

VII Corps in the Gulf War

Deployment and Preparation for Desert Storm

Lieutenant Colonel Peter S. Kindsvatter, US Army

President George Bush directed the deployment of VII US Corps from Europe to the gulf to provide the offensive punch needed for victory. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf gave VII Corps the main attack mission and made it the key element in his “Hail Mary” envelopment. Nearly every aspect of VII Corps’ deployment from Europe, preparations in the desert, move to the western attack positions and final assaults against the Iraqi Republican Guard took on previously undreamed of proportions—in terms of numbers and sizes of forces moved, timelines and schedules, distances, logistics requirements, and speed and lethality of engagements. It will all be the subject of intense study and analysis for years to come.



The following article is the first in a series of three that will chronicle the actions of VII Corps, from its planning and deployment, its training in the desert, through the 100-hour ground offensive and, finally, the corps' actions after the cease-fire. The author relates firsthand observations and information gathered in numerous interviews to provide a telling description of VII Corps' efforts. This article begins with the early planning in Europe and takes us to the eve of the ground offensive.

For six men seated in front of the television in the basement of VII Corps headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, the 8 November Cable News Network (CNN) announcement that VII Corps would deploy to Southwest Asia came as no surprise. A week earlier, General Crosbie E. Saint, commander in chief of United States Army, Europe (USAREUR),

had told the VII Corps commander, Lieutenant General Frederick M. Franks Jr., to form a small, close-hold cell to begin deployment planning.¹ The members of this cell were the only corps soldiers with advance knowledge of the deployment, and even they did not know about the public announcement until Saint called Franks on 8 November and said that a decision might be made that day in Washington.²

While the announcement of the deployment was certainly news to most of the Jayhawk Corps' soldiers, the possibility of deploying all or part of the corps to Southwest Asia was something that the corps'

leadership and staff had been secretly examining. The corps commander directed his planners, shortly after the first US troops deployed to Saudi Arabia in August, to begin closely monitoring the situation in Southwest Asia. In late September, VII Corps was directed to begin planning to deploy the 1st Armored Division (AD) to Southwest Asia and, in October, to

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plan for the deployment of the entire corps. The corps was then told, late in October, to put this planning effort on hold. This initial planning, which involved the corps and its major subordinate commands, served as the foundation for executing the deployment that was announced on 8 November.

In all, 49,008 Continental United States (CONUS)-based soldiers and some 73,369 USAREUR-based soldiers would deploy to Saudi Arabia, with 48,600 vehicles, in 97 days.³ Deployment began on 12 November, four days after the public announcement, when 2d Squadron, 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), began rail loading from its home station at Bamberg, Germany, to move to the ports. Prior to deployment, a BCTP team from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, conducted a seminar for the corps at Kelley Barracks, Stuttgart, Germany. A BCTP team then accompanied the corps to Saudi Arabia and conducted a three-day map exercise for the corps and its MSCs at King Khalid Military City, 6 to 9 January 1991. Subordinate commands conducted similar leader and staff training sessions.

In Germany, 465 trains, 119 convoys and 312 barges moved the soldiers and their equipment to aerial and seaports of embarkation, where 435 aircraft and 109 ships took them to Saudi Arabia. An additional

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Reconnaissance unit from the 82nd Airborne Division returning to its desert base camp while host nation personnel (near forklift) erect donated tents, August or September 1990.

[During the reconnaissance] Schwarzkopf outlined his strategic campaign plan at the meeting and told VII Corps that it would conduct the attack's main effort during the ground campaign. Its mission would be to attack and destroy the Iraqi Republican Guard. ... the reconnaissance allowed the VII Corps commanders to see firsthand the harsh desert conditions, the lack of supporting facilities and to gain valuable insights from their fellow commanders already in theater.

143 aircraft and 31 ships brought the CONUS-based forces to the desert.⁴

Given the need for immediate deployment, force structure decisions had to be made very early. Even before the deployment announcement, Franks met with Saint at USAREUR headquarters on 4 November to discuss tailoring the VII Corps force. Based on anticipated offensive operations, they decided to deploy tank-heavy armored divisions—1st Armored from VII Corps and 3d Armored from V Corps. Picking a division from the US corps stationed in Germany allowed cross-leveling and support from within each corps for its division's deployment.

The two leaders further discussed the internal composition of these divisions. Because of ongoing force reductions, several battalion-size units from the 8th Infantry Division (ID) would deploy to fill out

the 3d AD.⁵ In the 1st AD, where two mechanized infantry battalions had not yet upgraded from M113 personnel carriers to Bradley fighting vehicles, they decided to deploy the 3d Brigade of the 3d ID in lieu of the division's 1st Brigade.⁶

Finally, 2d AD (Forward) would deploy from Germany to round out the two-brigade 1st ID, which, with its armor-heavy brigades (two tank battalions and one mechanized infantry battalion in each) and its longstanding REFORGER association with VII Corps, was a logical addition to the force package.

Force structuring decisions in the combat support and combat service support area would prove even more difficult. As Franks noted, the challenge was "to make a contingency corps out of an already forward deployed corps, and that meant adding communications and combat service support units ... We were playing

catchup ball in making us a contingency corps almost to the time we crossed the line of departure." VII Corps, long reliant upon host nation support in a theater with a well-developed infrastructure, now needed substantial additions in signal, medical, transportation and

In a sense, the corps had begun focusing its training for the war in Southwest Asia even before Iraq invaded Kuwait. With the end of the Cold War and the dismantling of the inter-German border, VII Corps had begun to get away from lock step, general defense plan (GDP)-oriented scenarios in its training exercises, emphasizing instead more mobile, offensively oriented scenarios.

engineer support. The 2d Corps Support Command (COSCOM), for example, grew from about 8,000 personnel in Germany to 24,000 in Southwest Asia.

In expanding from two maneuver divisions and an ACR in Germany to, at times, five maneuver divisions and an ACR in Southwest Asia and in tripling the size of its COSCOM, VII Corps exhibited an ability to be expansible. As former Chief of Staff of the Army General Carl E. Vuono said, the smaller US Army of the future must be "expansible, able to regenerate forces to sustain and reinforce extended contingency operations." Vuono envisioned that the Army will continue to "rely extensively on the Reserve Components" for any such expansion, as was the case for VII Corps.⁷ The Jayhawk Corps included 19,908 personnel from 166 Army National Guard and Army Reserve units. Most of these were combat service support units and constituted a large part of the increase in size of 2d COSCOM.⁸

While many specific decisions concerning tailoring the force would, indeed, continue right up to line-of-departure time, most of the major subordinate units deploying with the corps were thus identified prior to the 8 November public announcement (see task organization chart), allowing Franks to immediately convene a commanders' meeting the morning of 9 November. He set the tone for the operation at this meeting, specifically that "we were proud to join our

fellow soldiers operating in Southwest Asia and to join the team to defeat aggression, and we would go do what we were asked to do, and we would talk about it later."

The corps commander also laid out a training focus at his 9 November meeting. Units would emphasize gunnery and weapons skills, NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) training, command and control (C²) of large formations, desert survival and host country customs. From this guidance, the corps' major subordinate commands (MSCs) developed mission essential task lists upon which to base their training.

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Franks also decided upon an immediate leaders' reconnaissance to Southwest Asia. On 11 November, he departed for Saudi Arabia with his 2d COSCOM commander (Brigadier General Robert P. McFarlin), his G3 (operations and plans officer, Colonel Stanley F. Cherrie), his 93d Signal Brigade commander (Colonel Richard M. Walsh), his deputy chief of staff (Colonel Edwin W. Simpson), and his aide (Major Toby Martinez). This party linked up with the corps' MSC commanders in country: Major General Ronald H. Griffith, 1st AD; Major General Paul E. Funk, 3d AD; Major General Thomas G. Rhame, 1st ID; and Colonel Don Holder, 2d ACR.

This reconnaissance was very productive for several reasons. First, Franks and his commanders received firsthand mission guidance from General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the Central Command (CENTCOM) commander, at a commanders' meeting held on 13 November. Schwarzkopf outlined his strategic campaign plan at the meeting and told VII Corps that it would conduct the attack's main effort during the

ground campaign. Its mission would be to attack and destroy the Iraqi Republican Guard Forces Command (RGFC). This basic guidance did not change from that point on, thus allowing VII Corps to focus its planning and training efforts.

Second, the reconnaissance allowed face-to-face coordination with Lieutenant General John J. Yeosock, commander of the Army component to CENTCOM (ARCENT [Army Forces Command]) and his staff. Initial assembly areas and ports of debarkation were selected, and an initial time-phased force deployment list for VII Corps was adopted, with an emphasis on getting combat service support units into the troop flow early.

Finally, the reconnaissance allowed the VII Corps commanders to see firsthand the harsh desert conditions, the lack of supporting facilities and to gain valuable insights from their fellow commanders already in theater (XVIII Airborne Corps, 24th ID and 1st Cavalry Division) on deployment and desert operations.

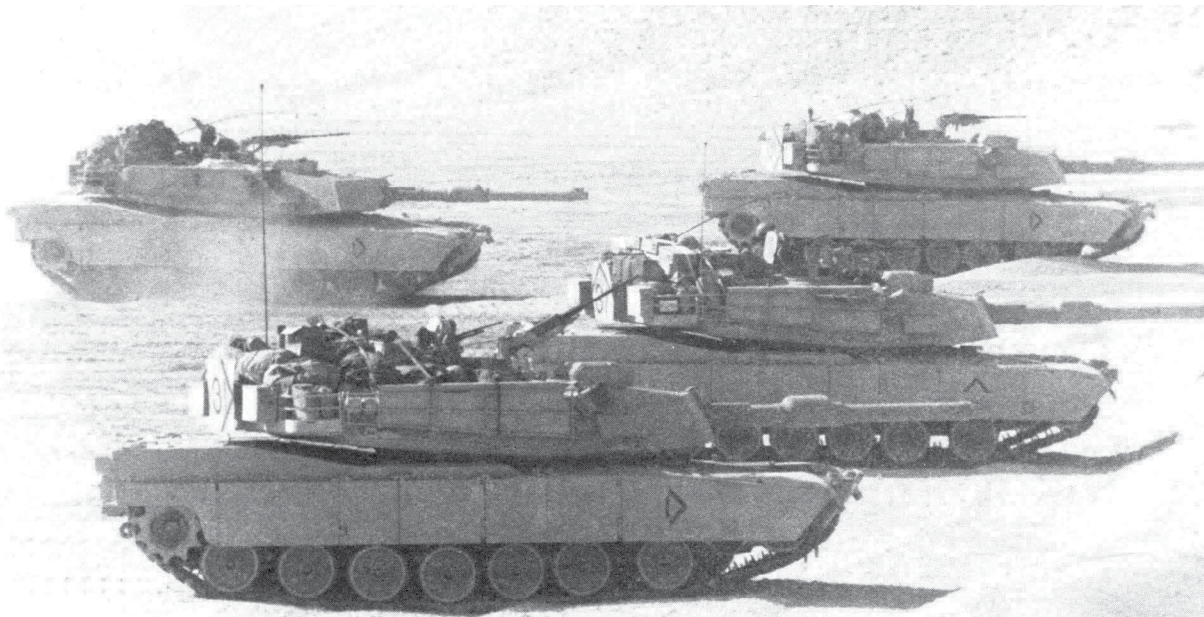
Upon returning to their home stations, the commanders and their staffs threw themselves into simultaneously conducting individual and unit training, deploying personnel and equipment and developing tactical plans. In the area of training, units placed a great deal of emphasis on gunnery skills, knowing that long-range gunnery skills would be critical. The 3d AD had just completed a gunnery and tactical training period at Grafenwohr and Hohenfels and, thus, was at the peak of its training cycle. The 3d ID was in a gunnery cycle at Grafenwohr at the time of the deployment and it hosted deploying tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles on the gunnery ranges, using its own vehicles for any gunner-vehicle commander pairs from 2d ACR, 1st AD or 2d AD (Forward) who had not previously fired together. Unit conduct of fire trainer (UCOFT) training was included.



Offloading of 3d Armored Division tanks at Ad Dammam, Saudi Arabia, December 1990.

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Live-fire gunnery training continued after units deployed to Saudi Arabia. The corps obtained permission to fire on Saudi training ranges at King Khalid Military City. In addition, the 2d ACR, 1st AD and 3d AD built their own firing ranges in the desert. Engineers constructed a full-scale replica of the enemy defenses for 1st ID to practice deliberate breaching of a fortified area. The 1st ID practiced with its newly acquired mine plows and mine rollers in this practice breach area. These in-theater ranges were not of the quality found at the training areas in Germany, but they afforded each crew the opportunity to fire service ammunition—something many of them had not done before. These ranges also had enough space to allow



M1A1s at a hastily built firing range in the Saudi desert.

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a large impact area, permitting long-range gunnery. During day and night, crews fired TOW (tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided) and Hellfire missiles, 120mm tank service SABOT rounds, the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS), mine clearing line charges (MICLICs), 155mm dual-purpose improved conventional munitions and 25mm Bradley fighting vehicle service ammunition.

Another key element of the in-theater training was maneuver training. Units practiced formations and navigation at all levels, learning to navigate by compass and odometer in the featureless desert. The acquisition of about 3,000 Global Positioning Systems proved immensely valuable to navigation and accuracy of artillery fires. Units learned to build fire support and field trains into their formations, both to keep them readily at hand and to protect them. For many commanders, particularly those above battalion level, the size of their formations was something of a revelation, as was the

speed with which they could move over the flat desert. Limited maneuver space had precluded such formations at home station.

The corps also emphasized leader and staff training and rehearsals, both at home station and in Saudi Arabia. Prior to deployment, a BCTP team from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, conducted a seminar for the corps at Kelley Barracks, Stuttgart, Germany. A BCTP team then accompanied the corps to Saudi Arabia and conducted a three-day map exercise for the corps and its MSCs at King Khalid Military City, 6 to 9 January 1991. Subordinate commands conducted similar leader and staff training sessions.

Both the corps commander and the corps chief of staff, Brigadier General John R. Landry, held frequent map rehearsals for commanders and staff, using a 1:100,000 scale flat map with unit counters. These sessions were invaluable in identifying problems and ensuring synchronization.⁹

The three to four weeks of in-theater training the corps' units were able to conduct (some units more than four weeks) was a critical confidence builder. At first, units were concerned with simply establishing themselves in their assembly areas and getting used to desert life. After about three or four weeks, however, as Franks put it: "Our soldiers were desert smart and desert tough. Our soldiers were magnificent at being able to adapt to the desert—much to the surprise of the Iraqis."

In addition to executing an ambitious training plan, the corps' units underwent various force modernization actions once in theater. Mine rollers, plows and rakes were issued to the corps, with priority to the 1st ID. The 2d ACR turned in its "basic" cavalry fighting vehicles for improved and more heavily armored M2A2 Bradleys, which the 2d ACR used as cavalry fighting vehicles. The four tank battalions of the 1st ID arrived from Fort Riley with M1 tanks. Two of these battalions drew

M1A1 tanks, with the 120mm main gun. By the time the ground war started, all of the corps' tank battalions had the M1A1 tank except 3-37AR (Armor) and 4-37AR of 1st ID's 2d Brigade, which would be quite successful with the basic M1 and its 105mm main gun.

Numerous other force improvement efforts took place. Several tank battalions in the 1st AD received add-on armor plating for their M1A1s. The corps also received single and multichannel tactical satellite (TACSAT) equipment, which proved extremely valuable for communications over great distances in a rapidly moving battle. The corps received intelligence input downlinked from JSTARS (Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System). MICLICs were mounted on armored vehicle launched bridge chassis to make AVLMS (armored vehicle launcher MICLICs). Hundreds of CUCVs (commercial utility cargo vehicles) were swapped out for the far more versatile and



VII Corps armor stretching across the Saudi desert to the southern horizon, late February 1991.

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A very efficient airflow of soldiers, coupled with ship breakdowns and delays, led to a growing time gap between the arrival of personnel and equipment. The [expected two- or three-day] waiting time stretched to more than two weeks and caused a buildup of about 30,000 soldiers in the port waiting areas.

A further complication was the lack of lines of communication.

The single LOC for the theater was a two-lane, hard-surface road known as Tapline (Trans-Arabian Pipeline) Road. Military and civilian traffic rolled in steady streams along this single supply route, day and night.

(Top) VII Corps soldiers packed into an Ad Dammam warehouse, 9 January 1991. (Below) A battle-weary GM sedan makes its way up Tapline Road among towering 2d Armored Division (F) and British 1st Armored Division vehicles, 30 January 1991. Note the marker directing "All 1st ID convoys" to exit the highway and the desert rat symbol painted on the HET cab door at right.



mobile HMMWV (high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle). Hundreds of additional HEMTT (heavy expanded mobility tactical truck) fuel trucks augmented the less mobile 5,000-gallon fuel tractor trailers.

Finally, much of the corps' equipment arriving in theater was green in color. A massive effort to paint it desert sand color started at the ports and continued up until line-of-departure time, with soldiers at the corps tactical command post (TAC) slapping tan paint on their vehicles with brushes as late as 22 February.

Such in-theater force modernization and improvement efforts, coupled with the latest equipment brought by units from home stations—the Apache attack helicopter, the MLRS, the armored combat earthmover, the German-built *Fuchs* NBC reconnaissance vehicle, the Army Tactical Missile System and the Patriot air defense missile system, to name just a few—ensured that VII Corps crossed the line of departure with the most modern equipment possible. The corps' equipment superiority over the Iraqis would be one of the keys to success.

This significant training and force modernization effort had to be built around the requirements for executing a massive deployment. The corps quickly developed and published, on 11 November, Operation Order (OPORD) 1990-1 for the deployment.¹⁰

The corps established a deployment cell, under the control of the corps deputy commander, Brigadier General Eugene L. Daniel. USAREUR and United States European Command (USEUCOM) collocated their representatives with the corps' cell. The sequencing of units out of Germany was 2d ACR,

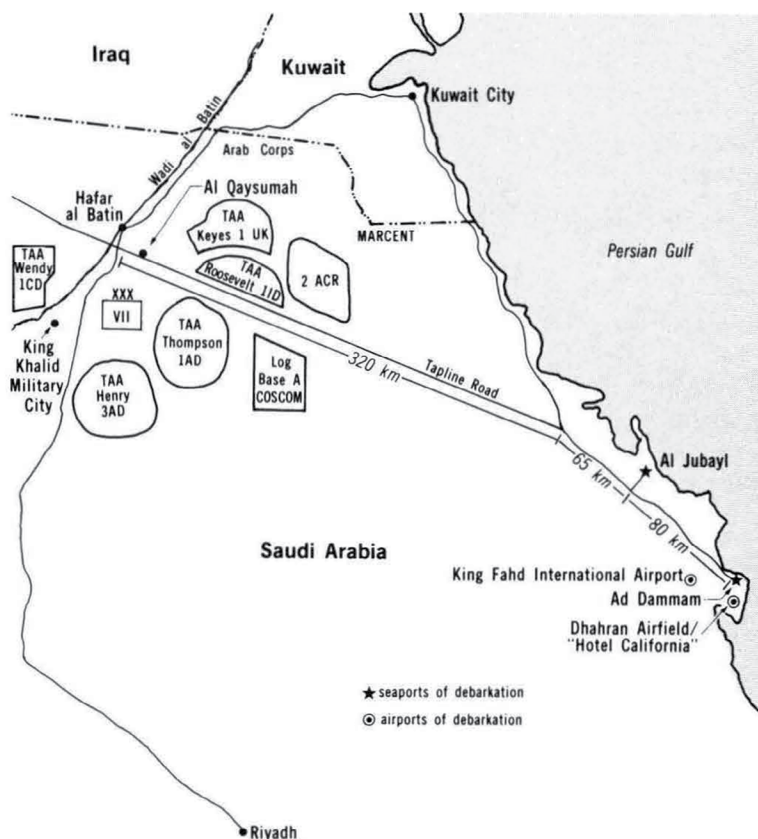


Figure 1. VII Corps Deployment

corps C² assets, 2d COSCOM, 1st AD, 3d AD, then 2d AD (Forward). The nondeploying 3d ID ran the port support activities in Europe, providing loading teams at seaports of embarkation at Antwerp, Belgium, Bremerhaven, Germany and Rotterdam, Holland.

Establishing a separate deployment cell under Daniel proved to be a wise division of the corps' C² in that it allowed the corps commander and his subordinate commanders to focus on training and war planning while the deployment cell executed the deployment plan. Also, the external support

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VII Corps tanks receiving their desert camouflage at a painting facility in Ad Dammam, 1 January 1991.

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provided by a wide variety of headquarters outside VII Corps such as USAREUR, USEUCOM and various CONUS-based agencies was equally invaluable to the successful deployment.

The corps intended to deploy as it was expecting to fight, in a tactical configuration, with unit integrity maintained, thus facilitating being able to go to war immediately upon arrival in Saudi Arabia. There was a great deal of pressure, however, to complete the deployment by the 15 January deadline given to Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. This led to an increasing tendency to administratively load ships to get as much equipment on board as possible, to the detriment of unit integrity. A shortage of MILVANs (military-owned

demountable containers) and CONEX (container express) container aggravated the problem.

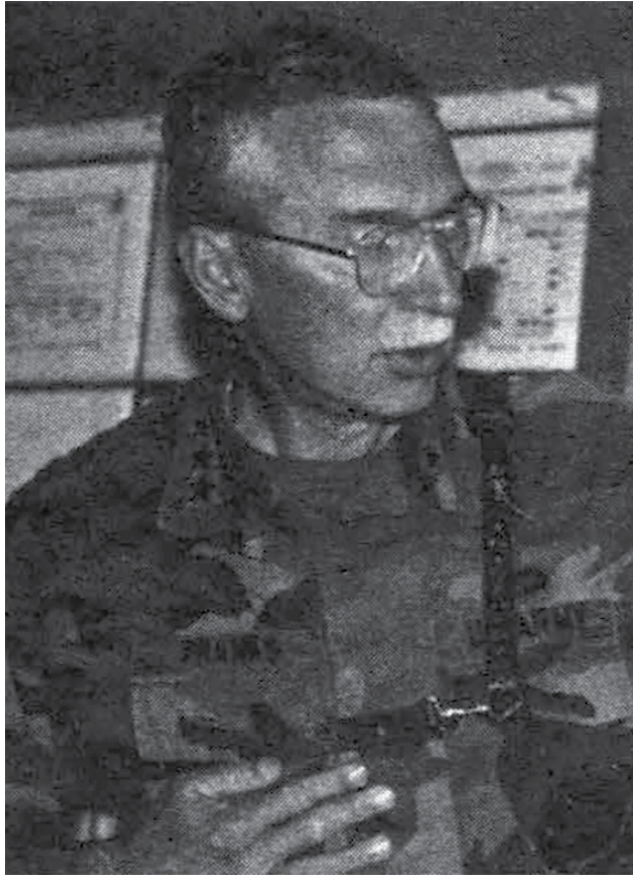
The in-theater merging of soldiers with their equipment also proved to be a problem. The corp established an ad hoc port support activities headquarters, known as "Hotel California," at the King Abdul Aziz Air Base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. This headquarters was responsible for monitoring the arrival of passengers at the King Abdul Aziz Air Base and at King Fahd International Airport, the arrival of equipment and supplies at the ports of Ad Dammam and Al Jubayl, and the linkup and forward movement of troops and equipment to tactical assembly areas (TAAs) (see fig. 1).

The goal was to have the soldiers wait in temporary quarters in the port area no more than two or three days before linking up with their equipment. However, a very efficient airflow of soldiers, coupled with ship breakdowns and delays, led to a growing time gap between the arrival of personnel and equipment. The waiting time stretched to more than two weeks and caused a buildup of about 30,000 soldiers in the port waiting areas, far in excess of the planned 12,000 to 15,000, greatly straining accommodations, security measures and transportation.

The ad hoc port support activities headquarters was inadequately staffed and structured to handle this dilemma, so Brigadier General William J. Mullen III, commander of 1st ID (Forward) in Germany, was tasked to bring his chain of command and necessary equipment to Saudi Arabia to assume the port support activities mission. About 800 soldiers from 1st ID (Forward) assumed this mission just after Christmas, with an immediate improvement in the reception and onward movement process. This superb effort allowed the corps and its MSCs to deploy to the desert and prepare for combat operations.

The next problem in the deployment process proved to be the lack of adequate heavy equipment transporters (HETs) to move equipment from the port area to TAAs in the desert. The number of available HETs was limited, and the reliability of the civilian drivers left something to be desired. Consequently, equipment backed up at the ports. Of course in Saudi Arabia, unlike a mature theater of operations such as Europe, there were no alternate means of transportation such as river barges or railroads to move heavy equipment.

A further complication was the lack of lines of communication (LOC). The single LOC for the theater was a two-lane, hard-surface road known as Tapline (Trans-Arabian Pipeline) Road. Military and civilian traffic rolled in steady streams along this single supply route, day and night (see fig. 1). Hence, despite everyone's best efforts, by 17 January, the equivalent of eight tank companies, 16 Bradley companies and 22 howitzer batteries were awaiting transport. On 22 January,



LTG Franks at the main VII Corps headquarters northwest of Hafar al Batin, late February 1991.

[LTG Franks was] on the lookout for a chance to call an "audible" ... on the "line of scrimmage" to take advantage of an enemy weakness. The specific move in mind was a shifting of forces westward to envelop the open western flank of the Iraqi defenses, rather than pass the entire attacking force through the breach made by 1st ID.

1st AD and 3d AD began road marching selected units to their TAAs rather than waiting for HET transport.¹¹

While there were many snags in the deployment process, these problems, as Franks was quick to point out, "were certainly not caused by anybody's lack of motivation or unwillingness to do what was required. It was just the enormity—the size—of the operation," deploying a heavy corps through two ports (Ad Dammam and Al Jubayl) while normal theater logistics had to flow through those same ports. Corps and the theater support command would overcome these problems, and the units would close in their TAAs in time to train and prepare for combat.¹²

In addition to training and deployment, the corps had to translate Schwarzkopf's mission of attacking to destroy the RGFC into a concrete tactical plan. The corps commander gave this mission considerable thought upon his return to Germany following the 13 November meeting with Schwarzkopf. On 26 November, a planning cell was convened at Kelley Barracks. Because of the sensitivity of the information, the cell was limited to 10 people.¹³ The planning cell was to develop options to rapidly move to the enemy's rear to attack and destroy the RGFC, which was positioned in depth behind the forward defenses. Depending upon the extent to which the Iraqis continued to improve their defenses and extend them westward, the corps would have to conduct a penetration of the enemy's defensive belt before advancing against the RGFC. The corps commander did not want to rule out an envelopment around the western edge of the enemy's defenses, however, as he much preferred this over what could be a bloody, deliberate breach of a fortified zone.

The planning cell then developed an outline plan that Franks briefed to the ARCENT commander on 7 December in Riyadh. The plan at that point envisioned a strong Iraqi first-echelon defense. The 1st ID would attack and secure a breach area in these defenses west of the Wadi al Batin, and the other corps forces (2d ACR, 1st AD and 3d AD) would pass through the breach and attack to the northeast. The employment of the 1st (United Kingdom [UK]) AD and the 1st Cavalry Division (CD) were discussed at that briefing, but no decisions were made concerning their employment. (Neither unit was, at that point, designated to be part of VII Corps, but the corps commander expected

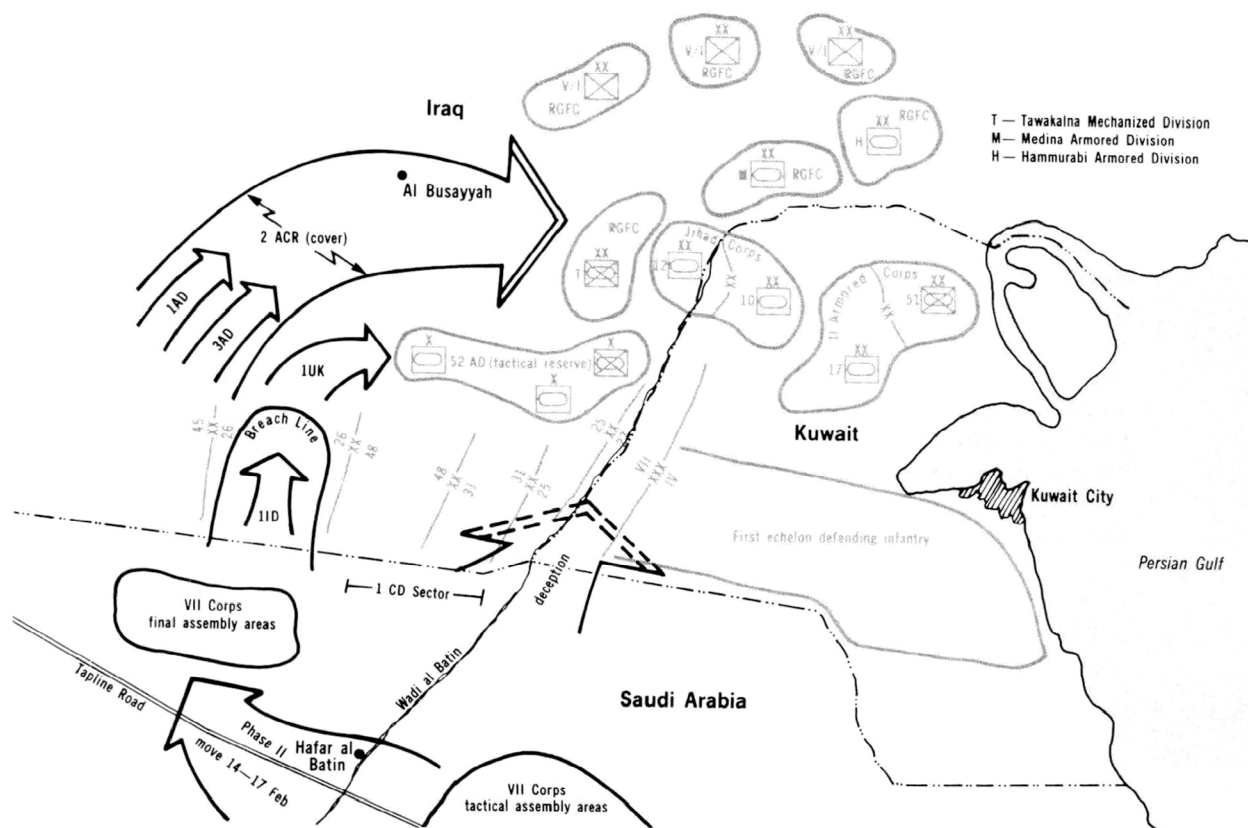


Figure 2. VII Corps Plan of Attack

one or both of those units to be given to the corps, since VII Corps' attack was to be ARCENT's main effort.)

The corps was informed at the 7 December briefing that the secretary of defense, Richard B. Cheney, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin L. Powell, were to be briefed in Riyadh on 20-21 December, to include briefings by the VII and XVIII corps commanders. It was now evident that the corps' focus was rapidly shifting to Saudi Arabia, even though most of the corps had not yet arrived. Thus, on 13 December, the corps commander and staff deployed to Saudi Arabia for the duration of the campaign, arriving in theater on 14 December.

A week later, the corps commander briefed the secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on essentially the same plan he had briefed on 7 December. The 1st ID would breach the Iraqi defenses, and the rest of the corps would pass through the breach to attack the RGFC. Franks

explained the three aspects of his tactical plan—penetrating the first echelon defenses, blocking the reaction by the enemy's tactical reserve and moving rapidly to destroy the RGFC. The plan required three divisions and an ACR for the RGFC fight, a division to penetrate the defenses and a division to block the tactical reserves. This was two more divisions than the corps controlled.

Franks briefed the corps' concept for conducting the breach and passing the follow-on units through, pointing out that this would take considerable time. He explained that he would be on the lookout for a chance to call an "audible," meaning a last-minute shifting of the corps' forces on the "line of scrimmage" to take advantage of an enemy weakness. The specific move in mind was a shifting of forces westward to envelop the open western flank of the Iraqi defenses, rather than pass the entire attacking force through the breach made by 1st ID.

During the BCTP-led corps map exercise held in early January at King Khalid Military City, the corps practiced this “audible.” The 1st and 3d ADs, with the 2d ACR covering, would shift to the western side of the corps’ zone and attack around the western end of the enemy’s fortified positions. The 1st ID would still conduct a breaching operation and would be the corps’ main effort until the breach was completed. The 1st (UK) AD, though not yet attached to VII Corps, was expected to join the corps before the ground campaign began.¹⁴ Its mission was to pass through the 1st ID breach and attack to defeat the enemy’s tactical reserves. This would protect the flank of the enveloping force driving to the north-east to attack the RGFC (see fig. 2).

The corps was now short only one division to execute this plan—a third division to join 2d ACR, 1st AD and 3d AD in the destruction of the RGFC. The corps published OPLAN 1990-2, Operation *Desert Saber*, on 13 January 1991, reflecting this concept of operation.

Prior to the start of the ground campaign, a series of fragmentary plans (“FRAGPLANS”) were developed off of OPLAN 1990-2. One of these, FRAGPLAN 7, would be significant to the execution of the campaign. The corps used FRAGPLANS as a means of providing some options to the subordinate commanders concerning future operations based on various friendly or enemy situations. FRAGPLAN 7 was developed at the request of the corps commander, to whom “it became apparent that, if the RGFC stood and fought, we needed a coordinated effort between us and XVIIIth Airborne Corps to finish the fight, so I asked

our planners to look at a variety of options, basically continuing the left hook (enveloping force).”

FRAGPLAN 7 essentially extended the corps’ zone of attack eastward to the Persian Gulf, and proposed a similar extension of XVIII Airborne Corps’ zone to the east, on VII Corps’ northern flank. ARCENT accepted this FRAGPLAN on 19 February, adopting it as “ARCENT Course of Action 6 for the Destruction

of RGFC: Positional Defense in Place.”

The corps published FRAGPLAN 7 on 24 February.¹⁵

Deception was an inherent part of the plan at all levels, and the initial positioning of the corps’ forces in theater was in large measure to support the deception story, specifically that the corps would attack to the northeast-up, or east of, the Wadi al Batin. For this reason, all unit TAAs were located east of the wadi.

The 2d ACR was positioned north of

Tapline Road, well east of the wadi, with a Hawk air defense battery radiating electronically behind it, to portray to Iraqi signal and human intelligence sources a cavalry regiment preparing for its doctrinal role as a covering force for a corps attack east of the wadi. No unit could move west of the Wadi al Batin without the personal approval of the corps commander. Once the air campaign began on 17 January, heavy bombing of targets near and east of the Wadi al Batin reinforced the deception.

On 13 January, the 1st CD, which had been attached to the XVIII Airborne Corps, was attached to VII Corps for the specific mission of protecting the theater’s main supply route, Tapline Road, against a possible Iraqi spoiling attack south along the Wadi al

VII Corps Task Organization on G-Day

1st Armored Division	207th Military Intelligence Brigade
3d Armored Division	354th Civil Affairs Brigade
1st Infantry Division (w/2 AD [Forward] attached)	TF 8-43d Air Defense Artillery
1st (UK) Armored Division*	7th Finance Group
1st Cavalry Division**	2d Corps Support Command
2d Cavalry Regiment	7-159th Aviation Regiment
Corps Artillery	332d Medical Brigade
42d Field Artillery Brigade	229th Movement Control Center
75th Field Artillery Brigade	800th Corps Movement Control Center
142d Field Artillery Brigade	7th Support Group
210th Field Artillery Brigade	159th Support Group
7th Engineer Brigade	30th Support Group
11th Aviation Brigade	16th Support Group
14th Military Police Brigade	43d Support Group
93d Signal Brigade	

* Tactical control (TACON) to VII Corps 260001Z Jan 1991

** Attached to VII Corps 13 Jan.—23 Feb., and again effective 260930C Feb 1991.

Batin to the town of Hafa al Batin. At that time, the 1st CD occupied TAA Wendy just west of King Khalid Military City. The corps also received the 2d Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) from the XVIII Airborne Corps for this same mission. The 2d Brigade of the 101st flew into Al Qaysumah, a town and airfield on Tapline Road about 30 kilometers east of Hafar al Batin, and began digging in around the airfield.

On a cold, rainy 13 January, the 2d Brigade of the 101st was trying to dig in and set up a defense with only what they had carried in with them. The corps, seeing that the 2d Brigade needed help, arranged for engineer and logistics support. Franks also ordered the 1st CD out of TAA Wendy north to positions along Tapline Road that placed the 2d Brigade of the 101st within range of the 1st CD's artillery. The 1st CD moved quickly, starting at 1520 in adverse weather, and covered about 100 kilometers in 16 hours to get into position. The 2d Brigade of the 101st was put under the tactical control of 1st CD.

The enemy did not attack, but this "defense of Hafar al Batin" proved to be a valuable C² exercise in synchronizing combat power. The corps also started, as a result of this exercise, to issue daily operational fragmentary orders to get units accustomed to receiving them and to help get everyone on a tactical footing.

Later in the month, the 2d Brigade of the 101st reverted to XVIII Airborne Corps' control, and the 1st CD moved further north until it occupied a sector along the Saudi-Iraqi border just west of the Wadi al Batin. It remained there through the start of the ground campaign, although it would revert to ARCENT control on 23 February as the theater's ground reserve force. During the month of February, the 1st CD actively supported the deception story of an attack in the vicinity of the Wadi by conducting a series of feints, artillery raids and Apache helicopter strikes against Iraqi forces defending north of the Saudi-Iraqi border.¹⁶



An MLRS attacking Iraqi positions during one of the many artillery "raids" conducted before G-day.

Deception was an inherent part of the plan at all levels, and the initial positioning of the corps' forces in theater was in large measure to support the deception story, specifically that the corps would attack to the northeast—up, or east of, the Wadi al Batin. For this reason, all unit TAAs were located east of the wadi.

There came a time, however, when the corps had to risk tipping its hand concerning its true intentions. That time came when the corps had to leave its TAAs and shift westward to assigned sectors and final assembly areas in preparation for the ground offensive. The corps executed this move, which was Phase II of *Desert Saber*, from 14 to 17 February. (Phase I was deployment and preparation for combat.) Corps units traveled as far as 160 kilometers to the west and north to position themselves for the attack across the Saudi-Iraqi border.

The corps was concerned that this move would alert the Iraqis to its intentions, but there was no way to completely conceal the move, as two major roads carrying civilian traffic had to be crossed and numerous Bedouin herdsmen and a few small villages were along the path of movement. The corps commander felt that, given the air campaign's success in damaging the Iraqis' intelligence collection and C² apparatus, the only viable intelligence collection method the Iraqis had left was human, "and by the time [anyone] called

The Phase II movement [became] a full-up rehearsal for the attack. The 1st ID moved ... to its assigned sector along the Saudi-Iraqi border [and] the 1st (UK) AD followed ... into a final assembly area just south of the 1st ID. Along the way, the 1st (UK) AD practiced the formations it would use when it attacked to the east out of 1st ID breach.

Baghdad, on their broken down communication system that the Air Force had destroyed, and got that to the field and they reacted to it, we'd be on them." The lack of Iraqi reaction to the corps' movement would bear this out. Indeed it seems probable that the Iraqis were not even aware of the presence of the VII Corps enveloping force until the attack commenced.¹⁷

Prior to executing the Phase II move, the corps commander noticed, from a map analysis, that he could move the corps to its final assembly areas using the same alignments and formations it would use when crossing the line of departure. The Phase II movement was therefore used as a full-up rehearsal for the attack. The 1st ID moved on 15 February from TAA Roosevelt to its assigned sector along the Saudi-Iraqi border. The 1st (UK) AD followed on 16 February, moving into a final assembly area just south of the 1st ID. Along the way, the 1st (UK) AD practiced the formations it would use when it attacked to the east out of 1st ID breach. The 1st ID and 1st (UK) AD did not rehearse the latter's forward passage at this time, but a full dress rehearsal had been conducted on 30 January using 1st ID's breach training area. (At the rehearsal, passage

lanes were marked and controlled as they would be during the breach, and the 7,000 vehicles of the 1st (UK) AD passed through these lanes.)¹⁸

On 16 February, after some initial repositioning on 14 and 15 February, the western enveloping force (2d ACR, 1st AD and 3d AD) moved west and then north to its final assembly areas along the Saudi-Iraqi border. The 2d ACR moved in the same covering force formation it would use to attack into Iraq. The 1st AD, in wedge formation, and the 3d AD, in a column of brigades, moved behind the 2d ACR as they would during the attack.

The corps also took this opportunity to rehearse corps-level C². Franks moved in his M113A3 personnel carrier, along with the G3's and air liaison officer's M113A3s (these three M113s constituted the command group), not far behind the 1st AD TAC headquarters, as he planned to do during the ground campaign. During the move, conducted in a brisk sandstorm, Franks found FM radio communications spotty at best, and he knew that FM radio would be the key to C² during what he expected to be a swift-moving offensive campaign. Franks, therefore, decided that, unless his physical presence at a particular point on the battlefield became critical, he would travel about the battlefield in his UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, taking his portable TACSAT radio and an operator with him. In between helicopter trips, he would base himself at whatever forward corps tactical command post was stationary and operating.

The corps' units also learned valuable lessons from the Phase II movement concerning C², time-distance factors, fuel consumption and refueling operations. The corps conducted a formal after-action review on 18 February at the corps' main headquarters, where commanders shared these lessons learned.

The stage was now set for the corps' offensive. The Iraqis had not extended their fortifications farther westward, nor had they repositioned any additional units westward. The chances of a successful envelopment of the Iraqi western flank appeared good. The corps prepared for the assault and awaited the announcement of G-day, a date called into question by the last-minute Soviet effort to arrange a peaceful withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The corps was scheduled and ready to attack on G+1. **MR**

Notes

1. Except as noted otherwise in the footnotes, this article is based upon information and quotations from a series of interviews with LTG Frederick M. Franks Jr. conducted by the author from 2 April to 26 June 1991. The author served as the VII Corps historian during *Desert Storm* from 21 January to 29 June 1991.

2. The six men were the corps commander, the deputy corps commander (BG Eugene L. Daniel), the 2d Corps Support Command (COSCOM) commander (BG Robert P. McFarlin), the corps G3 (COL Stanley F. Cherrie), the G3 plans chief (LTC Thomas R. Goedkoop) and the deputy G4 (LTC Michael R. Stafford). The corps chief of staff (BG John R. Landry), a G4 planner (LTC Robert W. Browne) and a G1 planner (MAJ Paul G. Liebeck) were also members of the planning cell, but were not present at the headquarters when the CNN announcement was made.

3. Tab D (Contingency and Fragmentary Plans [FRAGPLAN]) to VII Corps *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* After-Action Report. These numbers do not include the 23,917 British soldiers that deployed from the United Kingdom and the British Army of the Rhine who would later join VII Corps. Nor is the 1st Cavalry Division, which would also join VII Corps during the 100-hour war, counted in these numbers.

4. Ibid.

5. The 4th Battalion, 34th Armor and 5th Battalion, 3d Air Defense Artillery from 8th Infantry Division (ID) deployed with 3d Armored Division (AD).

6. The 3d Brigade of 3d ID, with 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, 4th Battalion, 7th Infantry, 4th Battalion, 66th Armor and the 26th Forward Support Battalion, deployed with 1st AD.

7. Quote from GEN Carl E. Vuono's Statement Before the Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives, on 20 February 1991.

8. Statistics on Reserve Component participation, provided by VII Corps G1 to the VII Corps historian, are as of 26 April 1991.

9. Such sessions included, for example, a commander's war-gaming session on 7 February, and chief of staff war-gaming sessions on 12, 17 and 21 February. Subjects war-gamed included the breach operation to be conducted by 1st ID, the first few days of combat operations, and the artillery and logistics support plans. This is by no means a comprehensive list; corps historian's notes.

10. A total of seven changes to the plan were published between 11 and 23 November, mostly reflecting additional information available concerning the reception and onward movement process in Southwest Asia and changes to the deployment sequence. The entire operating order, with changes, is in part

(Chronology and Documentation) of the VII Corps *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* After-Action Report.

11. Appendix 3 (Significant Activities), Tab A (Mission) to VII Corps *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* After-Action Report.

12. The 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment was closed in country on 20 December. It then occupied a sector east of the Wadi al Batin, and later closed into TAA Richardson on 23 January. 1st AD and 1st ID closed in TAAs Thompson and Roosevelt, respectively, on 28 January. The 3d AD closed into TAA Henry approximately 5 February, and 1st (United Kingdom [UK]) AD closed into TAA Keyes on about 31 January after moving westward from the Marine Forces Command (MARCENT) sector. Appendix 3, Tab A to VII Corps *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* After-Action Report.

13. This planning cell was initially limited to the commander, the deputy commander, the chief of staff, the commander of 2d COSCOM, the G3, the G4 (COL Wilson R. Rutherford III), the deputy fire support coordinator (COL Thurman R. Smith), the G3 plans chief, the G2 planner (LTC James P. Mault), and the G3 war plans chief (MAJ Patrick J. Becker). Others were soon added, however.

14. As early as mid-December, the corps received "unofficial" notification of 1st (UK) AD's eventual attachment to VII Corps. From that point on, the 1st (UK) AD maintained close ties with VII Corps, even though the "official" word did not occur until Army Forces Command (ARGENT) fragmentary order (FRAGO) 16 was issued, directing tactical control of 1st (UK) AD effective 260001Z January 1991. Tab D to VII Corps *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* After-Action Report.

15. FRAGPLAN 7 was initially published 20 February and modified and republished on 24 February. The graphics, if not the exact disposition of forces, would be executed during the ground campaign. FRAGPLANS 1 through 6, incidentally, were not executed-only FRAGPLAN 7. Tab D to VII Corps *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* After-Action Report.

16. Executive Summary and Narrative Summary, 1st CD After-Action Report, 10 April 1991.

17. VII Corps G2's *Battlefield Reconstruction Study*, "The 100-Hour Ground War: How the Iraqi Plan Failed," 20 April 1991, pages 31-37, provided details on the failure of the Iraqi intelligence system and the extent to which the Iraqi forces were in ignorance of the VII Corps' dispositions in particular, and of Coalition Forces in general.

18. 1st ID Executive Summary, *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* After-Action Report, 3.

To view "VII Corps in the Gulf War: Deployment and Preparation for Desert Storm" as it was originally published in January 1992, visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/JF-22/Original/Kindsvatter.pdf>.