

Addendum: Anbar Awakens

Colonel Sean MacFarland, U.S. Army

You old guys need to get over that s—t.

Young Marine to Marine sergeant major when asked how he felt about fighting alongside an Army unit in Al Anbar, Iraq.

Major Niel Smith commanded B Company, 2d Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment, in Tal Afar and then served as a brigade S3 staff officer for current operations in the Ready First during Operation Iraqi Freedom V. He currently is the operations officer at the U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. MAJ Smith holds a B.A. from James Madison University. His deployments include two tours in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Colonel Sean MacFarland commanded the Ready First Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, in Al Anbar province, returning with the unit in February 2007. He holds a B.S. from the United States Military Academy and an M.S. from Georgia Tech, and he is a graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. COL MacFarland's deployments include Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm and two tours as part of Operations Iraqi Freedom. He currently serves as chief of the Iraq Division, Strategic Plans and Policy Office (J5), Joint Chiefs of Staff.

PHOTO: A U.S. Army Soldier from Task Force 1-35 searches for insurgents across the street from Outpost 293 in Ar Ramadi, Al Anbar Province, Iraq, after the outpost was attacked by mortar and small arms fire, 24 July 2006, during Operation Iraqi Freedom. (U.S. Air Force, TSGT Jeremy T. Lock)

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In the March-April 2008 issue of *Military Review*, Major Niel Smith and I talked about the accomplishments of the Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen who fought in Ramadi from June 2006 through February 2007. I would like to elaborate on an important point raised in the article: the Al Anbar campaign was a model of joint operational effectiveness.

One of the great legacies of the fight for Al Anbar province will be the enduring, mutual respect earned by the various service-members who fought side by side. This respect was nowhere more evident than in Ramadi, where our Army brigade combat team, the 1st BCT, 1st Armored Division (Ready First Combat Team), fought under the command of I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF). The Ready First was not a pure Army BCT. It contained Marine Corps elements, including a reinforced rifle battalion (comprised of elements from 3/8 Marines and 1/6 Marines), two rifle companies from a Marine Expeditionary Unit (2/4 Marines), a riverine patrol unit, an air and naval gunfire liaison platoon, and a civil affairs detachment. The Air Force supported the Ready First with an air liaison team embedded in the BCT. The brigade staff itself was a de facto joint organization—it had Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine officers and NCOs throughout. The electronic warfare officer, a Catholic chaplain, and the head surgeon were all Navy commanders. The civil affairs and public affairs officers were Marines. Outside the brigade, support came from a Marine logistics group and I MEF's air combat element. Numerous other external USMC units, including a platoon from a radio battalion, a postal unit, explosive ordnance disposal teams, fire-fighting teams, air traffic controllers, and military transition teams, also provided support. So did the Navy, in the form of surgical teams and corpsmen, SeaBee battalions, electronic warfare experts, and SEAL platoons from SEAL Teams 3 and 5.

The Ready First enjoyed a particularly good working relationship with the Special Forces and other special operations forces in and around Ramadi. Soldiers bestowed the affectionate nickname of “Army SEALs” on the members of SEAL Team 3 in Ramadi who fought and died alongside of them. The brigade is particularly proud of its association with SEAL MA2 Mike Mansoor, who while supporting an operation in Ramadi won the Medal of Honor.

The Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen in Ramadi were deeply grateful for the lifesaving heroics of their Navy doctors and corpsmen. The spiritual

aid given by Navy chaplains to all services will never be forgotten. The skill and courage of Marine Corps pilots who attacked targets to assist troops in contact will likewise never fade from memory. In return, the Army's Apache pilots won the respect of Marines and Sailors who, in the mix, also came to rely on Army Paladins for timely and accurate fire support.

A command could not have asked for a better higher headquarters. The I MEF staff was dedicated to ensuring that there were no "haves" and "have-nots" among the units in Al Anbar. Often, the Army received first priority, ahead of the MEF's own Marines. The MEF commander at the time, Major General Richard C. Zilmer, ensured the Ready First had the resources it needed to fulfill his intent, and he never questioned or second-guessed us, even during the darkest hours. His forbearance demonstrated his trust in, and respect for, the professionalism and competence of the Soldiers under his command.

Altogether, the joint effort in Ramadi worked because, no matter what service uniforms they wore,

professionals dedicated to the mission performed as expected. This professional dedication evinced itself in shared values and shared understanding. It was not uncommon to see Soldiers and Marines march forward side by side in final honors at memorial services for their lost comrades. At times, the helmets atop inverted M4 carbines reflected a mix of Army and Marine Corps camouflage.

The U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps, each today without peer in its domain of land warfare, have not shared such a strong bond of common experience and understanding since the island campaigns of World War II. The services should nurture those bonds and sustain them over time. Those who share experiences on the battlefield with comrades from sister services can help strengthen these bonds and create closer ones by contributing to the discourse. Articles and other forms of media spawned from joint endeavors, co-written perhaps in cooperative cross-service efforts, will help feed the knowledge base for all services and make us stronger yet as a joint force.