operation Matador\S3.

129. RCT2 ComdC JJ and Jul-Sep05, 3d Battalion, 2d Mar ComdC July05, 3d Battalion, 25th Mar ComdC JJ, JD05; Stann and Wimberg (posthumous) Silver Star citations, RefSect. Task Force Lionheart comprised elements of the RCT-2 Headquarters Company, Company B, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion (RCT-2 reserve), and Company K, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines. Davis comment on draft.

130. 1st Bn, 5th Mar ComdC JJ05; Russell Silver Star citation, RefSect.

131. RCT-8 ComdC JJ05; 1st Bn, 6th Mar ComdC JJ05 also featuring excellent maps; Waldron Silver Star citation, RefSect.

Chapter 9

132. MEF Campaign Plan 28Jan05, S-0259-06\MNF-W Sitreps\OpOrd-Annexes; the "perceived injustices imposed on Sunnis," typically included the Coalition Provisional Authority's "De-Baathification" policy, disbandment of the old, Sunni-controlled Iraqi Army, and the lack of Sunni representation on the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council.

133. "Multi-National Force West (MNF-W) Operations Order 1-05 (Title: Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-06 Campaign Plan)", S-0259-06\Opord-Annexes.

134. 2MarDv Intentions 050530, S-4489-06\2dMarDiv\2dMarDiv Intentions Messages\05May.

135. 2MarDv Intentions 050606, S-4489-06\2dMarDiv\2dMarDiv Intentions Messages\05Jun.

136. RCT-2 ComdC Jul-Sep30: 40 weapons, 300 various artillery rounds, 1 81mm mortar tube, 2 60mm mortar tubes, 2 107mm rocket launchers, 2 improvised launchers and a number of 120mm warheads captured.

137. POC 050801

138. POC 050804; RCT2 ComdC Jul-Sep05; 3d Bn 2d Mar ComdC Aug05; 3d Bn, 25th Mar ComdC JD05; A/1st Tk Bn ComdC Aug05.

139. II MEF Sitrep 050901; S-0259-06\MNF-W Sitreps\05 Sep.

140. TF Phantom consisted of the XVIII Airborne Corps long range surveillance company, augmented by an Airscan aircraft capable of conducting live video surveillance, plus ground-based signal intelligence support, masint sensors, tactical human intelligence team, and intelligence production section. "Task Force Phantom Tacon To 2d MarDiv (revised)"; S-0627-06\publishedfragorders.

141. "FECC Classified Command Chronology May 05 to Dec 05; S-4523-06\G-3\FECC; RCT-2 ComdC Jul-Sep05.

142. Sources including photos: "BTT Location" "POE Brief v7.1" and "Al Qaim COA Brief," S-0266-06\ISF\DBE.

143. POC 050505, 050601, 050831; "BTT Location 25 Dec," S-0266-06\ISF enclosures.

144. "Strategic Basing & ISF Laydown Narrative" (16Apr05), S-4489-06\ISF.

145. Ibid.

146. "MNF-W ISF Monthly Status," POC 050831; 7th IA Div movement in POC 060215; MTT data from POC 051031.

Chapter 10

147. 2MarDiv Frago 0158-05 of 30Jul05: Operation Liberty Express; S-4509-06\Elections Turnover.

148. Ibid.

149. Ibid.

150. "Div Liberty Express OPT Outbrief (08 Aug 05) V.2 (Optimized)" [with excellent illustrations], S-4509-06\Elections Turnover\Liberty Express Documents.

151. Ibid.

152. II MEF Future Ops [staff section] ComdC JD05, S-4523-06\G3\FOPS; "Border Fort Code Words 5-18" (15Jan06), S-0266-06\ISF enclosures\DBE.

153. FECC Classified Command Chronology May 05 to Dec 05; S-4523-06\G3\FECC.

154. POC 051003; 3d Bn, 6th Mar ComdC Oct-Dec05; 1st Tk Bn ComdC JD05; Foncon au with Lieutenant Colonel Alford, 3Jun08; The POC briefing and the 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Oct05 curiously had the operation name in German: "Operation Eisenfaust."

155. POC 051003; 2MarDiv Hq Bn G-3 ComdC Oct05.

156. 2MarDiv Hq Bn G-3 ComdC Oct05; POC 051019; I MEF Future Ops ComdC JD05, S-4523-06\G3\FOPS; "270001.Cdec05.Firm. Bases.Hadithah.Haqliniyah.Barwana"; S-0621-06\Dec05.

157. 2Mardiv 061212COct05 Mod 2 To FragO 0158-05, S-4509-06\Elections Turnover\ Liberty Express Documents\Div Liberty Express FragO.

158. After action reports of 2d Marine Division, 8th Marines and 2d Brigade: S-4509-06\Elections Turnover\Liberty Express Documents\After action reports.

159. John Ward Anderson and Jonathan Finer, "Pollings Close in Iraq: Large Numbers Turn Out Despite Sporadic Violence" Washington Post (October 15, 2005). Colonel Stephen Davis comments to draft manuscript, 11Jun08. Iraq also sealed its borders, closed Baghdad International Airport, threw a night curfew across the entire country and banned all private vehicles from driving on the roads on election day, leaving Iraq's 15.5 million registered voters to walk to polling centers if they wanted to cast a ballot.

160. POC 051028; 13th MEU ComdC JD05; The checkpoint covered by C Battery, 1st Bn, 11th Mar provided relief for 2d Bn, 114th Field Artillery, which had occupied Hit the previous month.

161. 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Sept, Oct, Nov05.

162. 13th MEU ComdC Oct-Dec05; ComdC 3rd Bn, 6th Mar Oct-Dec05; "012400CDec05. Op.Sayaid.Effects.Complete", S-0261-06\ Dec05; 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Nov05.

163. II MEF, "012400CDec05.Op.Sayaid. Effects.Complete," "012000CDec05.ISF.Laydown," S-0261-06\Dec05; 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Nov05; MNF-W Sitrep 051110, S-0259-06.

164. 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Nov05 and Dec05; 13th MEU ComdC JD05; "021600CDec05. Cg.Loo.Briefing.Graphics," S-0261-06\Dec05

165. 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Nov05; "010001CDec05.Op.Hard.Knock;" S-0261-06\ Dec05.

166. 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Nov05 and Dec05; "021600CDec05.Cg.Loo.Briefing.Graphics"; S-0261-06\Dec05

167. 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Dec05; "Div Liberty Express Transition Brief (11 Dec 05)"; S-0237-06\1-LibertyExpress Documents.

168. S-0237-06\After Action Reports; Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer, "Iraqi Vote Draws Big Turnout Of Sunnis: Anti-U.S. Sentiment Is Motivator for Many," Washington Post (December 16, 2005), A1; Kenneth Katzman "Iraq: Elections, Government, and Constitution" CRS Report RS21968 (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2006)) The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq confirmed the election results on 10 February. The United Iraqi Alliance Coalition received 128 seats; Kurdish Alliance 53; Iraqi Tawafuq (Consensus) Front (Sunni Arab) 44; Allawi's Iraqiya 25; Iraqi Front for National Dialogue (Sunni Arab) 11, Kurdish Islamic Union 5 (remaining 9 seats divided between, Al-Risaliyun, Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering; Iraqi Turkmen Front, Al-Rafidain, Mithal Al-Alousi, Yezidi Movement).

169. 2MarDiv FragO 660-05 "Re-Establish Iraqi Control Of The Border Celebration," S-0267-06\PublishedFragOrders; "312200CDec05.Force.Laydown," S-0261-06\Dec05; II MEF, G3 Future Ops ComdC JD05 4Feb06; S-4523-06\G-3\FOPS.

170. 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Dec05; "312400CDec05.3.1.Op.Red.Bull" "Green Trident" and "Bulldog," S-0261-06\Dec05. The 85 small caches found by 1st Recon Bn yielded an impressive quantity of munitions: 742 artillery rounds, 980 mortar rounds, 70 rockets, 17 small arms weapons, 14 RPG launchers, 183 RPG rounds and 149 grenades. 3d Bn 1st Marines found the following in its 63 caches: 77 artillery rounds, 163 mortar rounds, 72 rockets, 24 small arms weapons, 15,700 small arms munitions, 1925 anti-aircraft rounds, 15 RPG launchers, 72 RPG rounds, 18 grenades, and 78 electronic devices. No end seemed in sight for the quantity of munitions available to insurgents of all kinds.

171. II MEF, "312301CJan06.MNFW.Operations.Rollup.As.Of.28Jan2400c.Complete," S-0261-05\Jan06.

172. II MEF FOPS ComdC JD05.

173. 2MarDiv G-3 ComdC Dec 05; casualties from POC 060103.

Chapter 11

174. In the strange nomenclature of the Joint Staff, the II MEF 2004-2005 deployment, known as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 04-06.1 and 06.2 would be relieved in 2006 by I MEF's 2006-07 deployment, known in its two increments as: OIF 05-07.1 and 07.2. For obvious reasons, these terms are not used in this history.

175. II MEF, "Al Anbar: Near Term Way Ahead (13Jan06)," S-4557-06\G3 1of7\V Corp Brief on Al Anbar (13 Jan) (ver5.2).

176. Ibid.

177. "MNF-W Combat Operations in Review (28Jan06)," S-0262-06\Jan06; 22nd MEU ComdC JJ06; POC 060103-060228.

178. POC 060120.

179. II MEF Sitrep 051231, S-0259-06\MNF-W Sitreps\Dec05, already showing departure of 155th Bde.

180. Turnover data from POC 060101-060228, passim.

181. Mattis to au tel interview 12Oct07. Johnson comment on draft mansuscript 27 May 08.

182. I MEF ComdC JJ06.

183. http://www.defenselink.mil/utility/printitem.aspx?print=http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=879

184. "MNF-W Combat Operations in Review"(28Jan06), S-0262-06\Jan06.

185. POC 060301.

Chapter 12

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189. 2d MAW, "Operation Matador 8-14 May Rollup;" S-0265-06\Aviation Strike Reports.

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193. U.S. Marine Forces Central Command ComdC Aug-Dec05.

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195. 4th MEB (AT) ComdC 2004-2005; Anti-terrorism Bn, 4th MAB(AT) ComdC 2004-2005

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Appendix A

Command and Staff List

I Marine Expeditionary Force (Fwd)

Commanding General: LtGen James T. Conway (–11 September 2004); LtGen John F. Sattler

Deputy Commanding General: MajGen Keith J. Stalder (–29 May 2004); BGen Dennis J. Hejlik

Chief of Staff: Col John C. Coleman

G-1: Col William J. Hartig (–26 May 2004); Col Eric D. Bartch

G-2: Col James R. Howcroft (–30 June 2004); Col Ronald S. Makuta

G-3: Col Larry K. Brown (–30 June 2004); Col Michael R. Regner

G-4: Col Bruce E. Bissett (–30 June 2004); Col Andrew Reynosa

G-5: Col Anthony L. Jackson; Col Richard O. Bartch

G-6: Col Marshall I. Considine; LtCol Martin E. Lapierre

G-7: Col Richard W. Spencer

G-9: Maj Florian Limoco (–23 August 2004); Maj Banjamin P. Stinson

I MEF Headquarters Group: Col John C. Cunnings; Col Joseph H. Bruder IV (7 June–)

1st Marine Division (-)(Rein)

Commanding General: MajGen James N. Mattis (1 January–19 August 2004); MajGen Richard F. Natonski

Assistant Division Commander: BGen John F. Kelly (1 January–15 July 2004); BGen Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.

Chief of Staff: Col Joseph F. Dunford Jr. (1 January–15 July 2004); Col Robert J. Knapp (16 July 2004–)

G-1: LtCol Robert R. Kosid (1 January–30 August 2004); Col Geffrey L. Cooper (31 August–)

G-2: LtCol Michael S. Groen (1 January–15 July 2004); LtCol George H. Bristol (16 July

G-3: LtCol Clarke R. Lethin (1 January–31 May 2004); LtCol Joseph A. L'etoile (1 June–14 July 2004); Col Lawrence D. Nicholson (15 July-13 August 2004); LtCol Joseph A. L'etoile (14 August–27 January 2005); Col Lawrence D. Nicholson (27 January–1 April 2005)

G-4: LtCol John J. Broadmeadow (1 January–14 March 2004); LtCol Jeffrey Q. Hooks (15 March–31 August 2004); Col Jeffrey M. Horigan (1 September–21 November 2004); Col Gregory R. Dunlap (22 November 2004–)

G-6: LtCol Paul Miller (1 January–5 October 2004); LtCol Brian M. Barton (6 October–31 December 2004); LtCol Paul Miller (1 January 2005–30 March 2005)

G-7: LtCol Daniel J. Odonohue (22 February–31 May 2004); Col Michael A. Shupp (1 June–14 September 2004); LtCol Jeffery W. Fulz (15 September 2004–30 March 2005)

G-X: Col Michael W. Manske (1 January–30 June 2004); Col Ralph N. Brown

Headquarters Battalion: LtCol Michael A. Biszak: Col Stephen C. Baker

2d Battalion, 4th Marines: LtCol Paul J. Kennedy

2d Battalion, 5th Marines: LtCol Newman

3d Battalion 24th Marines: LtCol Milton L. Wick

3d Battalion 11th Marines (Prov. MP): LtCol Thomas J. Connally

2d Battalion 11th Marines (Prov. MP): LtCol Michael M. Frazier

Regimental Combat Team 1: Col John A. Toolan (to 13 September 2004); Col Michael A. Shupp

2d Battalion, 1st Marines: LtCol Gregory P. Olsen

3d Battalion, 1st Marines: LtCol Willard A. Buhl

2d Battalion 2d Marines: LtCol James G. Kyser

1st Battalion, 5th Marines: LtCol Brennan T. Byrne

3d Battalion, 5th Marines: LtCol Patrick J. Malay

2d Battalion, 24th Marines: LtCol Mark A. Smith

1st Reconnaissance Battalion: LtCol Rory E. Talkington; LtCol Joseph C. Marello

2d Reconnissance Battalion: LtCol D. R. Knight

Regimental Combat Team 7: Col Craig A. Tucker

3d Battalion, 4th Marines: LtCol Bryan P. McCoy

1st Battalion, 7th Marines: LtCol Christopher Woodbridge

2d Battalion, 7th Marines: LtCol Philip C. Skuta

3d Battalion, 7th Marines: LtCol Matthew A. Lopez

1st Battalion, 8th Marines: LtCol Brandl

1st Battalion, 23d Marines: LtCol Stevens

1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion: LtCol William R. Constantini

3d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion: LtCol Stephen R. Dinauer

1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division: Col Arthur W. Conner

2d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division: Col Gary S. Patton

3d Marine Aircraft Wing (–)(Rein)

Commanding General: MajGen James F. Amos (–30 May 2004); Maj Gen Keith J. Stalder

Chief of Staff: Col Gerald A. Yingling; Col Rex C. McMillian (1 July–17 October 2004); Col Rick W. Schmidt

G-1: Col Paul D. McGraw (–25 April 2004); LtCol Douglas G. Olbrich

G-2: LtCol David M. Wargo (–31 August 2004); LtCol Andrew P. Veith (1 September 30–November 2004); Maj Christopher A Radford

G-3: Col Jonathan G. Miclot; Col Curtis E. Haberbosch (1 July–19 August 2004); Col Kenneth J. Lee

G-4: Col Donald W. Zautcke; Maj Kevin C. Rosen (1-31 July 2004); Maj Ignacio Soria

G-5: Maj Michael R. Kennedy (10 February–31 March 2004); Maj Gregory W. Taylor (1–22 April 2004); Maj Arend G. Westra (23 April 2004–30 September 2004); Maj Richard C. Andersen

G-6: LtCol Rodney H. Taplin; LtCol Steve A. De La Cruz (1 July–1 December 2004); LtCol Ira M. Cheatham

G-9: LtCol Johnathan L. Pirkey

Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3: LtCol Glenn A. Murray (–15 April 2004); LtCol David A. Demorat

Marine Aircraft Group 16: Col Stuart L. Knoll (–15 April 2004); Col Guy M. Close

HMLA-36: LtCol Stephen W. Hall

HMLA-169(-): LtCol Lloyd A. Wright

HMM-268: LtCol David S. Foy

HMM-365: LtCol James S. O'Meara

HMM-774, 4TH MAW: LtCol John M. McGonagle

HMH-361: LtCol Anthony L. Winters

VMFA(AW)-242: LtCol Kevin M. Iiams

VMA-542: LtCol R. A. C. Sanborn

VMA-311: LtCol C. A. Arnold

571st Air Ambulance Company (Army): Major Eric G. Rude

Marine Wing Support Group 37: Col Juan G. Ayala

Marine Air Control Group 38: Col Ron R. McFarland; Col Jonathan G. Miclot (from 1 July 2004)

VMU-1: LtCol John H. Newman

VMU-2: Lt Col Douglas M. Hardison

1st Force Service Support Group (–)(Rein):

Commanding General: BGen Richard S. Kramlich

Chief of Staff: Col Charles L. Hudson; Col Tracy L. Mork

G-1: LtCol Mark C. Hickman; LtCol Lyle E. Forcum (15 February 2005); Capt Richard C. Garcia (16 February–15 March 2005)

G-2: Capt Robert B. Burgess (30 January–1 April 2004); Capt Craig R. Schwetje; Capt Robert B. Burgess (1 January–April 2005)

G-3: Col Lawrence D. Foy; Col John P. Sheehan

G-4: LtCol Todd L. Lloyd (–6 June 2004); LtCol Erick P. Thomas (7 June–14 March 2005)

G-6: LtCol James B. Fritz (–31 June 2004); Maj Robert K. Maldonado

2d Battalion, 10th Marines (Provisional Security): LtCol Terrence P. Brennan

Headquarters and Service Battalion: LtCol Thomas N. Collins (–May 2004); Maj Harold B. Eggers (6–9 May 2004); Maj Emily J. Elder (10 May–30 June 2004); LtCol Thomas B. Eipp

BSSG-1: Col Gregory R. Dunlap

CSSG-11 (1st Transportation Support Bn): Col David B. Reist; Col Elvis E. Blumenstock

CSSG-15 (1st Supply Bn): Col Michael E. Kampsen; Col John T. Larsen

CSSB-7 (1st Maintenance Bn): LtCol Adrian W. Burke; LtCol Drew T. Doolin

CSSB-1 (7th Engineer Support Bn): LtCol John M. Schultz; LtCol Kurt M. Kemster

120th Engineer Battalion Combat, Heavy (Army): LtCol William E. Bartheld

I MEF Engineer Group

Commanding: Rear Admiral Raymond K. Alexander

Rear Admiral Charles R. Kubic

11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC): Col Anthony M. Haslam

BLT 1/4: LtCol John L. Mayer
HMM-166 (Rein): LtCol John W. Guthrie
MSSG-11: Lieutenant Col Ted A. Ruane

13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (SOC) (OpCon MND-S) (11–25 October 2003): Col Michael R. Regner

BLT 1/1: LtCol Brian D. Beaudreault
HMM-163: LtCol Bruce A. Haines
MSSG-13: LtCol ScottA. Dalke

24th Marine Expeditionary Unit: Col R. J. Johnson

BLT 1/2: LtCol Durkin
HMM-263: LtCol Osbourne
MSSG-24: LtCol Coglianiese

31st Marine Expeditionary Unit: Col W. Lee Miller

BLT 1/3: LtCol Michael R. Ramos
HMM-265: (Rein) LtCol M. G. Glavy
MSSG-31: LtCol J. Vohr

Task Force Black Watch (UK)

1st Battalion, The Black Watch Regiment: LtCol J. Cowan

3d Civil Affairs Group: Col Michael Walker

4th Civil Affairs Group: Col John R. Ballard

II Marine Expeditionary Force (Fwd)

Commanding General: MajGen Stephen T. Johnson; MajGen Richard A. Huck (31 January–28 February 2006)

Deputy Commanding General: BGen Charles S. Patton

Chief of Staff: Col John L. Ledoux

G-1: LtCol John R. Armour; Maj Blair S.Miles

G-2: Col John T. Cunnings;

G-3: Col Glen T. Starnes; Col Thomas L. Cariker

G-4: Col John J. Fitzgerald; Col Donald C. Hales

G-5: Col Kenneth D. Bonner

G-6: Col Sean T. Mulcahy

G-8: Col Steven B. Vitali

G-9: Col Edward D. Daniel

II MEF Headquarters Group: Col Daniel E. Leshchyshyn

2d Marine Division

Commanding General: MajGen Richard A. Huck

Assistant Division Commander: BGen Joseph J. McMenamin; BGen James L. Williams

Chief of Staff: Col Robert G. Sokoloski

G-1: LtCol Jack Ciesla

G-2: LtCol Andrew J. Gillan

G-3: Col Robert H. Chase (–10 August 2005); Col John P. Holden

G-4: Col Michael E. Rudolph

G-6: LtCol Scott R. Sizemore

G-7: Col Richard B. Fitzwater

Headquarters Battalion: Col David K. Hough

1st Battalion, 5th Marines: LtCol Eric M. Smith

3d Battalion, 7th Marines: LtCol Roger B. Turner Jr.

Regimental Combat Team 2: Col Stephen W. Davis

3d Battalion 2d Marines: LtCol Timothy S. Mundy

3d Battalion 6th Marines: LtCol Julian D. Alford

2d LAR Battalion: LtCol Richard A. DeForest (–5 July 2005); LtCol Austin E. Renforth

1st LAR Battalion: LtCol Robert R. Kosid

3d Battalion 25th Marines: LtCol Lionel B. Urquhart

3d Battalion 1st Marines: LtCol Jeffery R. Chessani

4th Squadron, 14 Calvary: LtCol Mark A. Freitag

3d Battalion, 504th Infantry Regiment: LtCol Larry Swift

2d Battalion, 114th Field Artillery Regiment: LtCol Gary E. Huffman

Regimental Combat Team 8: Col Charles M. Gurganus (–9 August 2005); Col David H. Berger

3d Battalion 8th Marines: LtCol Steve M. Neary

2d Battalion 2d Marines: LtCol James J. Minick

1st Battalion 6th Marines: LtCol William M. Jurney

2d Battalion 6th Marines: LtCol Scott D. Aiken

3d Battalion 4th Marines: LtCol Andrew R. Kennedy

2d Battalion 7th Marines: LtCol Joseph A. L'Etoile

3d Reconnaissance Battalion: LtCol Daniel R. Masur

1st Reconnaissance Battalion: LtCol Joseph C. Marello

2d Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division, U.S. Army: Col Gary S. Patton

2d Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division (Mechanized): Col John Gronski

224th Engineer Battalion, Iowa National Guard: LtCol Todd M. Jacobus

2d Marine Aircraft Wing (Fwd)

Commanding General: BGen Robert E. Milstead

Chief of Staff: Col John T. Rahm; Col Thomas M. Murray

G-1: CWO Donald F. Page; Maj Robert A. Haughton

G-2: Col Robert K. Beauchamp; LtCol Dieter G. Jobe

G-3: Col John C. Kennedy; Col Darrell L. Thacker

G-4: Col Robert J. Drummond; Col Peter M. Warker

G-6: LtCol Kenyon M. Gill (–23 April 2005); Maj James E. Munroe

Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2 (Fwd): LtCol Todd W. Schlund; Maj Elmer K. Couch

Marine Aircraft Group 26 (-)(Rein): Col Thomas M. Murray; Col David J. Mollahan

VMFA-224: LtCol Wilber E. Thomas

VMFA-332: LtCol David A. Wilbur

VMFA (AW)-142: LtCol Charles B. Sagebiel

VMFA (AW)-242: LtCol Kevin M. Iiams

VMFA-224(AW): LtCol Wilbur E. Thomas

VMFA-142: LtCol Charles B. Sagebiel

VMA-223: LtCol Andrew G. Shorter

VMA-311: LtCol Robert C. Kuckuk

VMAQ-1: Col Mark E. Wakeman

VMAQ-2: LtCol Michael W. George

VMAQ-4: LtCol Phillip K. Zimmerman

HMLA-167: LtCol Lawrence E. Killmeier

HMLA-269: LtCol Joseph M. Jeffrey

HMLA-369: LtCol Thomas D. Weidley

HMLA-775: LtCol Bruce S. Orner

HMM-161: LtCol Robert M. Brassaw

HMM-264: LtCol Gregory M. Douquet

HMM-266: LtCol Joseph E. George (–18 December 2005); LtCol Leo A. Kilgore

HMM-364: LtCol Michael R. Hudson

HMM-764: LtCol Jacques C. Naviaux

HMM-774: LtCol John J. McGonagle

HMH-465: LtCol Paul A. Pond

HMH-466: LtCol John H. Celigoy

DET, VMGR-252: LtCol Kenneth Zielick

571st Air Ambulance Company (Army): Maj Eric G. Rude

82d Medical Company (Army): Maj Dustin K. Elder

Marine Wing Support Group 27 (Fwd): Col Scott M. Anderson

Marine Air Control Group 28: Col Mark R. Cyr

VMU-1: LtCol John H. Newman

VMU-2: LtCol Mark A. Werth

2d Force Service Support Group (Fwd)

2d Marine Logistics Group (Fwd) [as—of 9 November 2005]

Commanding General: BGen John E. Wissler

Chief of Staff: Col J. E. McCown

G-1: Major Mark R. Schroeder (–April 2005); Major John J. Depinto

G-2: Capt Ryan P. Januaryosek (–July 2005); Major Eugene P. Wittkof

G-3: LtCol Francis X. Carroll (–July 2005); Col Paul K. Durkin

G-4: Major David E. Jones (–March 2006)

G-6: LtCol Carlos O. Urbina (–March 2005); LtCol Karl J. Gannon (–July 2005); LtCol Douglas E. Mason

Headquarters and Service Battalion(-)(Rein): LtCol J. R. Gambrino; Maj P. T. Deutsch (22–28 Septembert 2005); LtCol D. M. Smith

2d Battalion, 112th Infantry: LtCol W. A. Hall

2d Battalion, 130th Infantry: LtCol Mark Jackson

8th Engineer Support Battalion (-)(Rein): LtCol T. V. Williams (to–5 June 2005); LtCol D. W. Elzie

Combat Logistics Battalion-2: Col W. S. Aitkin (–29 August 2005); LtCol B. E. Nickle

Combat Logistics Battalion-8: LtCol P. N. Kelleher (–11 September 2005); LtCol F. X. Carroll

Combat Logistics Regiment-25: Col Robert W. Destafney (–11 Septembert 2005)

Appendix B

Selected Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

AA–Assault Amphibian
AAA–Antiaircraft Artillery
AAOE–Arrival and Assembly Operations Echelon
AAV–Amphibious Assault Vehicle
ACE–Aviation Combat Element
ADC–Assistant Division Commander
ADOCS–Automated Deep Operations Coordination System
APOD-Air Port of Debarkation
APOE–Air Port of Embarkation
ASLT–Air Support Liaison Team
ASOC–Air Support Operations Center
ASP–Ammunition Supply Point
ATARS–Advanced Tactical Air Reconnaissance System
ATO–Air Tasking Order
BCL–Battlefield Coordination Line
BCT–Brigade Combat Team
BDA–Battle Damage Assessment
BFT–Blue Force Tracker
BSSG–Brigade Service Support Group
C2PC–Command and Control Personal Computer
CBR–Counter Battery Radar
CE–Command Element
CEB–Combat Engineering Battalion
CENTCOM–U.S. Central Command
CFACC–Coalition Forces Air Component Commander
CFLCC–Coalition Forces Land Component Commander
CG–Commanding General
CGS–Common Ground Station
CIP–Combat Identification Panel
Class II–Batteries
Class VIII–Medical Supplies
Class IX–Repair Parts
CMOC–Civil-Military Operations Center
CPAO–Consolidated Public Affairs Office
CP-Command Post
CPX–Command Post Exercise
CRAF–Civil Reserve Air Fleet
CSS–Combat Service Support
CSSB–Combat Service Support Battalion
CSSC–Combat Service Support Company
CONPLAN–Contingency Plan

CONUS–Continental United States
COP–Common Operational Picture
DA–Dispersal Area
DAC–Division Administration Center
DASC–Direct Air Support Center
DIA–Defense Intelligence Agency
DOC–Deployment Operations Center
DS–Direct Support
DSA–Division Support Area
EMCON–Emissions Control
EOD–Explosive Ordnance Disposal
EPW–Enemy Prisoner of War
FAC–Forward Air Controller
FAD–Field Artillery Detachment
FARP–Forward Arming and Refueling Point
FOB–Forward Operating Base
FOE–Follow on Echelon
FPOL–Forward Passage of Lines
FRAGO–Fragmented Order
FRSS–Forward Resuscitative Surgery System
FSCC–Fire Support Coordination Center
FSS–Fast Sealift Ships
FSSG–Force Service Support Group
GBS–Global Broadcasting System
GCE–Ground Combat Element
GOSP–Gas-Oil Separation Plant
HDR–Humanitarian Daily Ration
HET–Human Exploitation Team
HF–High Frequency
HHA–Hand Held Assay
HUMINT–Human Intelligence
IC–Intelligence Community
IMINT–Image Intelligence
IMO–Information Management Officer
IO–Information Officer
IPSA–Intermediate Pumping Stations
JDAM–Joint Direct Attack Munition
JMEM–Joint Munitions Effectiveness Manual
JSTARS–Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System
KAF–Kuwaiti Armed Forces
KI–Killbox Interdiction
KLF–Kuwaiti Land Forces
KMOD–Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense
LAR–Light Armored Reconnaissance
LASER–Light Amplification through Stimulated Emission of Radiation

LAV–Light Armored Vehicle
LD–Line of Departure
LOC–Line of Communication
LSA–Life Support Area; Logistical Support Area
LTO–Logistics Tasking Order
LZ–Landing Zone
MACCS–Marine Air Command and Control Squadron
MAG–Marine Air Group
MAGTF–Marine Air-Ground Task Force
MANPAD–Man-Portable Air Defense
MARCORSYSCOM–Marine Corps Systems Command
MAW–Marine Aircraft Wing
MCIA–Marine Corps Intelligence Activity
MCRE–Marine Corps Readiness Evaluation
MCWL–Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory
MDACT–Mobile Data Automated Communication Terminal
MEB–Marine Expeditionary Brigade
MEF–Marine Expeditionary Force
MEFEX–Marine Expeditionary Force Exercise
MEG–MEF (Marine Expeditionary Force) Engineer Group
MEWSS–Mobile Electronic Warfare Support System
MLC–Marine Logistics Command
MOD–Ministry of Defense (Kuwait)
MOI–Ministry of the Interior (Kuwait)
MOPP–Mission Oriented Protective Posture
MOS–Military Occupational Specialty
MOUT–Military Operations on Urban Terrain
MP–Military Policy
MPF–Maritime Prepositional Force
MPSRON–Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron
MRLS–Multiply Rocket Launcher System
MSC–Major Subordinate Command
MSTP–MAGTF Staff Training Program
MWSG–Marine Wing Support Squadron
MWSS–Marine Wing Support Squadron
NBC–Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical
NBCRS–Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Reconnaissance System
OCD–Obstacle Clearing Detachment
OMC-K Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait
OPCON–Operation Control
OPLAN–Operations Plan
OPP–Offload Preparation Party
OPT–Operational Planning Team
ORCON–Originator Controlled
OSW–Operation Southern Watch

PA–Public Affairs
PALT–Public Affairs Liaison Team
PIR–Priority Intelligence Requirement
PLI–Position Location Information
POL–Passage of Lines
POW–Prisoner of War
PRR–Personal Role Radio
QRF–Quick Reaction Force
RA–Regular Army
RCT–Regimental Combat Team
RFF–Requested for Forces
RG–Republican Guard
RGFC–Republican Guard Forces Command
RIP–Relief in Place
ROC–Rehearsal of Concept
ROZ–Restrical Operation Zone
RRP–Refueling and Replenishment Point
RSO&I–Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration
RUC–Reporting Unit Code
SAPOE–Sea and Aerial Ports of Embarkation
SAM–Surface-to-Air-Missile
SASO–Security and Stabilization Operations
SIGINT–Signal Intelligence
SIPRNET–Secret Internet Protocol Routed Network
SLTLP–Survey, Liaison, and Reconnaissance Party
SMART-T–Secure Mobile Antijam Reliable Tactcal Terminal
SOP–Standing Operating Procedure
SRG–Special Republican Guard
SPINS–Special Instructions
SPOD–Sea Port of Debarkation
SPOE–Sea Port of Embarkation
SSE–Sensitive Site Exploitation
SSM–Surface-to-Surface Missile
TAA–Tactical Assembly Areas
TACON–Tactical Control
T/E–Table of Equipment
TEWT–Tactical Exercise Without Troops
TIO–Target Information Officer
TIP–Thermal Identification Officer
T/O–Table of Organization
TPC–Target Procesing Center
TPFDD–Time-Phased Force Deployment Data

Appendix C

Chronology of Events

2003

1 August

Medium Helicopter Squadron-165 (HMM-165) becomes the last Marine Corps aircraft squadron to return from the initial Iraq campaign.

3 September

I MEF transfers authority to the Polish-led Multinational Division (Center-South). Three weeks later, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, handed control of an-Najaf to a Spanish-led force (22 September). The delay in the second transfer stemmed from a violent upheaval in the city beginning on 29 August.

11-25 October

13th MEU (SOC) in al-Faw region, under operational control of the British command in Southeastern Iraq, conducts Operation Sweeny.

5 November

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld announces the Marine Corps return to Iraq as part of the next U.S. troop rotation.

21 November

The Marine Corps reaches its lowest point in overseas deployments during 2003, with less than 11,000 Marines (excluding personnel permanently stationed overseas).

27 November

General Michael W. Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps, announces Marine Corps rotation policy for Iraq.

9 December

Company C, 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, returns to home station after three months in Iraq followed by a six-month Unit Deployment Program rotation in Japan.

2004

14 January

I MEF begins its deployment from the United States.

February-March

Arrival and assembly of I MEF, covering over 800 kilometers from the staging areas in Kuwait to Forward Operating Base St. Mere, Iraq.

15 March

3d Marine Aircraft Wing assumed responsibility for airspace management and aviation support for the area of operations in al-Anbar Province.

20 March

1st Marine Division transfers authority with 82d Airborne Division, thus I MEF assumes duty as Multinational Force–West.

25-27 March

Marines of RCT-1 conduct offensive actions at the northeastern sector of the city of Fallujah, succeeded in taking control of the Cloverleaf intersection.

28 March

3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division is relieved by 1st Marines, detaches from 1st Marine Division operational control, the last major relief in al-Anbar Province.

31 March

Insurgents ambush four armed security contractors riding in two unmarked all-terrain vehicles from security services contractor Blackwater USA. The four Americans die amid a volley of hand grenades, and a local mob desecrates the bodies, setting fire to them, and hanging two of them inverted from the nearby Old Bridge over the Euphrates River.

April

The first Fallujah battle under Operation Vigilant Resolve (3-30 April 2004). 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, and 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, moves into to the volatile Iraqi city of Fallujah. 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, blocks access from the south, and later 2d Battalion, 4th Marines joins the assault force. The purpose is to isolate and seek out insurgents holing up in the city following the murder and mutilation of the four American contractors. The bitter fighting throughout the month leaves numerous Marines dead or wounded and with no real peace after the Coalition orders Marines to scale down attacks and eventually withdraw from the city before a decisive offensive can

be launched. Although a tenuous cease-fire continues in effect for Fallujah, Shi'a [al-Sadr] militia begin spreading violence to several other cities, including parts of Baghdad, Kut, Karbala, and Najaf.

4 May

The U.S. Joint Chiefs alert 24th MEU that it will be sent on 24 July, two months earlier than planned.

29 May

Major General James F. Amos turns over command of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing on to Major General Keith J. Stalder and departs to take command of the II MEF at Camp Lejeune, NC.

27 May

11th MEU departs the U.S. ahead of the planned sortie date of 17 June as part of Expeditionary Strike Group 3, commanded by Marine Brigadier General Joseph V. Medina, as U.S. forces concentrate to respond to insurgent successes.

28 June

The "transfer of sovereignty" to Iraq. The U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority dissolves itself, and legal authority devolves upon the appointed Iraqi Interim Government (IIG), with U.S. and Coalition forces operating under the "all necessary measures" language of the United Nations Security Council resolutions that identified the state of conflict existing in Iraq and the need for the Multinational Force to conduct operations and to detain individuals in order to help establish a secure environment. The U.S.-led Coalition transferred sovereignty two days early to the interim Iraqi government. The surprise early handover was done in the hope that it would decrease insurgents' chances to sabotage Iraq's step toward self-rule.

30 June

Marines raise the American flag over the new U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, marking the first time the American flag has flown there in 13 years.

16 July

11th MEU begins arriving in an-Najaf.

24 July

24th MEU reports to 1st Marine Division and begins operations in the province of North Babil, Iraq.

31 July

11th MEU assumes operational control of the an-Najaf and al-Qadisiyah provinces in Iraq, initially working under the Polish-led Multi-National Division (Central-South), but then reports to I MEF on 8 August, for the same area.

5-27 August

Combat in an-Najaf: A cease-fire signed in June between members of radical Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's militia and Iraqi officials in Iraq ended when the militia launched attacks against Marines of the 11th MEU and Iraqi security forces in Najaf. After failed negotiations by Iraqi authorities, the final operations began the night of 24 August, with Marines and Army cavalrymen battling through the streets and buildings through the following day, culminating with Marines encircling the Imam Ali Mosque at a distance of 100 meters by the end of the 25th. Amid heavy fighting, the issue never came into doubt. However, the Sadr militia had suffered terrible losses, and resistance came to an end. A face-saving settlement brokered by Grand Ayatollah Sistani brought truce on 27 August, and the insurgents withdrew from the city.

29 August

Major General James N. Mattis relinquishes command of 1st Marine Division to Brigadier General Richard F. Natonski and departs for Quantico, Virginia, where he will take command of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command. Natonski is frocked to the grade of major general after taking command of the 1st Marine Division.

12 September

Lieutenant General John F. Sattler becomes commanding general, I MEF, relieving Lieutenant General James T. Conway, who departs to the Pentagon to become the Director of Operations, J-3, Joint Staff.

18 September

31st MEU begins training ashore in Kuwait at the Udairi Range.

7 October

The Marine Corps schedules its last undeployed Marine Corps Reserve infantry battalion, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, for Iraq in early 2005.

29 October

4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism) is activated as a non-rotational Anti-Terrorism Battalion. Unlike previous infantry units assigned in rotation, the new AT Battalion is permanently assigned to 4th MEB (AT) and exempted from the Unit Deployment Program rotation in order to concentrate on the battalion's specialized mission of combating terrorism.

8 November

Beginning of the second Fallujah battle. The largest military operation since the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom began just after sunset 7 November as thousands of U.S. and Iraqi troops pushed into the insurgent-held city of Fallujah. The city had been in rebel control since April after I MEF was instructed to halt all offensives. Operation Phantom Fury (later renamed Operation Al Fajr or Dawn) began the evening after the Iraqi interim president declared martial law on the city and surrounding area.

15 November

Marines, soldiers, and Iraqi security forces overrun the last major sites of insurgent resistance in the southernmost section of Fallujah. Eighty-three Marines and one Navy corpsman lost their lives in the November fighting, with hundreds more wounded. Mopping up operations continue through December with sporadic flurries of fighting.

24-27 November

Marines, British, and Iraqi forces launch Operation Plymouth Rock, aimed at asserting control of North Babil Province.

1 December

The Pentagon announces that the number of U.S. troops in Iraq will be increased from 138,000 to about 150,000. The increase is due primarily to the need for increased security for the national elections scheduled for January 2005.

6 December

24th MEU reports for operations to the 1st Cavalry Division, continuing its missions in North Babil.

21 December

11th MEU assumes operational control of Karbala Province from the Multi-National Division (Central-South).

22-23 December

Operation Plymouth Rock II, again in North Babil.

2005

14 January

All districts of Fallujah remain open for resettlement by city inhabitants. An estimated 30 percent of the population returns by the end of March.

9-17 January

3d Battalion, 4th Marines, deploys for the third time in the Iraq campaign. The first Marine Corps battalion to enter Baghdad in the opening days of the war in 2003, the unit was the first infantry battalion to deploy to Iraq three times, setting up camp near Fallujah.

26 January

A CH-53E crash in western Iraq claims the lives of 30 Marines and one sailor while conducting a security and stability operation near Ruthbah in western al-Anbar Province. Twenty-seven of the victims are from 1st Battalion, 3d Marines. This remains the war's deadliest single event for U.S. forces.

30 January

A majority of Iraqi voters participate in an election conducted by their transitional government, electing a 275-member Transitional National Assembly. The vast majority of Sunnis boycott the election.

6 February

24th MEU is relieved by the incoming Army 155th Brigade.

14 February

11th MEU is relieved by the incoming Army 155th Brigade.

14-16 February

15th MEU arrives in Kuwait.

20 February—5 March

Operation River Blitz is begun by 1st Marine Division in support of the unit reliefs. RCT-7 follows with Operation River Bridge (10-17 March), continued by RCT-2 through 25 March.

1 March

3d MAW is relieved by 2d MAW as responsible for air operations in Multinational Force-West.

7 March

3d MAW completes the longest deployment in its 62-year history as it heads home after 13 months in Iraq.

11 March

15th MEU moves to the southeastern edge of Baghdad and occupies Camp Falcon, operating (less aviation) under the operational control of the Army 3d Infantry Division.

17 March

The incoming 2d Marine Division executes its transfer of authority with 1st Marine Division.

27 March

The incoming II MEF conducts its transfer of authority with I MEF, which includes standing up as Multinational Force-West.

11 April

Insurgents attempt to overrun a Marine base on the Syrian border using small arms, mortars, suicide car bombs, and a fire truck loaded with explosives. The raid on Camp Gannon at Husaybah results in three wounded Marines but no American deaths.

2 May

Two VMFA-323 F-18 fighter jets collide over Iraq, killing both pilots. The planes had launched from the USS Carl Vinson in support of operations.

7-14 May

RCT-2 executes Operation Matador near the Iraq-Syria border.

25 May

Marines and other troops move into the Iraqi city of Haditha.

15-16 June

Heavy fighting in ar-Ramadi, where 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, operates under direction of the Army 2d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division.

17-22 June

RCT-2 executes its third major offensive in six weeks in western al Anbar. Operation Spear focuses on the rebel stronghold of Karabilah, near the Syrian border.

28 June-6 July

Operation Sword brings RCT-2 to the town of Hit, which becomes the first new town in area of operations Denver (western al-Anbar) that the Coalition permanently occupies.

7 July

RCT-2 launches it sixth offensive in al-Anbar province since May. Operation Scimitar begins with raids in the village of Zaidan, approximately 20 miles southeast of Fallujah, where at least 22 suspected insurgents are detained.

22 July

VMAQ-4 completes the first six-month deployment by an EA-6B Prowler squadron to Iraq. VMAQ-4 is replaced by VMAQ-1.

23 July

Insurgents score a particularly lethal car bomb ambush in Fallujah, resulting in the first women Marines killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The coordinated attack (small arms fire also hits the targeted convoy) leaves five Marines and one sailor dead and more than a dozen Marines wounded.

3-6 August

RCT-2 launches Operation Quick Strike, an offensive operation aimed at disrupting insurgent activities in the Iraqi cities of Hadithah, Haqliniyah, and Barwanah after 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, receives two lethal ambushes.

30 September

3d Battalion, 25th Marines, returns to Camp Lejeune. The Marine Corps reserve battalion lost 48 men in action, including 19 over a two-day period in early August.

15 October

First phase of Operation Liberty Express takes place with the National referendum as Iraqis vote on the ratification of their new constitution.

21 October

13th MEU reports to 2d Marine Division for Operations.

28 October

U.S. reaches its peak strength to date in Iraq: 161,000.

5-17 November

RCT-2 executes Operation Steel Curtain, assembling more than 4,500 Marines, sailors, and soldiers to clear three Euphrates River Valley towns along the Iraq-Syria border.

1 December

Ten Marines from 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, die and 11 others sustain wounds during a promotion ceremony. The Marines had gathered in an old flour mill near the Iraqi town of Fallujah for the ceremony when a hidden explosive device was triggered.

5 December

By message ALMAR 061/05, Headquarters Marine Corps announces a secondary mission for Marine Corps artillery units. The new mission assigns each artillery regimental headquarters and each battalion a secondary civil-military operations function. The artillery units are given the lead on civil-military operations in their respective Marine divisions to help relieve the Marine Corps Reserve civil affairs groups.

15 December

Operation Liberty Express: the Iraqi national election selects a permanent 275-member Iraqi National Assembly.

21 December

I MEF begins redeploying to Iraq.

27 December

13th MEU relieved by 26th MEU at al-Asad Air Base.

2006

5 January 2006

With the departure of the Army 155th Brigade, II MEF relinquishes responsibility for North Babil, Karbala, and Najaf provinces and reverts to al-Anbar Province as its sole operational responsibility.

15-27 January

1st Battalion, 2d Marines, and Iraqi army soldiers execute Operation Koa Canyon along the Western Euphrates River Valley in Iraq.

8 February

3d MAW relieves 2d MAW for air operations in al-Anbar Province.

24 February

4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism) (4th MEB (AT) is deactivated at Camp Lejeune.

24 February

Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command (MARSOC) is activated at Camp Lejeune, under the U.S. Special Operations Command.

28 February

I MEF relieves II MEF as Multinational Force-West.

19 March

Third anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Appendix D

Reviewers

Gen James T. Conway
Gen (Ret) Michael Hagee
Gen James N. Mattis
LtGen James F. Amos
LtGen Richard S. Kramlich
LtGen Richard F. Natonski
LtGen John F. Sattler
LtGen Keith J. Stalder
MajGen Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.
MajGen Dennis J. Hejlik
MagGen (Ret) Richard A. Huck
MajGen (Ret) Stephen T. Johnson
MajGen John F. Kelly
MajGen Robert E. Milstead, Jr.
MajGen Michael R. Regner
MajGen James L. Williams
BGen David H. Berger
BGen Charles M. Gurganus
BGen Ronald J. Johnson
BGen Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr.
BGen Thomas M. Murray
BGen Lawrence D. Nicholson
BGen (Ret) Charles S. Patton
BGen David B. Reist
BGen John A. Toolan, Jr.
BGen John E. Wissler
Col Scott M. Anderson
Col (Ret) John R. Ballard
Col Elvis E. Blumenstock
Col Paul W. Brier
Col (Ret) Larry K. Brown, Jr.
Col Thomas L. Cariker
Col Robert H. Chase
Col (Ret) Guy M. Close
Col Mark R. Cyr
Col Stephen W. Davis
Col Robert W. Destafney
Col Paul K. Durkin
Col Thomas C. Greenwood
Col (Ret) Curtis E. Haberbosch
Col (Ret) Anthony M. Haslam
Col John P. Holden
Col Michael E. Kampsen
Col John C. Kennedy
Col (Ret) Stuart L. Knoll
Col (Ret) John T. Larson
Col James K. La Vine
Col Kenneth J. Lee
Col Clarke R. Lethin
Col (Ret) Ron R. McFarland
Col (Ret) Steven E. McKinley
Col Jonathan G. Miclot
Col W. Lee Miller
Col David J. Mollahan
Col Glenn T. Starnes
Col Michael A. Shupp
Col Darrell L. Thacker
Col Craig A. Tucker
Col (Ret) Michael Walker
LtCol Francis X. Carroll
LtCol Joseph A. L'etoile

Back Cover: The logotype reproduced on the back cover has as its major element the oldest military insignia in continuous use in the United States. It first appeared, as shown here, on Marine Corps buttons adopted in 1804. With the stars changed to five points, the device has continued on Marine Corps buttons to the present day.


MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION