

# **Eyewitness to War**

## **Volume I**

**The US Army in Operation AL FAJR:  
An Oral History**

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## Foreword

*Eyewitness to War The US Army in Operation AL FAJR: An Oral History* is a unique publication for the Combat Studies Institute. It is our first publication to make exclusive use of oral history. This study is a derivative of the CSI Operational Leadership Experiences (OLE) project, a program that collects and archives first-person experiences from the Global War on Terror. It can also be considered a companion to the recently published CSI Occasional Paper #20: Operation AL FAJR: A Study in Army and Marine Corps Joint Operations. Interviews collected for the OLE project formed the basis for that occasional paper and were so compelling, we felt a need to publish those interviews in a book series.

In November 2004, the second battle for Fallujah was a brutal and bloody fight so characteristic of urban terrain. Under the overall command of the 1st Marine Division, four Marine infantry and two US Army battalions (Task Forces 2-2 Infantry and 2-7 Cavalry) were committed to the streets of Fallujah. At this same time, the Army's 2d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division formed a cordon to hold and isolate the insurgents in the city. Using the firepower and mobility of the Army's heavy armor and mechanized units to full effect, the Marine Regimental Combat Teams were successful in destroying the enemy and securing Fallujah in ten days.

*Eyewitness to War* interviews span a wide spectrum of participants, from commanders and senior non-commissioned officers at all levels to the first-hand accounts of combat and combat service support personnel on the battlefield. We make no claim that this history is a comprehensive work, as these 37 people are but a fraction of the thousands who took part in the operation. This is primarily an Army oral history, though one of the Marine Regimental Commanders agreed to provide his story. The USMC bore the brunt of fighting in Fallujah and this study does not attempt to overlook their tremendous accomplishments.

The individuals featured in this work volunteered to work with our staff over many months. Their stories are a tremendous testimony to the skill, flexibility, and bravery of the US Army today.

This collection of personal experiences is the raw material history is made of. It is a riveting and useful way to study the past. And it is our hope that the insights derived from their roles in the second battle for Fallujah will better prepare the US Army for tomorrow's endeavors. *CSI – The Past is Prologue!*

Timothy R. Reese  
Colonel, Armor  
Director, Combat Studies Institute



## Introduction

The Combat Studies Institute (CSI) was established at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1979 with the mission to conduct original, interpretive research on historical topics pertinent to current doctrinal and operational concerns of the US Army. CSI's further mission is to publish these results in a variety of useful formats and to conduct battlefield staff rides for the US Army. Today, CSI also assists the US Army's Combined Arms Center in the development and implementation of an integrated progressive program of military history instruction. CSI's mission further includes writing contemporary Army history, overseeing the Frontier Army Museum, and serving as the Command History Office for the Combined Arms Center.

In 2005, the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) gave CSI the mission to conduct oral and videotaped interviews with officers who recently participated in operations in the Global War on Terrorism, including Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The Operational Leadership Experiences (OLE) section accomplishes this by arranging these interviews and providing transcription, archival support services, and website implementation. Digital copies of all interviews are posted on the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) and CSI websites at <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/contentdm/home.htm> and <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/csi/>.

Since its inception in the summer of 2005, the OLE section has conducted over 350 interviews of returning veterans. Many officers interviewed were conveniently located at Fort Leavenworth as students of the Command and General Staff College, the School for Advanced Military Studies, or for one of the Pre-Command Courses. However, numerous other officers, soldiers, and civilians interviewed volunteered from units or posts located all around the world. The wide range of experiences and perceptions preserved for posterity is remarkable and continues to grow.

*Eyewitness to War The US Army in Operation AL FAJR: An Oral History* is the first series of published interviews by the OLE section. The accounts in this book and successive volumes are the experiences of actual participants told in their own words. It is history in raw form, recorded for future generations by key leaders on the ground and the men and women there to see and hear the events unfold. The CSI staff only lightly edited the contents for clarity, to remove the occasional use of excessive profanity and the rare injurious personal attack. However, the content and tone describing the operation remain untouched. No classified information was used or included in this book and the opinions expressed by the participants are their own.

The bulk of this book consists of Army interviews, which are presented in order of rank. Two Marines, one airman, and a journalist are also included and provide interesting insight to the cooperation achieved between the services. Volume I provides an overview chapter of the second battle of Fallujah, named Operation AL FAJR (Dawn) by the Iraqis. This is a modified version of a chapter featured in *Breaking the Mold: Tanks in the Cities*, published by CSI Press in 2006. Matt Matthews authored an additional work of great interest in the CSI Occasional Paper #20 *Operation AL FAJR: A Study in Army and Marine Corps Joint Operations*.

My thanks go foremost to the men and women who took the time and effort to be interviewed, provide statements, and review the final transcripts. Additionally, the fine work of the OLE team, namely John McCool, Dr. Chris Ives, Colette Kiszka, and Jennifer Vedder who made this work possible by their untiring efforts to locate key personnel and to persevere under tight deadlines. High recognition and praise also go to Mr. Matt Matthews for identifying, tracking down, and interviewing a significant number of the featured participants. Thanks and appreciation also goes to our editor, Jennifer Lindsey and also to Mike Brooks for his fine work in designing the cover. Lastly, this project could not have seen fruition without the support and sage advice of Colonel Timothy R. Reese and Dr. William G. Robertson.

Kendall D. Gott  
Senior Historian  
Research and Publication Team

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## **Battle Overview**

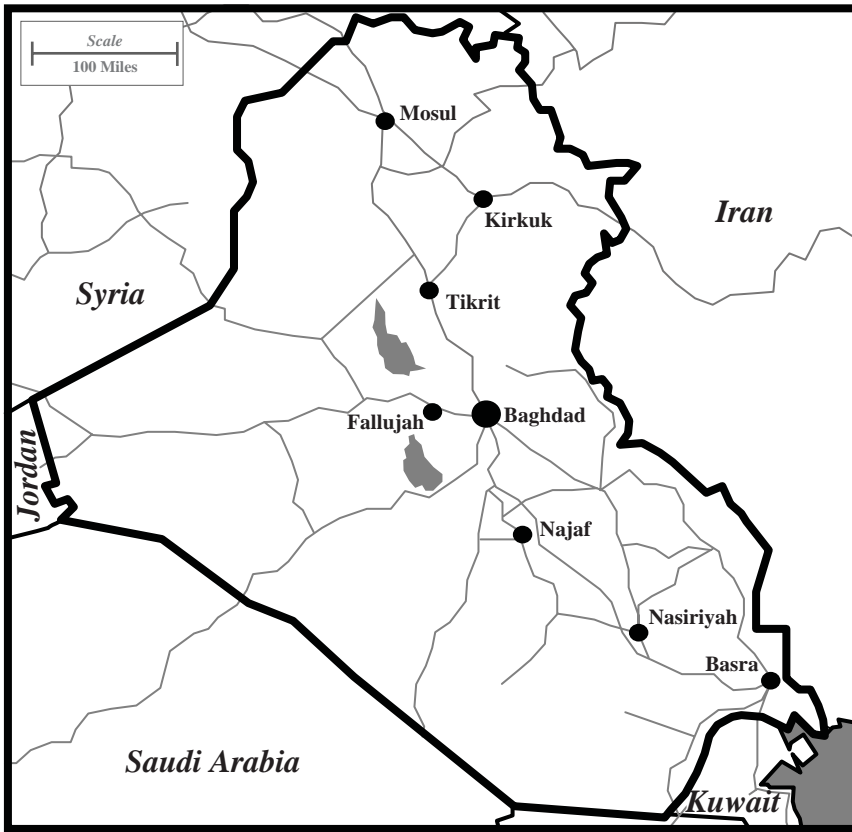
### **Operation AL FAJR, November 2004**

After the fall of Baghdad, to the American military in April 2003, Fallujah was one of the most violent areas of the country in the heart of what was dubbed the Sunni Triangle. Almost immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein, Sunni fighters began targeting Coalition forces, local Iraqi leaders, and representatives of the emerging Iraqi government with violent riots, murders and bombings. Between May 2003 and April 2004, a number of different US units exchanged responsibility for the area. Neither they, nor the local Iraqi police and city leaders, proved able to defuse the simmering Sunni resistance. Meanwhile, the resistance grew stronger, taking advantage of a weak government as imams and sheiks incited further violence. Fallujah also served as a staging base for attackers operating in Baghdad.

After some violent confrontations with Iraqis, American units only occasionally ventured into the city to avoid further inflaming local passions. Twice in 2004, however, Coalition forces launched large-scale operations to destroy the Sunni resistance fighters in Fallujah. The first attempt, in April 2004 failed, leading Coalition forces to launch a much larger and better-prepared attack in November. This was successful in destroying the Sunni insurgents, but caused a great deal of damage to the city.

The city of Fallujah dates back to the ancient times of Babylonia as a stop along a primary desert road leading west from Baghdad. As part of the modern Anbar Province, Fallujah was situated on the Euphrates River, 43 miles west of Baghdad. Prior to 1947, it was a small and unimportant town, but increased commerce and the introduction of industry caused its population to gradually swell to about 350,000 in 2003. The city of Fallujah measured about three kilometers square and consisted of over 2,000 city blocks with courtyard walls, tenements, and two-story concrete houses separated by squalid alleyways. These were laid out in a grid with a few wide boulevards, and the six lanes of Highway 10 that ran for two miles straight through the center of the city. South of this highway were decrepit factories. To the north were more spacious homes. As in many cities in Iraq at the time, half-completed homes, heaps of garbage, and wrecks of old cars graced every neighborhood. Ironically, the new highway system, sponsored by Saddam Hussein, had bypassed Fallujah and its importance and caused its population to plummet. (See Map 1.)

With over 200 mosques, Fallujah was an important regional center of Sunni Islam and the population showed a great deal of support for the Ba'athists during the Saddam Hussein era. Most of the inhabitants practiced extreme Wahhabism and were traditionally hostile to all foreigners, meaning anyone not from Fallujah.



Map 1. The Republic of Iraq.

The city had a well-earned reputation across Iraq as a very rough town, still firmly entrenched in the tradition of the clan. After the fall of Saddam Hussein and the disintegration of the Iraqi army, there were over 70,000 unemployed men in the streets. With no jobs and an uncertain future, many were highly susceptible to the call for active resistance against the American occupation. Later estimates showed that over 15,000 of these Iraqi men did just that.

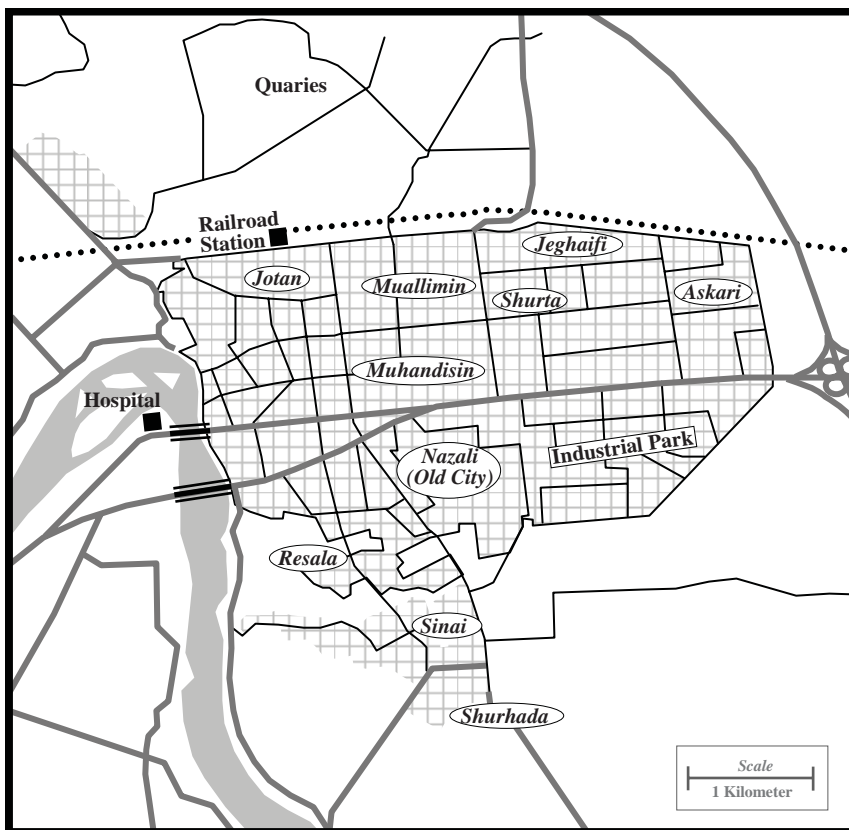
The 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment of the 2d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division was the first unit assigned responsibility for Fallujah and the surrounding area when it was sent there in late April 2003. On the evening of April 28, 2003, hundreds of residents marched down the streets of Fallujah in defiance of the American curfew to protest the Coalition's presence outside a local school. Soldiers attempted to disperse the crowd with announcements, but failed. According to the unit, soldiers inside the school were responding to "effective fire" coming from the protesters. According to locals, at this point, the 82d troopers fired upon an unarmed crowd. Seventeen protesters were reportedly killed and

there were no American casualties. This incident was the first in a long chain of events leading to the major battle in November 2004. Stretched thin over a wide area, the paratroopers were unable to make substantial progress in quelling the unrest. It was replaced briefly by elements of the 2d Squadron of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment in May 2003, but it was clear that a larger unit was needed.

This force was the 2d Brigade of the 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized). The 2d Brigade used its greater numbers, mobility and combat power to root out insurgents, prevent easy hit-and-run attacks, and support the local Iraqi civil and security forces. This “carrot-and-stick approach” was successful in driving down the number of incidents, but Fallujah remained a volatile and dangerous place. Unfortunately the carrot, in the form of lucrative contracts and lifting of curfews, was often responded to with further attacks by the resistance. The stick, in the form of the 2d Brigade conducting large-scale sweeps looking for weapons and wanted individuals, was often more effective. Meanwhile, efforts to pacify the people of Fallujah by rebuilding infrastructure continued with varying degrees of success.

The resistance fighters in Fallujah were unlike any the American Army had encountered since the Vietnam War. They wore no uniforms and blended in almost perfectly with the population. Operating from their own homes, there was no conventional infrastructure to target such as training camps or bases. Command and control was so loose that there was usually no perceptible chain of command or communications that could be readily intercepted or exploited. Huge stockpiles of weapons and explosive material remained from the war and were widely available for arming new recruits and in the manufacture of improvised roadside bombs. Members of the resistance were urged by the Wahhabi imams to drive out what they saw as the infidel invaders as well as any Iraqi who collaborated with them. Many mosques became arsenals used to stockpile weapons and explosives as well as safe havens for the resistance. The combination of religious zeal, idleness caused by high unemployment, and hatred for the occupation made recruiting an easy job. The resourcefulness and daring of the fighters made them a deadly foe. (See Map 2.)

The 2d Brigade, 3d ID rotated out of Fallujah in August 2003 and the 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment from the 82d Airborne Division replaced it. The situation in the city remained virtually unchanged in spite of the capture of some notable resistance leaders and large numbers of weapons and explosives. Particularly disappointing was the failure of two Iraqi Civil Defense Corps or ICDC battalions, arriving in February 2004, to pacify the city and bring it in line with the central government. Two days after their arrival, a massive attack by the resistance destroyed the central police station as well as the reputation of the ICDC. The Iraqi battalions were quickly withdrawn in disgrace. There was little significant progress in pacifying the insurgency in Fallujah by the 82d Airborne



Map 2. The City and Sections of Fallujah, 2004.

forces during this rotation. Even the capture of Saddam Hussein on 13 December did not offer a respite. Instead, it appeared the resistance grew stronger.

The First Marine Expeditionary Force was assigned to the Anbar Province in early March 2004 to relieve the 82d Airborne Division. Instead of focusing on large-scale search-and-sweep operations as the Army units had done, the Marines planned to try a different approach that focused on winning the hearts and minds of the populace. It was hoped that by interacting with the people of Fallujah, the situation would improve. The Marines had less than three weeks in theater when the situation rapidly grew worse.

The resistance was not impressed. Insurgent leaflets nicknamed the Marines “*awat*,” a sugary soft cake. Attacks escalated. The defining moment came on 31 March 2004 when insurgents ambushed four contractors from Blackwater USA, a private company providing security to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), and strung up the charred corpses on a nearby bridge. The grisly scene, televised in the US and around the world, prompted a strong Coalition response. At about

the same time, Shiite militia groups under the firebrand, Muqtada Al Sadr rose up in defiance of the Coalition in several cities to the southeast of Baghdad. In April 2004, the Coalition thus faced the greatest level of resistance to its occupation.

In reaction to the murder and mutilation of the four contractors, the Marines and Coalition forces launched Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE on 4 April 2004. The objective of the operation was to capture or kill those responsible for the murders and to restore control of the city to the Coalition and the Iraqi Governing Council. Senior Marine commanders had initially wanted to take a less forceful approach, fearing that heavy damage to the city and large numbers of Iraqi civilian casualties would be counterproductive to the long-range goal of pacifying the city. The CPA under Ambassador Bremer and the Bush Administration, however, believed that strong action was needed to prevent further attacks by the Sunni resistance in Fallujah. It is important to note that at nearly the same time as these murders were committed by Sunni insurgents, Shiite militias under Muqtada Al Sadr had seized control of several southern cities. Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7) issued hasty orders to the Marines to destroy the resistance in Fallujah.

Four Marine battalions from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force were poised to assault into the city while two more formed a cordon around it. After conducting precision air and artillery strikes, the Marines began their assault on Fallujah. The fighting was intense and casualties heavy on both sides as the Marines made steady progress through the city, destroying insurgent forces as they went. On 9 April, however, after five days of heavy fighting, CJTF-7 ordered the Marines and Coalition forces to suspend offensive operations in Fallujah. Key members of the Iraqi Governing Council were threatening to desert the Coalition if the attacks were not stopped. International media and leaders were also pressuring the US to halt the offensive. After initially ordering Coalition forces to launch the attack, Ambassador Bremer reversed himself and ordered CJTF-7 to cease offensive operations over the protests of Coalition military commanders. The Marines had occupied about half of the city when the offensive was halted.

Marine commanders began talks with Fallujah city leaders and representatives of the insurgency. Attacks by the resistance continued as they resupplied themselves under the cover of the truce using humanitarian aid convoys to smuggle fighters and arms into the city. The Coalition and the Iraqi government opened a humanitarian supply route into the city and reopened the Fallujah General Hospital, previously closed because of the siege. In early May, the Marines withdrew from the city. In a controversial move, they handed over security responsibilities to the so-called Fallujah Brigade. This ad hoc force of locally recruited men was composed of former Iraqi soldiers and was initially commanded by Major General Jassim Mohammed Saleh, an officer from the defunct Republican Guards. After domestic and international outcry, he was immediately replaced by General Muhammad Latif, himself a former Iraqi Army intelligence officer. This cobbled-together

unit failed miserably and quickly dispersed. Once again, the situation in Fallujah disintegrated. The Marines maintained a strong ring around Fallujah over the next several months in an effort to contain it, but left the city largely alone.

Over the course of the summer and autumn, the insurgency took the opportunity to recruit, fortify, and stockpile supplies. Fallujah had become a symbol of resistance and an embarrassment to the new Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) which was formed on 28 June 2004. Coalition forces seemed powerless to do anything about it. Patience was wearing out. The Coalition continuously warned city leaders and residents that they were provoking a major assault on the city, but the warning went unheeded. Unlike the abortive April attack, which was called off when the Iraqi Governing Coalition almost self destructed, the IIG authorized an attack on the insurgents in Fallujah by Coalition forces. From the beginning, the IIG and CJTF-7 planned to follow the attack, sure to be destructive, with large-scale humanitarian relief efforts, civil and economic reconstruction, and a long-term security presence. Beginning in earnest on 30 October, air and artillery attacks pounded select targets in the city as an ominous warning. Near Baghdad, the British Black Watch Regiment relieved American forces preparing for the operation. Power was cut off to Fallujah on 5 November, and leaflets were dropped warning people who remained in the city to stay inside their homes and not use their cars. On 7 November, the Iraqi government declared a 60-day state of emergency throughout most of the country. Heeding these warnings, between 75 and 90 percent of the civilian population fled the city.

### **Coalition Forces**

The forces surrounding Fallujah and preparing to assault into it were composed of units from the US Army and Marines, supported by aviation assets from the Army, Marines, Navy, and Air Force. Additionally, Iraqi ground forces were used in a limited role as well. Lieutenant General John F. Sattler of the US Marines was placed in overall command of the operation. Sattler organized the assault forces into two regimental combat teams, each augmented by one US Army and two Iraqi Army battalions. Total numbers for the operation called for approximately 10,000 Americans and 2,000 Iraqis.

Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1) was assigned to the western half of Fallujah and was composed of three battalions: the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines Regiment, and 3d Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, and Task Force 2-7 Cavalry detached from the 1st Cavalry Division. Regimental Combat Team 7 (RCT-7) was assigned to the eastern half of the city and was composed of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment and the 1st Battalion, of the 3d Marine Regiment, and Task Force 2-2 Infantry, detached from the 3d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. In addition to the Army battalions, each combat team was augmented by the addition of one Marine tank company. These tanks were dispersed down to company level to provide

direct support to the Marine riflemen. The 2d Brigade Combat Team (2 BCT) of the 1st Cavalry Division was deployed around the city to block all movement into and out of Fallujah. An Iraqi battalion supported that effort as well.

The units assigned to the operation were composed mainly of veterans of OIF from 2003 and had accumulated a great deal of experience in urban operations. In the weeks prior to the operation, these units had the opportunity to train and rehearse and had honed their skills to a sharp edge. The American military forces were supplied with up-to-date equipment including advanced night vision goggles and sights and communications gear. The heavy armored vehicles used in the coming operation were the M1A2 Abrams tank and the M2A3 Bradley Infantry fighting vehicle. The Marines also employed AAV-7A1 Amphibious Assault Vehicles, but relegated them generally to a heavy weapons platform.

The operation included at least five small battalions from the growing Iraqi army and security forces. These were the 1st and 4th IIF, the 36th Commando, and 5th and 6th IAF battalions. These uniformed forces were armed with AK-47 rifles and Soviet-made machine guns, which were standard in the old Iraqi army. Their training in complex urban operations was rudimentary, and they were to play a supporting role, sweeping through and securing buildings the Americans had passed through. The Iraqi forces were also ideal to battle insurgents holed up in mosques, as widespread civilian hostility was expected if American forces were to do so. Use of Iraqi forces would serve to reinforce the perception that Iraqis were able and willing to secure and run their own country.

### **The Plan of Attack**

The attack on Fallujah was originally called Operation PHANTOM FURY by the Americans, but was renamed Operation AL FAJR (Dawn) by the Iraqi Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi. It was meant as a means for the Interim Iraqi Government to establish control over the city to bolster its flagging prestige and to create enough security that the national elections scheduled for January 2005 could be held as planned. A secondary, but very important objective, was to destroy the resistance, killing as many insurgents as possible with a minimum amount of casualties to Coalition forces and civilians. The operation did not receive full support within the Iraqi government and posed a serious risk of alienating large segments of the population, particularly those of the Sunni sect.

The tactical plan was simple and included an unprecedented level of integration between Marine and Army units at almost every tactical level. With the cordon in place, the assault forces would assemble to the north of Fallujah and would attack due south within assigned sectors. The Army's heavy armor would lead the assault into the city with the soldiers and Marines closely following to provide cover and to clear each and every building. Trailing Iraqi forces would conduct further searches for insurgents and logistics caches and assault mosques as needed. Using heavy

armor to achieve deep penetrations in an urban environment was a great departure from the traditional use of tanks as a supporting arm to the infantry. In this battle, the audacity and shock effect of the Army armor was counted upon to disrupt the insurgent defense. Massing such a force was difficult to accomplish unnoticed, so surprise was achieved by a 12-hour bombardment and a demonstration of activity to the south to draw the insurgents' attention to that sector. The units participating in the operation were to be methodical in their operation, clearing their zone entirely of insurgents. A high level of collateral damage was expected, but civilian casualties were to be avoided, if possible. Blocking positions around the city would prevent the escape of hostile combatants. The initial objective was Phase Line Fran, Highway 10, running through the heart of the city. Once the city was secured north of that line, the Coalition forces would fight on to Phase Line Jena to the south. Once that objective was reached, the attacking forces would turn about and sweep through the city in a northerly direction. The attack was scheduled to begin on 7 November.

Over the preceding months, a massive intelligence effort collected a large amount of information on the insurgent forces in Fallujah. Using every conceivable asset, including Special Forces, human intelligence, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and satellites, a fairly clear picture of the situation was known. Safe houses, weapons caches, and the routines of key leaders were identified, as well as an approximate number of insurgents active in the city. This information, as well as detailed maps and overhead imagery, was disseminated down to the lowest commander, and even down to the squad level in many cases. The commanders and troops at all levels felt confident they knew where the enemy was in their sector and could plan their operation in detail. During the operation, these intelligence assets quickly switched to target acquisition and were instrumental in bringing effective supporting fires on target.

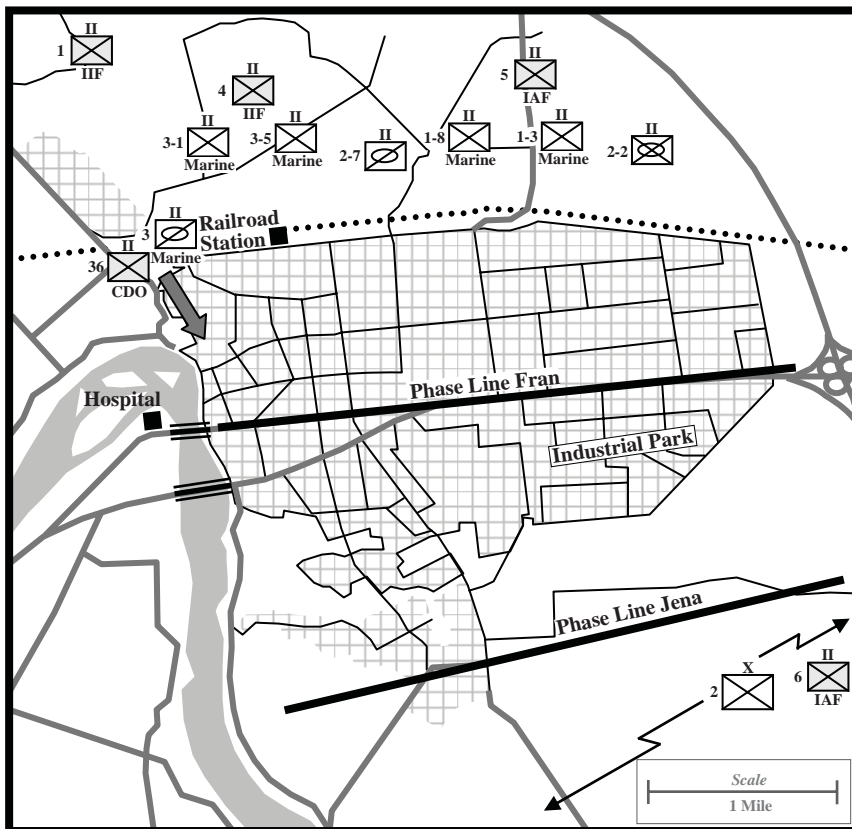
The intelligence picture in November showed the resistance had used the preceding months to turn Fallujah into a fortress. There were approximately 3,000 insurgents in the city, of which about 20 percent were foreign Islamic militants. They were armed with AK-47 rifles, RPG-7s, and a large amount of grenades, mines, and explosives. Attackers could expect a fanatical defense from every building and crevice and from any angle. The dreaded improvised explosives and booby traps were no doubt in place. For tactical movement, the insurgents had dug tunnels between buildings and used the existing sewer system. It was believed that Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was located in the city. As a high-ranking member of the Al Qaeda terrorist organization, his capture or death was a high priority.



## The Assault

Operation AL FAJR commenced on 7 November as the planned aerial and artillery bombardment began and the ground forces moved to their assault positions. At 1900, the Iraqi 36th Commando Battalion quickly captured the Fallujah General Hospital to the west of the city, while the Marine 3d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion secured the two bridges south of the hospital. This mission succeeded in blocking the routes of egress to the west and secured the hospital for use in treating civilian casualties. The major ground assault was now set to begin. (See Map 3.)

The four Marine and two Army battalions began their assault along a broad front in the early hours of 8 November. The heavy armor of Task Force 2-7 Cavalry and Task Force 2-2 Infantry led the way into the city as they quickly breached the railroad embankment in several places. Army engineers and armor were shifted to assist the temporarily stalled Marines in their sectors. The Army tanks and IFVs stayed close to either side of the street when possible to provide cover for the vehicles on the other side. Dismounted soldiers provided cover against insurgents

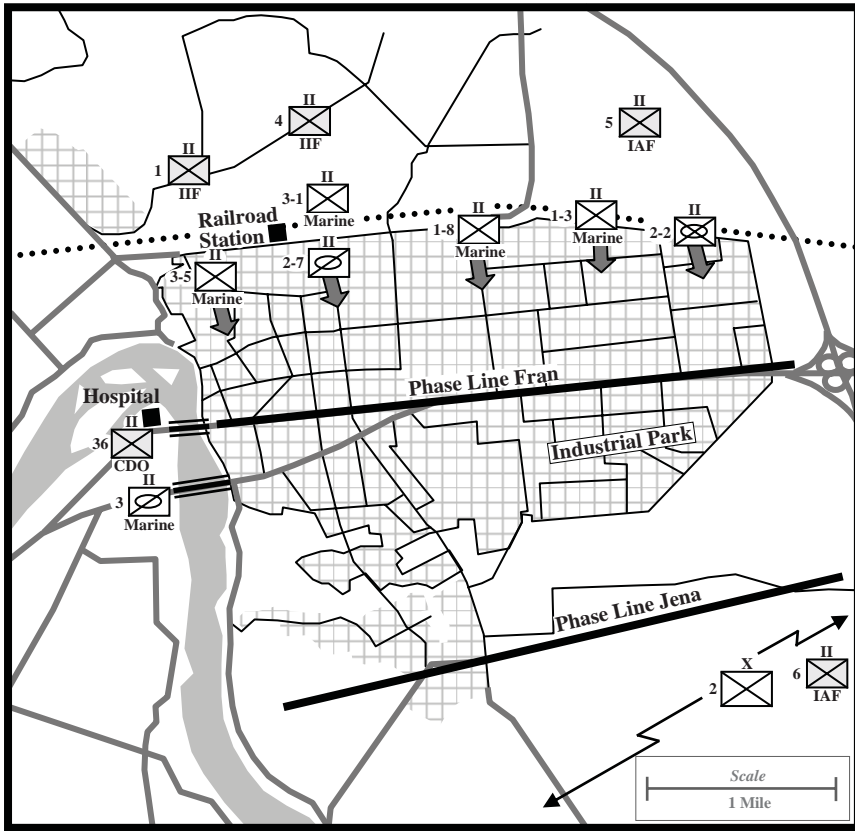


Map 3. In Position to Assault, 8 November 2004.

attempting to ambush the vehicles by using copious amounts of automatic fire and snipers, and by sweeping through the buildings. Often, the riflemen identified enemy positions for the armor, which then used its heavy ordnance against the target. Armored vehicles toward the rear also covered the advance and their increased distance from targets allowed them to shoot higher than forward armor, because the tanks' main guns had a limited elevation. Artillery, mortars, and air strikes eliminated the more stubborn pockets of resistance. Engineers and armored vehicles rammed through the many obstacles and roadblocks. Soldiers generally entered houses only after tanks rammed through walls or specialists used explosives to create openings. The Marines typically used their traditional small unit techniques of fire and maneuver to close with and destroy the enemy. This technique was far slower than the Army's and often allowed the insurgents to fall back or shift forces. However, the general advance was steady and rapid, as the Army armor ripped through the enemy defenses followed by the soldiers and Marines, who cleared each building before moving on. By the afternoon, they had secured the train station and had entered the Dubat and Naziza districts in the west and the Askari and Jolan districts in the east. Soldiers seized apartment complex in the northwest, which looked down on the city. Heavy weapons emplaced there provided excellent cover by fire to assaulting forces. The Iraqi forces joined in on the attack and conducted their operations aggressively and well. (See Map 4.)

The insurgents were clearly overwhelmed from the onset by the speed and shock of the massed armor and firepower. For example, in the Jolan district, in the western edge of Fallujah, the resistance was expected to be particularly intense. Intelligence reports indicated the most hardline units were located here and the area consisted of densely packed buildings and narrow streets. Although there was stiff fighting, it was below expectations with only small bands of insurgents numbering less than 20 being encountered. These were quickly destroyed or forced to fall back under heavy fire using their prepared tunnels and routes of egress. Some analysts believe it was indicative that many insurgents chose to flee the city when they had the chance, or that the deception operation to the south was successful.

In the early morning of 9 November, the Marines conducted a passage of lines through the sectors of TF 2-7 Cavalry and TF 2-2 Infantry, placing the Army armor to the rear of the advance, but ready to respond where needed. The Marine tanks remained close behind the advancing riflemen to provide direct fire support. The fighting was so intense though, the Army tanks and IFVs could not respond to all the calls for assistance from the embattled Marines. In many cases the Marines in the vanguard had to rely on their organic systems, such as the AT-5 antitank rocket, indirect fires, or air strikes. However, at one point, the air strikes and artillery were halted. So many troops were engaged in the densely packed city that a pause was needed to ascertain precise friendly positions to prevent fratricide. By the end of the third day, the Army and Marine forces were deep into Fallujah. The greatest



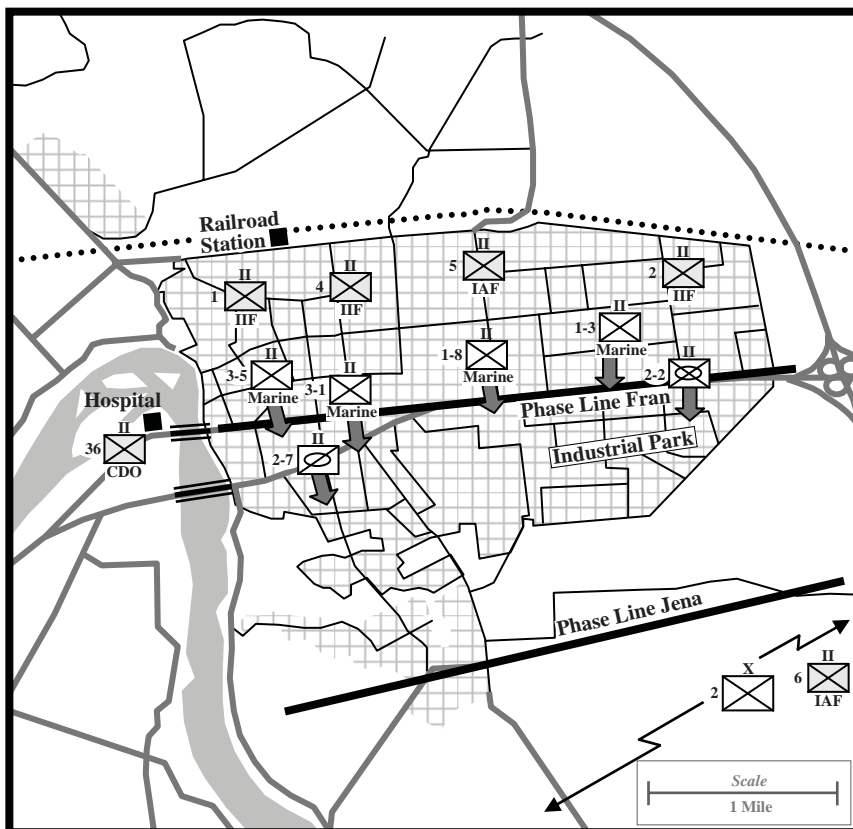
Map 4. Initial Assault on Fallujah, 9 November 2004.

gains were in the northeast part of the city, where TF 2-2 Infantry succeeded in reaching Phase Line Fran, thus cutting the highway, blocking an insurgent escape route, and securing a shorter supply route for Coalition forces.

Iraqi army units captured two large mosques on 10 November after heavy fighting in which they performed quite well. Each of these had been used as insurgent command posts, supply depots, ammunition dumps, and improvised explosive device factories. They had also been insurgent safe houses and fortresses from which to attack Coalition forces. The Iraqi forces found remnants of the black outfits and masks routinely worn by the resistance, as well as banners of the insurgency and videos of the executions of foreign hostages. In addition, they uncovered many weapons and large amounts of ammunitions and supplies. By the end of the 10th, the fourth day of the operation, the Americans and Iraqis had retaken over half of Fallujah, including many key civic and military buildings. Mop-up operations continued in their zones and the Jolan district was turned over to the Iraqis. The fight for the rest of the city lay ahead.

By 11 November, the strategy of attacking and clearing in zone had driven most insurgent forces into the southern part of the city. Coalition forces paused the advance briefly to consolidate and resupply but the clearing operations continued. By the end of the day, the offensive continued across Phase Line Fran with the armor of TF 2-7 Cavalry and TF 2-2 Infantry again in the lead. The assault would be a repeat of the previous days. Full control of Fallujah was expected within 48 hours with an additional week or so for fully clearing the city. By 11 November, at least 18 Americans and five Iraqi soldiers were killed and over 160 wounded. It was estimated that 600 insurgents were killed. (See Map 5.)

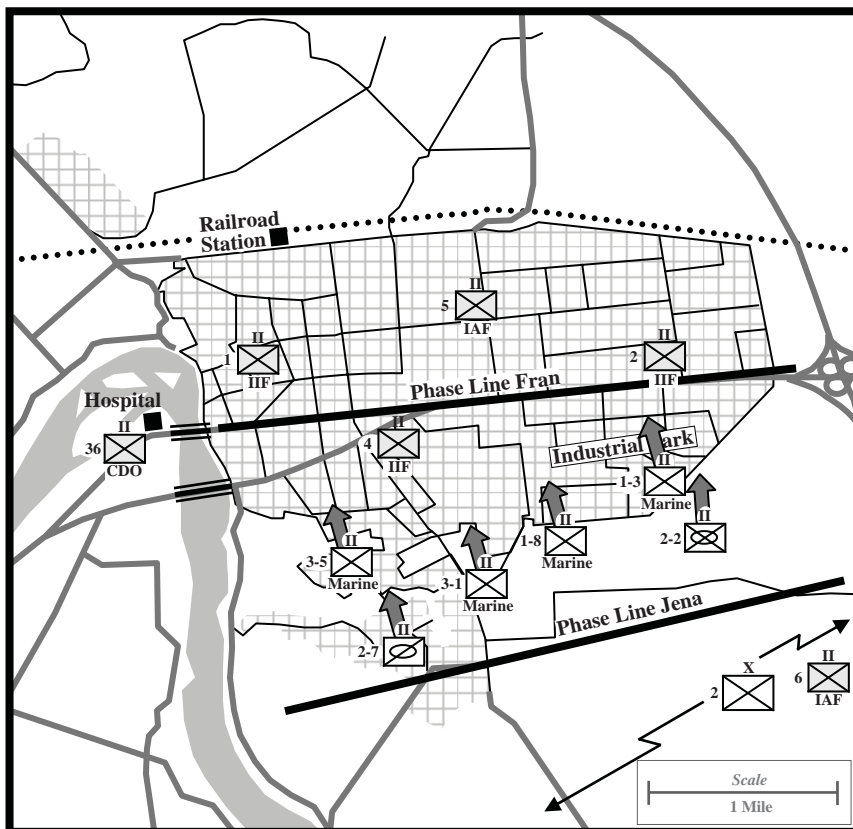
The intense street fighting continued for three more days until coalition forces reached Phase Line Jena, which marked the southern limits of the city. Over 300 insurgents surrendered, many of these surrounded in a mosque. Marines and Soldiers found thousands of AK-47s, RPGs, mortar rounds, and improvised explosives in houses and mosques. US commanders feared that sleeper cells would rise up once the assault had passed through an area and continue the resistance.



Map 5. Fallujah, 11 November 2004.

When Coalition forces reached Phase Line Jena on 15 November, they turned about and began re-clearing buildings as they moved northward. The Army and Marine battalions broke down into company, platoon, and squad-size elements to thoroughly search for hiding insurgents and caches. The progress was methodical with a great concern for booby traps laid by roving bands of the resistance. These efforts were not in vain as additional weapons and explosives were found. By 16 November, the city of Fallujah was declared secured by Coalition forces, although the search and sweep operations continued for several weeks. (See Map 6.)

A total of 38 Marines and Soldiers, plus six Iraqi soldiers lost their lives in the battle. They killed between 1,200 and 2,000 insurgents during Operation AL FAJR. Three of the American fatalities were not battle-related injuries. At least 275 Americans were wounded. US forces also captured between 1,000 and 1,500 insurgents.



Map 6. Fallujah, 15 November 2004.

## **The Aftermath**

Much of the city was heavily gutted by the operation. Over 60 percent of Fallujah's buildings were damaged, 20 were destroyed outright, and 60 of the mosques were heavily damaged. In response to the operation and damage, the Sunni minority in Iraq was enraged. Insurgent activity surged across the country and widespread demonstrations followed. Sunni turnout was indeed low in the important January 2005 Iraqi elections, but subsequent Sunni participation increased during the elections in June and December 2005.

As part of the full spectrum of Coalition and Iraqi efforts to retake Fallujah, during battle the Iraqi government and the Coalition sent medical and reconstruction teams to the area with 14 trucks loaded with medical supplies and humanitarian goods. Unable to enter into the city because of the military operations, they were diverted to villages surrounding Fallujah where tens of thousands of Fallujah residents had evacuated before the battle began. Meanwhile, Iraqi and American forces sought out civilians still in the city who were in need of medical care using loudspeakers, leaflets, and word of mouth. The Fallujah General Hospital was reopened to care for them.

When fighting was completed, the Coalition then entered the second phase of the operation, that was the rebuilding of Fallujah's damaged infrastructure and the creation of a new civil government and security force for the city. Destruction of the insurgents was only the first step in making the city secure for its citizens.

The slow process of reconstruction began when residents of Fallujah were allowed to return in mid-December. Strict access controls prevented the insurgents from reentering the city. Random and sporadic acts of violence by the insurgency gradually resumed, but the insurgent grip on Fallujah was destroyed and Operation AL FAJR served as an example for cities in open defiance of the new Iraqi government.

## **In Retrospect**

By November 2004, the Army and Marine forces in Iraq had developed tremendous skill in the tactics, techniques and techniques of urban warfare, honing them to a science. Many, if not most of the officers and troops were veterans of the initial invasion of Iraq in March and April of 2003 and the subsequent occupation of the country. The US Army and Marines had standing urban operations doctrines, which were applied and modified to meet the situation. The Soldiers and Marines also tended to have their own style in combat. Both Army task forces relied on the mobility, firepower and protection afforded by their Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles to rapidly attack through and destroy insurgent positions en route to their objectives within the city. Soldiers did not hesitate to level a building from which they received hostile fire before they occupied it. With only a few exceptions,

they also did not hesitate to destroy buildings simply suspected of holding insurgents. The Marines, in comparison, tended to rely on the use of dismounted infantry units to attack and clear buildings. They called on direct fire from tanks and other vehicles, or called for indirect fire support only after an attack was stalled. Marines also had the difficult mission of methodically clearing every building in the city looking for insurgents that had been bypassed or remained hidden. Tactical coordination between the two services was sometimes strained as these differences surfaced and Army units got ahead of their Marine counterparts. Differences in communications equipment and procedures also hampered coordination at times. However, both services overcame organizational friction and worked well together toward defeating the insurgency in Fallujah.

Heavy ordnance delivered from aircraft and artillery was used effectively as a rolling barrage to cover the movement of ground forces and to obliterate insurgent positions. Key buildings and mosques were spared when possible, but they were engaged aggressively when insurgents used these structures in their operations. Precision munitions and excellent fire support communications ensured quick, accurate, and deadly fires.

Considering the complexities of the situation, the intelligence support for Operation *AL FAJR* was superb. Using the prior weeks and months to great effect, the various intelligence agencies and platforms were able to paint an accurate picture of the situation and disseminate that information down to the lowest echelons. When the battle began, these assets quickly shifted to acquiring targets and assessing the capabilities and intentions of the insurgents.

Iraqi forces proved capable of cooperating within the coalition for this operation. Although they played a limited role, they did attack key targets, like mosques, thus avoiding widespread consternation had an American unit done so. When they fought, the light Iraqi units fought effectively within their capabilities.

The insurgents had hoped to turn Fallujah into a killing zone, but were disappointed. The American and Iraqi forces were effective in countering the insurgents' tactics by not rushing to the center of the city to be surrounded and eliminated piecemeal. Instead, they cleared and secured each building and the routes of ingress before moving on to the next. Additionally, some American and Iraqi forces remained behind the advance to keep the insurgents from reoccupying previously cleared areas. Establishing clear zones of operation and excellent communications facilitated this.

A key element in the success of the coalition in Fallujah was the application of American armor, namely the M1A2 Abrams tank. The Abrams was able to take enormous punishment and continue operating. In many instances, these tanks received multiple hits from RPG-7s, which failed to penetrate the heavy armor; even large improvised explosives failed to knock tanks out. The tactics used by the

Americans offset the inherent design weaknesses of tanks in the cities. Operating in pairs, tanks covered each other while others remained a short distance behind lending support. The same can be said about the Bradley vehicles, although their armor was far less capable. The Marines had dispersed their tanks to provide direct support to the riflemen, and this time honored tactic worked to systematically destroy tough enemy positions. Conversely, the Army battalions assigned to this operation used a different approach. Instead, they led their assault with the heavy armor, which blasted through the city and unhinged the enemy defenses. This allowed for the rapid advance of the infantry and the clearing of their zone, and ensured a rapid victory.

The battle for Fallujah was a stunning victory with a historically low casualty rate for an urban fight of this size and scope. The success of the Operation *AL FAJR* was a tribute to the professionalism and training of the US military, the teamwork between the US Army and the US Marine Corps. For the remainder of this book, the participants tell their story.

Kendall D. Gott  
Senior Editor



## Endnotes

1. The text and analysis were compiled using various unit briefings, media reports, and the few published works available. No classified material was used in the writing of this work.

2. Mike Tucker, *Among Warriors in Iraq: True Grit, Special Ops, and Raiding in Mosul and Fallujah* (Guilford, CN: The Lyon's Press, 2005), 89-90. Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005), 13. Anbar Province, the largest province in Iraq, borders Syria and Jordan to the west and Saudi Arabia to the south. Anbar is largely a combination of desert and steppe and is generally an inhospitable environment. Temperatures can get as high as 115 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer.

3. West, 13-14. Fallujah was known as the "city of mosques" due to the large number of them.

4. West, 14-16.

5. Anthony H. Cordesman and Patrick Baetjer, *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume I: The Arab-Israeli Conflicts, 1973-1989* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 30-31, 40, 46. The common term for these bombs was improvised explosive devices" or IED.

6. West 26, 47-49. Cordesman, 72. Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) units were established by coalition executive order on September 3, 2003, as a temporary force to augment coalition troops. The ICDC has taken on a larger role and now participates in counterinsurgency and other military operations. It is an example of a national guard or constabulary force that provides internal security. The coalition plans for 36 ICDC battalions to include some 30,000 to 40,000 men.

7. West, 3-4, 51, 58.

8. Cordesman, 52, 72, 356-7. See also West, 258. This operation was controversial from concept to execution. The US media portrayed it as a humiliating loss and some Iraqi battalions refused to fight. The Fallujah Brigade, a hastily raised and equipped force, was disbanded within four months. Many of its soldiers joined the insurgency. Across the country the number of significant attacks did decline for a month or so but rose again.

9. Fallujah residents were without running water and were worried about food shortages. Faced by a hostile press and strong Democratic Party opposition, it is no surprise the Bush Administration waited until after the general elections to launch an attack. The timing also avoided the hot summer temperatures.

10. West, 258.

11. West, 258-60. The tactic of establishing a cordon around Fallujah had not been employed back in April. For brevity and clarity the Army and Marine battalions are known by their official designations. They were, in fact, task forces with infantry or armor attached for the mission at hand.

12. It was expected that over 2,000 Iraqi troops would participate in the operation, but an unknown number of them deserted prior to D-Day.

13. Cordesman, 51, 85, 97. The Industry Minister, Hajim Al-Hassani of the mainly Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party, quit the government in protest over this operation.

14. West, 258. Under international law mosques granted protected status but lose that status if they are used for military purposes. The attack in April had come from the south

and the Americans had hinted to the media and Iraqis that it would come from that direction this time as well.

15. West, 257. Improvised explosive devices were the most-feared threat to the coalition planners.

16. Cordesman, 104, 359-60. West, 260.

17. West, 263, 268-9.

18. West, 270.

19. West, 284-5, 315. It is believed that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of the insurgent faction in Fallujah, fled the city on this day. Meanwhile, the leading Sunni political party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, announced it was withdrawing from the interim government and called for a boycott of the upcoming national elections.

20. Cordesman, 104, 359-60. West, 275. The Iraqi 5th Battalion, 3d Brigade seized Al Tawfiq Mosque and the Iraqi Police Service's Emergency Response Unit and elements of the 1st Brigade of the Iraqi Intervention Force captured the Hydra Mosque. A number of insurgents were captured as well and were transferred to the Abu Ghraib Prison for further questioning. Some armed women and children took part in the fighting throughout the city.

21. West, 282.

22. Cordesman, 360. On 13 November Prime Minister Alawi declared Fallujah liberated. West, 293, 305.

23. West, 316. Cordesman, 360. Tucker, 94.

24. West, 315-7. These numbers indicate that over a quarter of the buildings and mosques had heavy damage.

25. David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (New York: Westview Press, 2005), 216.

26. Cordesman, 103. Phillips, 222. The loss of Fallujah deprived the Sunni insurgents and terrorist groups of their major sanctuary in Iraq.

27. Cordesman, 103.

28. Jason Conroy and Ron Martz. *Heavy Metal: A Tank Company's Battle to Baghdad* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 169, 267-8. The US Army's M1127 Stryker vehicle was not used in this fight. There were Stryker units able to participate, but did not. Instead they were used to maintain the cordon around the city, a role for which they were better suited.

## Abstracts

**Colonel Michael Formica, Commander, 2d Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division:** During his 13-month deployment to Iraq, beginning in January 2004, Colonel Formica commanded the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, better known as the “Black Jack Brigade.” In addition to discussing his brigade’s pre-deployment training, its task organization and myriad missions in the Camp Victory environs, he discusses at length the role Black Jack played in Operation *AL FAJR*. Formica describes the exceptional teamwork that existed from the joint perspective, a situation that even enabled Marine squads to operate inside Army infantry platoons. After the securing of Fallujah, the Black Jack Brigade continued working under the Marines in south Baghdad, enabling the successful January 2005 elections.

**Colonel James C. McConville, Commander of 4th Aviation Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division:** Deployed in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, from March 2004 through February 2005, Colonel McConville commanded the 1st Cavalry Division’s 4th Aviation Brigade and focuses on his unit’s participation in Operation *AL FAJR* in this interview. McConville begins by laying out the principal differences between Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE in April 2004 and what occurred in Fallujah in November 2004. He explains the movement of troops into attack positions in detail. McConville describes his brigade’s Kiowa Warrior, Blackhawk and Apache helicopters performing a wide variety of reconnaissance, security, attack and lift missions, many of which had larger strategic implications. McConville, himself, was part of a Kiowa Warrior team that was conducting counter mortar and rocket interdiction missions.

**Colonel Michael Shupp, Commander of the Marine Regimental Combat Team 1:** Colonel Shupp commanded Marine Regimental Combat Team 1 during Operation *AL FAJR*. Focusing on the battle itself, he provides excellent details and deep insights into the planning, the task organization and the daily, even hourly, conduct of the operation, as well as his experiences and working relationships with Iraqi security forces and with Task Force 2-7, an Army unit attached to RCT-1.

**Lieutenant Colonel Ken Adgie, Operations Officer (S3) for 3d Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division:** Lieutenant Colonel Adgie served as the operations officer (S3) for the 1st Infantry Division’s 3d Brigade Combat Team between July 2004 and June 2005. In this capacity, he was intimately involved in the planning and force packaging for Operation *AL FAJR*. In this interview, Adgie discusses in great detail the packaging and task organization of Task Force 2-2 and stresses the methodology used in the planners’ efforts. Although not directly involved in the fight proper, Adgie monitored hostilities, “filled requests and needs,” and here provides a wealth of insights into how Army units communicated, worked and fought with their Marine Corps counterparts, as well as the course of battle itself.

**Lieutenant Colonel William K. Mooney Jr., Commander of 2d Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment:** The commander of 2d Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment during Operation AL FAJR, Lieutenant Colonel Mooney and his unit of 16 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters conducted daily logistics runs in support of this November 2004 combined-joint assault to retake the Iraqi city of Fallujah. At the time, 2-227 was also tasked with supporting the Iraqi interim government with personnel movements, including the transportation of Iyad Allawi, the interim prime minister, to a meeting with US military commanders in Fallujah shortly before the operation commenced. In this interview, Mooney discusses a key mission his aircraft flew during a critical moment of the battle. With the soldiers of Task Force 2-7 critically in need of 120mm mortar rounds, he oversaw a high-risk emergency resupply operation that battled low visibility and the weather conditions.

**Lieutenant Colonel Peter A. Newell, Commander of Task Force 2-2:** The commander of 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Newell and his Task Force 2-2 participated in Operation AL FAJR. Discussing everything from the planning and task organization to the initial breach into the city through the fight's successful conclusion, he provides a wealth of insight into this important urban operation, of which 2-2 played a central, even leading role while attached to Marine RCT-7. Beyond his detailed assessments and analyses of the enemy and his tactics, as well as his unit's relationship with the Marines, Newell talks about such traumas as the combat death of the battalion command sergeant major and those of several other key leaders, including the Alpha Company commander and executive officer. In addition, he offers some interesting perspectives on his dealings with the news media and the advantages that resulted from having reporters, including CNN's Jane Arraf, embedded with Task Force 2-2 during the operation. Newell also speaks on what he calls the issue of "leadership in a plug-and-play war."

**Lieutenant Colonel James Rainey, Commander of Task Force 2-7:** Lieutenant Colonel Rainey led his unit into Operation AL FAJR roughly six months after assuming command. Attached to RCT-1 and working closely with its commander, Colonel Shupp, Rainey's overriding responsibility during this decisive urban fight was to "control the violence" and "manage the chaos" wreaked by his battalion's 14 tanks and 30 Bradleys. In this interview, Rainey discusses in tremendous detail the important, even essential, role his mechanized task force as a whole played in this operation.

**Major (Dr.) Lisa DeWitt, Surgeon for the Task Force 2-2:** An experienced emergency room physician who joined the Florida Army National Guard after 9/11 "to serve my country." Major (Dr.) DeWitt was in Iraq voluntarily serving as the surgeon for 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment. Dr. DeWitt discusses the life-saving care she and her medical staff provided to the roughly 80 soldiers from 2-2 who were wounded during this decisive urban fight. She also speaks on the issue

of noncombatants in the city and the care she provided to Iraqi detainees. Beyond this, she offers unique insider perspectives on many of the principal leaders from 2-2, as well as on the battalion's cooperative relationship with RCT-7, the Marine Corps unit to which Task Force 2-2 was attached.

**Major Andy Dietz, Information Operations Officer for Marine Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1):** An individual augmentee attached to Marine RCT-1 from July 2004 to March 2005, for most of his deployment Major Dietz served as RCT-1's information operations (IO) officer. During Operation AL FAJR he was RCT-1's fire support coordinator (FSC) and, in this interview, discussing the coordination and clearing of close air support (CAS) and indirect fires. Prior to the battle, Dietz was involved in the IO aspects of preparing the battlefield and clearing the city of its civilian, noncombatant population by means of everything from loudspeakers and radio messages to handbills, leaflet drops and sonic passes. Once the battle commenced, Dietz also ran the 1st Marine Division's Target Processing Center controlling all counterfire missions.

**Major Pete Fedak, Advisor Team Leader to the 6th Battalion, Iraqi Army:** From March to November 2004, Major Fedak led a 10-man team that served as advisors to the 6th Battalion, Iraqi Army, training this unit from formation through its participation in Operation AL FAJR. In the months preceding this operation, the unit received individual and collective training and began conducting company-level combat patrols in and around Kirkush. Upon being sent to Fallujah, the 6th Battalion was tasked with perimeter route security, running traffic control points in concert with US forces and, later, battalion-level cordon and search missions. In this interview, Fedak discusses his advisory experience in great detail, expounding on everything from equipment issues and shares candid insights into the "very minimal guidance" his team received prior to deploying. He also offers a number of recommendations for how future advisor teams could better prepare, especially concerning the aspects of cultural awareness.

**Major Tim Karcher, Operations Officer for Task Force 2-7:** Serving as the operations officer for 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment during Operation AL FAJR, Major Karcher was involved in the detailed planning with Marine RCT-1, the organization under which Task Force 2-7 was assigned. Having previously operated with the Marine units in Najaf, 2-7 had built a solid combat reputation. In this interview, Karcher offers unique insights into the task organization and joint nature of the operation.

**Major Erik Krivda, Executive Officer for Task Force 2-2:** Major Krivda served as the executive officer for Task Force 2-2 and, in this interview, provides details and insight into the planning, scheme of maneuver, task organization, actual conduct and the resolution of Operation AL FAJR. Among many other aspects of the fight, Krivda discusses in depth the logistical piece, myriad communications

issues, his battalion's working relationship with US Marine and Iraqi Army forces, the role of embedded media, enemy and coalition tactics, taking enemy prisoners of war, the application of indirect fires, and the impact of losing several key leaders, including the battalion sergeant major, a company commander and an XO. Krivda also discusses the different ways the Army and Marines used firepower in this fight and the lessons he learned about the conduct of urban operations.

**Major Sean Tracy, Joint Fires and Effects Planner at III Corps:** Assigned to III Corps headquarters and based at Camp Victory in Baghdad from January 2004 through February 2005, Major Tracy served as the joint fires and effects planner and was attached to the G3 plans shop. During his deployment, he was responsible for tying all the lethal and non-lethal effects into all the corps plans. Tracy describes his role in the battle for Fallujah, to include the shaping of targets in the days, weeks and months preceding the fight, the information operations campaign waged, and close air support (CAS).

**Major Doug Walter, Commander Alpha Company, Task force 2-2:** Unable to deploy with 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment - part of 3d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division - due to an illness when the unit went to Iraq in early 2004, Major Walter eventually rejoined his comrades in country in July and became the brigade assistant operations officer, tasked primarily with the formation and training of the Iraqi Army in 3d Brigade's area of operations. Based in Ba'qubah at FOB Warhorse, he initially had to content himself with an observer's role. When a company commander and executive officer were tragically killed days into the battle, Walter was summoned to assume command of the unit for the remainder of the fight. In this interview, Walter discusses these events and the intense emotional consequences of them in great detail, describing how he retook command of his old company at a critical moment in the operation and led them in combat. He discusses the dangerous room-to-room, house-to-house clearing missions, the securing of innumerable weapons caches, and offers insights into how Iraqi Army units performed and the capabilities and tactics of the enemy forces his company encountered.

**Captain Chris Boggiano, 2d Platoon leader, 1st Infantry Division's 3d Brigade Reconnaissance Troop:** Attached to Task Force 2-2 Infantry during Operation AL FAJR, Captain Boggiano was the 2d Platoon leader in the 1st Infantry Division's 3d Brigade Reconnaissance Troop. Employing the invaluable Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System (LRAS) to identify and then call artillery and air strikes against enemy targets throughout the first few days of the operation. Among the many leadership challenges he faced was a "crazy R&R setup" that had roughly half his platoon on leave when the battle commenced, requiring him to integrate a number of new personnel.

**Captain Chris Brooke, Commander of Charlie Company, Task Force 2-7:** In

command of Charlie Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Captain Brooke relates in great detail his unit's role in this decisive urban fight. Focusing at length on the joint aspect, he describes the pre-mission planning and coordination that occurred with Marine RCT-1, to which 2-7 CAV was assigned for this operation. He shares too the experience of having Marine Corps demolition soldiers and Air Force tactical air controllers attached to his company, and details challenges posed by friendly Iraqi units in the battlespace. While Brooke discusses the combat in which his unit engaged, he also speaks of the Marines and how he wishes his men would have been allowed to assist them more.

**Captain Chris Carlson, Medical Platoon Leader, Task Force 2-2:** As the medical platoon leader, Captain Carlson had responsibilities as the medical planner for operations, personnel and patient administration, and logistical operations for the medical support of Task Force 2-2 Infantry, during Operation AL FAJR. Carlson covers such topics as supply and medical evacuation routes and his working relationship with the battalion surgeon, Major (Dr.) Lisa DeWitt, and the physician assistant, Captain Gregory McCrum. In this interview, Carlson also describes how the medical section was task organized to support the combat phase of the operation and how, once the fighting began, medical support was administered. He also touches on the treatment provided to friendly Iraqi forces and offers a variety of insight into the use and adequate availability of Class VIII medical supplies during this decisive urban fight.

**Captain James Cobb, Fire Support Officer for Task Force 2-2:** Captain Cobb served as the fire support officer for 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment. Attached to Marine Regimental Combat Team 7 for purposes of this combined-joint urban assault, he expounds on the artillery-related planning and coordination conducted with the Marines, his observer plan, his work in terms of the preparation and execution of the initial breach into the city, and the overall fire support plan throughout the decisive fight. For Cobb, a variety of communications issues posed significant challenges and caused no small amount of frustration, particularly the order to change COMSEC in the middle of the battle. In addition, he discusses having embedded reporters, gives his explanation for the successful outcome of the battle, and also comments at length on the experience of high-intensity combat.





# Colonel Michael Formica

## 21 April 2006

MM: My name is Matt Matthews [MM] and I'm a historian for the Combat Studies Institute. Today is April 21, 2006, and I'm interviewing Colonel Michael Formica [MF]. He was the commander of the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, also known as the Black Jack Brigade. Please give me a little background on where you grew up, how you got your commission, and your military assignments up until the time of Operation Phantom Fury.

MF: I grew up in southwestern Pennsylvania, Somerset County. I went to a small high school there and played football and ran track. Then, I went to college at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, was awarded an ROTC two-year scholarship and was commissioned in the regular Army in military intelligence (MI). I went to Fort Huachuca for the Military Intelligence Basic Course and the Tactical Intelligence Course. My first duty assignment was as the intelligence officer (S2) of 2d Battalion, 15th Infantry in Wildflecken, Germany. That unit was inactivated due to Division 86 and I was reassigned to 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment in Kitzingen – again part of the 3d Infantry Division, the 2d Brigade. I was an S2 there for about a year and then I requested a branch transfer and became a scout platoon leader. I went on to serve in the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) and commanded a tank company. I left there and went to the Pentagon and did a year in the joint intern program, Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA). I was the special assistant to the presidential emissary, General John Vessey, who was retired at the time. From there, I went to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans (DCSOPS) and then off to Fort Leavenworth. From Leavenworth, I did the co-op program, stayed an extra 10 months and earned my master's degree in public administration. Then, I went to 1st Cavalry (CAV) Division where I served on the division staff for about four months under General Peter Chiarelli, who was the G3 at the time. Then, I went down to 2d Brigade and served as their logistics officer (S4) and later went to the tank battalion as an operations officer (S3) and executive officer (XO). I went to the brigade headquarters as the S3 and XO. I commanded 4th Squadron, 7th Cavalry in Korea and from there I went to the Army War College. After that, I went to Fort Hood where I was the chief of operations for III Corps while waiting to take the Black Jack Brigade Combat Team (BCT) in May of 2002. I was blessed to be able to command that brigade for about 37 months, 13 of which were in and around Baghdad during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). We served with the 1st Armored Division as the lead force for the 1st CAV Division. We served with the 1st Armored Division for about 75 days, I think, and obviously under the 1st CAV Division.

MM: Can you talk me through the arrival of your brigade in Iraq and describe what your mission was and what your brigade was doing prior to PHANTOM FURY?

MF: Let me back up a little bit, because this is really a success story. When I took command of the brigade in 2002, they had just come out of Kuwait about a month before, after having been sent over there in the fall of 2001. Colonel Mark French took the brigade into Kuwait. They served for five or six months and then came back out. As they came back out, we went into a reorganization phase associated with Force XXI, turned in all the tanks and Bradleys, and began a reorganization and training phase to learn Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade-and-Below (FBCB2) and all the systems associated with it. That was all great, getting all the new bells and whistles and new equipment. I believe this was called Unit Set Fielding; and among its virtues, I saw one of the most important being the stabilization that it established for the BCT. As a team, we would receive new equipment conduct individual and collective training at Fort Hood and then execute a capstone exercise at the National Training Center (NTC) within 18 months. Therefore, as part of this Force XXI design for this new equipment, we would remain together – noncommissioned officers (NCOs), officers and soldiers – so a great opportunity to build a team. In the late summer of 2002, the prospect that we would be deploying to combat caused us to accelerate the Unit Set Fielding Plan. Working with the equipment program managers, we sped up the fielding schedule for the equipment and we designed and executed our capstone exercise at home station. The division imported observer-controllers/trainers (OC/Ts): the Wrangler team came out and OC'd my brigade staff, and we had a team of OCs from the training division that assisted in task force and company-level training. We executed this home station capstone exercise in November of 2002, which really set us up well. We were pretty confident by that point that we knew how to use all these new systems and collectively use them as a BCT. We went through the spring of '03 and all of the, "You're going, you're not going." And then finally we were told we were not going but rather would execute an NTC rotation in July. As we entered into the rotation, I anticipated we would deploy to Iraq within the next 3-6 months. As such, I did not believe that a high-intensity rotation would best prepare us for combat operations in Iraq. We coordinated with the operations group commander, the assistant division commander for maneuver (ADC-M) and the commanding general (CG) of the NTC and modified the rotation to be a hybrid scenario. The BCT would fight high-intensity battles similar to what the 3d Infantry Division saw in combat, and then during the preparation phases – days between high-intensity fights – we would execute stability operations, such as cordons and searches of villages, establish checkpoints, etc. I have to tell you, as we went into that, we were absolutely clueless as to what all that looked like. The only resident expertise in my outfit existed in two places: in my infantry battalion and in my engineer battalion. It was

a good eye opener for us and provided us a solid appreciation of what we needed to do to prepare for combat. As anticipated, General Peter Chiarelli called me two days after we came out of the box and said, "You're deploying in January and I just want to tell you and your troopers before it becomes public notice." To plan for our next phase of training, we conducted a two-day training assessment meeting at the NTC. I pulled the battalion commanders together and we figured out what our training plan needed to look like for the next three or four months, to prepare us for deployment and combat operations in Iraq. Upon return to Fort Hood, we executed a pretty extensive training regimen from basic rifle marksmanship, crew-served weapons qualification, building clearance, to platoon and company team cordons and searches. In essence, we transformed ourselves from an armor brigade to a motorized infantry brigade. We deployed into theater in the beginning of January 2004. We were fortunate again in that there were some hiccups in the ship getting there. We got there early so we had time to take advantage of the training opportunities available in Kuwait, assisted by the Military Professional Resources, Inc. (MPRI) teams at Udairi Range. We executed live shoot house training for every infantry, armor, artillery, and engineer squad and platoon within the brigade combat team. In addition, all our troopers participated in convoy training – again culminating in a convoy live-fire exercise. So kinetically, we were confident about what we were supposed to do in those kinds of situations. That's not bad for an armor brigade to go from zero to 60 and have that kind of skill set, where your troopers felt they understood how to do room clearance, building clearance, block clearance techniques; how to establish cordons and searches, and execute convoys. The other great thing I would tell you is – and this really is a good lesson learned: we did a pre-deployment site survey (PDSS) in October of 2004 and fell in on the brigade we knew we would take over from, which was 3d Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Colonel Russ Gold's brigade. It was a great PDSS. I took all the battalion commanders, all the command sergeant majors with me, and we had a chance to walk the terrain. I came out of that thing with a 99 percent solution as to how I would organize my BCT to execute that task. Most importantly, they knew what they would be doing and they began reading the mail of the counterparts they would be taking over from. We had one secure internet protocol router (SIPR) terminal in the brigade headquarters, and we read the 3d Brigade, 1st Armored Division updates every day and tracked what they were doing, where they were doing it – and that was down to battalion level. So, we went into the theater already having started our right seat ride. 1st Armored Division had worked out a pretty good two week right seat/left seat ride program for us and we deployed advanced parties in from Kuwait into 3d Brigade, 1st Armored Division, probably within the first week of hitting Kuwait. Frankly, in hindsight, it was a relative period of calm as well, unlike what my peers would face as they were transitioning into theater. We had probably 45 days – two weeks of which were under the right seat/left seat ride of 3d Brigade,

1st Armored Division – to really have a chance to learn the battlespace and begin to understand all the nuances associated with it. Equally as important, if not more so, was General Chiarelli's real desire and guidance that we had to think beyond the kinetic and start thinking along these campaign plan lines of operations, even at the tactical level. We began to look at what we were going to have to do from the perspective of lines of operations associated with the infrastructure, reestablishment of legitimate government, economic development, obviously security, and in the back of all that was information operations as well. So it really came together pretty well that we had that kind of thinking. In many cases, 1st Armored Division was doing all these things, but we had a construct in which we could track how we were doing against those as we came into theater. The BCT conducted full-spectrum operations in the western Baghdad area for about nine months.

MM: Can you describe the area you were initially assigned to? What was the camp you were actually at?

MF: The brigade had two camps. The preponderance of the BCT was located on Camp Victory, which is adjacent to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). I had a battalion task force at Camp Justice in Kadhimiya. That was a critical node that I argued for and was permitted to maintain because of its proximity to the Kadhimiya Shrine, probably the number three most important shrine in Iraq for Shi'a Islam. We kept 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment (1-5 CAV) at that location. It's worth describing the task organization as well, as it wasn't a typical armor brigade. I lost a tank battalion, so I had 1-5 CAV, mech infantry commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Myles Miyamasu; 2d Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment (2-12 CAV) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John (Tim) Ryan, my armor battalion; 3d Battalion, 82d Field Artillery Regiment (3-82 FA) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tim Vuono as my direct support (DS) battalion; 91st Engineer Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Chris Martin, which was a Bradley-equipped engineer battalion, which became very, very important to us. I also had my forward support battalion (FSB) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ray (Bill) McCarver, my signal company and my MI company. But again, I did not have 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment (1-8 CAV), which was one of my tank battalions. 1st Armored Division placed 1-4 ADA under our operational control until they did the transfer of authority (TOA) with 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment (4-5 ADA). We would then accept, as attached, 4-5 ADA once they got into theater. Our area of operations (AO) was initially western Baghdad, excluding the Green Zone. So if you just drew a line around the Green Zone, everything that was west of the Tigris River, generally Route Irish north and what I would call the BIAP salient all the way out to the 82d Airborne Division boundary was ours. Our AO was big in size and complexity. It ranged from Shi'a strongholds in the northeast area to very strong Sunni, former Ba'ath Party strongholds in the center, as well

as extremely rural and impoverished areas in the west towards the 82d boundary. Lastly, two real key pieces here for infrastructure: we owned BIAP, so we had to make sure aircraft could fly in and out; and the key lines of communications, both east/west and north/south, to resupply the theater ran through our AO. Route security became an essential task for us.

MM: Can you talk me through the period from January through April of 2004 when the Marines have their first big encounter in Fallujah?

MF: We fully arrived in theater towards the end of January and TOA with 3d Brigade was on 13 February. From then up until the first week of April, things in our AO and frankly across 1st Armored Division were pretty much as they had been. No significant uprising occurred during this period. One of the key things we had to fight off, and did pretty well with the brigade reconnaissance troop (BRT), was denying the enemy the opportunity to shoot long-range rockets into Camp Victory and BIAP. That was a key task because we had been hit numerous times during our first couple weeks in theater, and we countered that with the use of our BRT in conjunction with division rotary-wing aviation assets. The 82d Airborne in Fallujah also faced this rocket threat. We suspected they were probably coming from the same cell organization which was operating on the seam between the two divisions. In addition to rocket denial operations, another key focus we had during that initial period of time was to make sure the routes were secure: improvised explosive device (IED) route clearance missions. Compared to what we would face later, the number and sophistication of the IEDs was limited. In addition, we were also aggressively working to determine the infrastructure needs for the Khadamiya and Mansour Districts, which consisted of between 12 or 14 neighborhoods associated. That's pretty much where we were. The 1st Armored Division ran a campaign that I think was referred to as "Iron Sweep," and that operation kicked off on or about Saint Patrick's Day. What we need to remember, as we look back, is that there were a lot of great things that came out of the capture of Saddam Hussein. When we came into theater, they were about two thirds of the way through the document exploitation, dealing with the documents which had been exploited from his capture. There were a lot of cordons and searches, targetings of individuals, and cleaning up a lot of Ba'ath Party guys as a result of that capture. In my estimation, the enemy had really been knocked back pretty aggressively and effectively, and Iron Sweep was a continuation of that. Our success in Operation Iron Sweep was very limited. I attributed this to our lack of understanding of how to develop targets, how to conduct intelligence operations. To overcome this recognized weakness, we went to school with 2d Brigade, 1st Armored Division, because they were pretty successful at it. In the early part of March, I had directed my brigade XO to reorganize/revamp our infrastructure, the intelligence battlefield operating system (BOS). We entered April with a solid understanding of this new intelligence/tar-

getting system and a solid appreciation of our AO to include the civic leaders. As we came into the Holy Week (Passover, Holy Week, and Abereen) during the first week of April, first battle for Fallujah kicked off. As you know, what precipitated that was the killing of the contractors. Sadr City erupted on the 6th of March, with 1st CAV Division forces fighting alongside 1st Armored Division. In our AO, the enemy executed a series of attacks and engagements. These occurred over a period of about 96 hours and consisted of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and small arms ambushes along the main supply routes (MSRs) on US supply vehicles, attack of Iraqi police stations, attack of Iraqi National Guard convoys that were crossing our northern AO to support Fallujah, and a direct attack on Raider Base, a company strong point in the town of Abu Ghraib. At times, the entire span of the brigade's battlespace was in contact. Every battalion was fighting in one form or another and we got through it very well. Fortunately, we did not lose any soldiers in that and we defeated the enemy and enabled us for the next 120 days to focus on infrastructure, local governance, and the development of Iraqi security forces. Next to what 1-5 CAV would do in An Najaf in August and the BCT (-) in Fallujah during November, this was the peak of our high-intensity combat operations.

MM: Did anyone in your brigade get involved in any of the Marine actions in April in Fallujah?

MF: No, not in April in Fallujah. But as the coalition was attempting to re-inforce that with Iraqi forces, convoy operations run by Marines were working across the northern half of my sector. In several cases, they came under ambush and we worked to defeat the forces ambushing those convoys.

MM: Were you down in Najaf as well?

MF: 1-5 CAV led by Lieutenant Colonel Miyamasu was, and again demonstrated phenomenal flexibility. The division chief of staff, Colonel Keith Walker, called me and told me he needed a battalion task force in eight hours to move to Najaf. I knew who I was going to send. I picked my mech battalion, 1-5 CAV, and within eight hours they were moving south.

MM: They were working side by side with the Marines in this operation?

MF: They were placed under the operational control of (OPCON'd to) the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) along with Lieutenant Colonel Jim Rainey's 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment (2-7 CAV). 1-5 CAV was responsible for the northern approach to Najaf through the cemetery – lots of three-dimensional fighting down into the crypts – as well as 2-7 CAV fighting in through the city from the west.

MM: Have you read Bing West's book, No True Glory? The reason I ask is that I've been in contact with General Richard Natonski and some others, because

there's a part in the book where Lieutenant General John Sattler actually requests 2-7 CAV, the Black Jack Brigade and 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment (2-2 Infantry). I was just wondering if you could shine any light on that.

MF: That was for the November Fallujah battle, right?

MM: Yes.

MF: I can't speak to what Lieutenant General Sattler asked for or not, but the bottom line here is that we were the obvious brigade of choice. The plan for our redeployment was we were to leave theater in November and be back before Christmas – and, quite frankly, we looked at that with a rather skeptical eye when the word came out in the spring of 2004. We all knew when the elections were going to be and we frankly didn't expect to be able to leave before the elections. But that was the plan. I had gone to Ireland for a week with my wife as part of the leave program. I left thinking that I'd come back and spend about 20 more days and then we'd start our redeployment. Upon my return, General Chiarelli informed me that we were being extended and that we would continue to transition our AO over to the 2d Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, and the brigade became an operational reserve for the corps commander. We did not know at that point, although I'm certain that others well above me did, that we would likely support the November Fallujah campaign.

MM: Can you talk me through when you first got the warning order about this event?

MF: Yes, and it probably was a warning order from the division. I stayed in touch with the division G3 pretty closely and it became apparent that we would likely be the BCT that would do something with the Marines. That was in the second week or so of October at the latest. Once that all started happening, I asked permission to conduct coordination. We went out and we did a leader's recon with our brothers from the Marine regiment. I took all my battalion commanders and command sergeant majors out again to do that reconnaissance and we began to develop a plan for how we were going to participate in this operation. The concept was that we would perform basically a cordon and prevent anybody from leaving or reinforcing the city of Fallujah. We would also keep the lines of communication open and prevent indirect fires from falling on the attack positions of the Marine regiments as they were staging for the attack into Fallujah. This would all be executed 72 to 96 hours prior to the actual crossing of the line of departure (LD) of forces into Fallujah.

MM: That would be around November 7th. For this operation, is your brigade working directly for the 1st Marine Division (MARDIV)?

MF: Yes.

MM: Do you recall meeting with General Natonski or any of his staff, and what did you think of the Marines when you sat down to start planning this? Had you worked with them before?

MF: In order to do this operation, I would have 1-5 CAV, my mech battalion; 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment (1-5 Infantry) (Stryker); the Alpha Battery from my DS battalion, 3-82 FA, and a couple radars; the 15th FSB, our forward support battalion; the MP battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Byron Freeman; and lastly I would have four dedicated aircraft: a Kiowa Warrior, Apache mix from the 4th Aviation Brigade of the 1st CAV Division. They were basically in direct support of me 24 hours a day during the operation. Also, the 1st MARDIV commander OPCON'd the 2d Recon Battalion to us. This battalion and their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Spike Knight, served as my first inroad with the Marines and enabled all of us to understand how they thought and how they fight. To my great pleasure, there wasn't a lot of difference. We spoke task and purpose, we all worked hard to understand the capabilities of the organizations, and our communications equipment were all compatible – so that was a good news story. Most important to me was that I had a battalion commander that understood the ground where we were ultimately going to have to fight. I gave him a key piece of ground to do that and task organized him with a mech platoon and section of tanks to assist him in that task. My first real meeting with the 1st MARDIV Commander, regimental commanders and staff was during the division rehearsal. The rehearsal occurred about a week or so prior to the execution of the operation. It was a no-kidding sand table rehearsal in which all the regimental commanders and the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTAF) folks, etc., were all present around the table to rehearse this operation. We all spoke in very similar terms. A key takeaway for me was the manner in which they executed air/ground operations and deconflicted fires and close air support (CAS).

MM: What was the plan that eventually was formulated for your brigade in this operation?

MF: The task was to isolate with the purpose to enable freedom of maneuver for the 1st MARDIV attack. We executed our task through a cordon tied into the canals and rivers. The 1st MARDIV was in contact while they were in the similar positions prior to our transitions; and as we assumed those positions, we came in contact with the enemy as well. It was not uncommon for 1-5 CAV to be engaging mortar teams at 2,000 meters with 25-millimeter high explosive incendiary (HEI) rounds on a daily basis. The enemy was trying to probe the new lines of the new force. We did not see any concerted attack occur across any of the positions. It was just like a force feeling like they were going to come under siege. Our perimeter was about 270 degrees around Fallujah. It stopped at the Euphrates River, both in the north and in the southeast, and on the other side of the river were Marine forc-



es. We were based out of three primary locations: Camp Fallujah, which is where the brigade headquarters was, along with my firing battery and the forward support battalion; 1-5 CAV was in the field continuously in platoon strong points and even down to vehicle strong points, as was 1-5 Infantry. 1-5 Infantry also had a company base camp located in the town of Kharma that was referred to as Delta.

MM: It's my understanding that when your brigade rolled in to take up these blocking positions, was there also some kind of deception plan involved to make the enemy think that the major attack into Fallujah would in fact be coming from the south?

MF: Not that I'm aware of. I will add, however, that 1st MARDIV did not possess much armor. We came in convoys right up Route Mobile in the middle of the night and occupied those positions. The next morning, based upon initial contacts with the enemy in which they attempted to attack our positions with mortar fires and we destroyed them at long ranges with direct fire, it was apparent that they were surprised by the presence of M2A3 Bradleys, Stryker Infantry Fighting Vehicles, and M1A2 SEP Abrams. So whether intended or not, it may have appeared that way to the enemy

MM: Could you talk me through the fight and some of the significant things that happened during this campaign? I'm not certain when your brigade left. Was it around the 20th of November?

MF: Actually, we stayed under 1st MARDIV control through the second week of December, if I'm not mistaken. We were there much longer than 2-7 and 2-2. We then went into exploitation. We provided the 1st MARDIV the mobile capability to seek out insurgents outside of the city of Fallujah. That was a great operation as well, and we learned a lot of things in the execution of that. But going back to the battle of Fallujah, being on the outside looking in, it was just unbelievable the amount of firepower that was being used there. My battery alone shot over 1,800 rounds of 155. We did five Copperhead missions. Most of this was in direct support, some of it Q37-driven stuff, but it was just something else. One of our biggest challenges – and it was recognized by the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and by the division – was who do you let out and who do you not? What are the rules and the screening procedures? And when they're let out, where do they go? So the bottom line answer was that military-aged men, defined as 16 to 55, would not be permitted to leave, but children and women certainly could leave. We had all the Marines and soldiers fully understanding those rules and how you were to search people before they'd be let out. So one of the tasks we faced was this "humanitarian" task of folks that want to flee this unbelievable combat environment. How you do that so you didn't put your soldiers at risk and you didn't let a key target out.

MM: How many people were coming in your direction? Are we talking truck-loads?

MF: Primarily, this was occurring in my 2d Recon Battalion's area of operations. There were a lot of dismounted exfiltration routes, if you will. And to a limited extent, 1-5 CAV's as well. Over the period of time, probably in the hundreds and in groups of 25 to 50.

MM: Mostly on foot?

MF: Yes. Nobody tried to drive anything. They would come out in these groups to try to get out. The rules as imposed by the government of Iraq prior to the execution of the Fallujah operation were that vehicles were not allowed to drive anywhere across the country. You could only walk, to prevent the suicide bombings and those types of things. Anytime we saw a vehicle moving, we moved in and shut it down, whether it was coming out of the city or operating inside our AO. We just went in and took the people out, searched them, and they had to walk away from the car.

MM: Going back to your artillery battery for a minute, were your Q37s picking up a lot of rocket and enemy mortar fire, and so were you actually doing quite a bit of counterfire missions?

MF: I hesitate to describe the quantity. I know it did occur, and we had some rockets that hit on Camp Fallujah and there was some mortar fire coming out of the city. It did occur. I wouldn't say it was a lot. The preponderance of the missions were in direct support of calls for fire coming from the lead battalions conducting the attack.

MM: Were you firing for both 2-7 and 2-2?

MF: That is correct.

MM: Did you get any Marine fire missions?

MF: We certainly did. Again, Alpha Company, 3-82 FA was in DS to 1st MARDIV.

MM: So you're firing for everybody.

MF: That is correct, and Alpha Company, 3-82 FA worked as a battery associated with, for lack of a better term, the division artillery (DIVARTY) of the 1st MARDIV. They were all located in the same place on Camp Fallujah. Alpha Company, 3-82 FA was the only Paladin Battery and, as such, provided increased accuracy, rate of fire, and agility in executing fire missions.

MM: I interviewed some folks from the 2-7 this week and the Marines were highly impressed with the 120-millimeter mortar. They told me they fired so much

that they went black on 120-millimeter mortar rounds and had to get an emergency resupply.

MF: That is correct. We supplied 2-7, and I think 1st Infantry Division kept 2-2 supplied. We did a lot of those kinds of missions where we had to bring in CH-47s worth of ammunition into Fallujah so we could quickly get that ammunition out to those guys.

MM: You were logistically responsible for 2-7?

MF: That is correct.

MM: Is there anything that stands out in your mind during the fight for the city? Are there any of your commanders that you'd like to talk about or any incidents that we can record here?

MF: The teamwork that existed between the regiments and the BCT in the initial phases was really good. We assumed that battlespace seamlessly. As stated earlier, it was part of my intent that when the sun came up in the morning, I wanted the enemy to know they were locked down and they couldn't get in or out. That happened very, very well. I could not have been more proud of the soldiers and Marines that executed these tasks. We task organized Army and Marine forces down to platoon level. I had Marine squads operating inside of infantry platoons, because they knew the terrain and the enemy. I had tank and Bradley platoons and sections task organized to Marine reconnaissance companies to provide precision direct fire capability. It all worked very well. Tactically, commonality of task and purpose is the binding element that ensures unity of effort and is the key to joint operations.

MM: It's got to be the ultimate joint operation, in my opinion.

MF: It was just unbelievable. You know, the naysayers would tell us that we could only go as far as company level. Well, we had to, by necessity, go down below that and it worked just phenomenally. Also, as the guy looking in – just to see the execution of that operation was really impressive as well. The synchronization of air, ground and indirect fires in an urban environment was pretty phenomenal. AC-130 fires, 155s, fast movers and then tank and Bradley fires on the streets. As you well know, the two lead battalions in each of these regimental attacks were Army mechanized battalions and the main efforts for each of those, and also one of the main efforts for the division – so it did the heart good. We monitored their nets to be able to maintain an understanding of the forward line of troops as they were attacking into the zone. One of the key things we had to focus on, as we maintained that perimeter, was to make sure we didn't have any fratricides with direct fire, because we weren't controlling the indirect fire other than providing it.

MM: Had you ever met the 2-7 CAV commander, James Rainey, or the 2-2 Infantry commander, Lieutenant Colonel Pete Newell?

MF: I have not met Pete, but Jim Rainey and I had served in the 2d Infantry Division. He was the division planner and I was the squadron commander, so I knew Jim very, very well. Jim did not hesitate to call me if he needed anything in terms of supplies and such, so we had a great relationship.

MM: As I've interviewed people in the 2-7 and 2-2, they've said that a lot of times the RCT commander would suddenly appear, and even the 1st MARDIV commander would show up unexpectedly. There would be a firefight going on and they'd turn around and there he was. Did they come down and visit you at all?

MF: Yes, daily, both the division and the MEF commander, Lieutenant General Sattler, and we really appreciated it. One of the problems we had command and control wise was that the Marine Corps operated off the mIRC Chat system, and each of the regimental commanders would have one of these things in their Humvee. Through the Enhanced Position Location Reporting System (EPLRS), they would maintain connectivity and would be chatting via laptop. So here I am, an Army brigade commander, with FBCB2 in my Bradley and my Humvee, and I don't have this kind of connectivity with my counterparts or the division commander. My brigade headquarters had it, but I was not with them. I was out and about on the battlefield maintaining awareness from those positions. From an Army perspective, you would expect the division command net to be one of the key things you'd be using, an FM net of some sort. Well, that net was up and running but it wasn't serving the same purpose that I was accustomed to, so I had a hard time maintaining awareness external from my brigade headquarters. To my pleasure – every day – I saw General Natonski on the battlefield. 1st MARDIV would call and inform me that the CG was in the area and wanted to come see me; and within a short amount of time, he and his force protection guys were at my location and we were talking about where we were, what we needed, and how we could do better.

MM: Did you recall having any problems with any of the embedded press? Did you even have any?

MF: MEF public affairs office (PAO) did not assign embeds with Army units. I can't tell you why this was the case, but the 1st CAV Division scrambled to fix this lack of coverage for the fight. As a result, we had the New York Times and AP, and I had no problems with them. The New York Times came out with us, but it was a challenge at times to get the AP correspondent to leave Camp Fallujah and come out with me as we circulated through the BCT's area of operation.

MM: I interviewed Jane Arraf from CNN and she had been with 2-2 over there. She was explaining to me that it was really hard to get her boss to let her go

with an Army unit because everybody assumed this was totally a Marine fight – at least back at CNN. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me, sir?

MF: Just a couple other points. While this operation was important, we had the opportunity to continue to work under Marine control until the middle of December. During this time, we conducted exploitation operations within the I MEF AO. Specifically, we were looking for anti-Iraqi force members (AIF), supplies, caches, etc. Again, we operated in and around the Fallujah area on both sides of the Euphrates River, sometimes for extended periods of time away from the base camp to conduct those operations. They were very successful and we found lots of caches of high explosive ordnance and rockets. I really think it went a long way to ensure the situation beyond Fallujah would be a bit calmer. We never did make it back to the Baghdad area. Following a brief refit period over Christmas, we next deployed to the North Babil area, received OPCON of another Marine Corps battalion – the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mark Smith. Because of our relationship with the 1st MARDIV and 2d Recon Battalion, we were able to work some very close operations for cordon and searches along the division seam in an area known as the Zaydon. The enemy clearly appreciated where those seams were along that boundary. Again, these joint efforts were very successful as we uncovered tens of tons of cached explosives and numerous AIF. I think it was pretty important to the January elections as well. The Fallujah campaign, our operations in south Baghdad/North Babil, and the 1st CAV efforts enabled the successful January 2005 elections. Our contribution again was in isolating the enemy. We understood the terrain, how the enemy was using “rat lines” out of Fallujah to attack the Baghdad area, and positioned forces to deny the enemy the use of the terrain and his caches of weapons. We prevented crossing of the Euphrates River. We owned all the bridges and we prevented the crossings so they weren't able to do that kind of thing, so it was pretty successful. Folks said we wouldn't be able to have elections in south Baghdad, but we did have elections there, much to the surprise of many.

MM: When was your unit finally allowed to head back to the States?

MF: We were extended twice and departed Kuwait at the end of February 2005. So we had spent just about 14 months in theater. We had left Iraq at the end of January and, as a matter of fact, it was Super Bowl Sunday when I got in a convoy and headed south.

MM: Sir, I greatly appreciate your time.



## **Colonel James C. McConville**

### **21 April 2006**

MM: My name is Matt Matthews [MM]. I'm an historian with the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and the date is 21 April. Today I'm talking to Colonel James C. McConville [JM] who was the 4th Aviation Brigade Commander for 1st Cavalry (CAV) Division during Operation Phantom Fury. To start out, sir, could you give me a brief background of where you grew up, where you went to school, how you got commissioned and some of your assignments prior to the November 2004 action in Iraq?

JM: Sure. I grew up in Boston and graduated from West Point, Class of 1981. I started out in the CAV and commanded a "blues platoon" and an air cavalry troop at Fort Ord in the 7th Infantry Division. I went to grad school at Georgia Tech for aerospace engineering, spent some time in special operations and as an operations officer (S3) in the CAV and the aviation brigade S3 at the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii. I commanded the divisional CAV squadron and was the G3 for the 101st Airborne Division. I attended the National Security Fellowship at Harvard and then spent three years commanding the 4th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) in the 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, with a year in Baghdad from March 2004 to February 2005.

MM: Could you give me a breakdown of the units that were in your brigade during the time of Operation Phantom Fury?

JM: My brigade consisted of the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment (1-227), which was my organic attack battalion, and 1st Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment (1-25), which was attached from the 25th Infantry Division but fought most of the war with us. Then we had 2d Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment (2-227), which was our lift battalion, along with some augmentation from some National Guard aviation units that were stationed at Balad. I had the 615th Aviation Support Battalion, which provided all of our aviation and ground logistical support, and a National Guard air traffic control (ATC) company. We also had a quick reaction force (QRF) infantry platoon from the 39th BCT that was stationed with us at Taji.

MM: Could you talk me through when you first found out that there might be an operation going into Fallujah, that the Marines might be doing this, and that they might be seeking help from your brigade?

JM: Sure. I think it might be helpful to identify, as a lead-in to the Army's participation in Fallujah in November 2004, four things that were done differently in November 2004 versus in April 2004. Please note that these are from an

Army aviation perspective. The four things done differently were: (1) security of the movement of Iraqi security forces by Army 1st CAV air and ground units; (2) establishing an outer cordon with 2d BCT, 1st CAV with aerial support (controlling all routes in and out) around Fallujah; (3) use of Army heavy battalions – 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment (2-7) from 1st CAV and 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment (2-2) from 1st Infantry Division – with support from Army aviation as the main effort for each of Marine regiments attacking in zone; and (4) movement of key personnel and aerial resupply of critical supplies by Army aviation. The 4th BCT did standard aviation missions throughout the battle of Fallujah in November 2004 that included reconnaissance, security missions, attack missions and lift missions. So as the thing set up, a couple things happened from an aviation standpoint that I thought were kind of strategic in nature. 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry Regiment (2-162) had the mission of providing security for the Iraqi security forces moving to Fallujah; and as they moved along the road near Abu Ghraib, they were ambushed by 30 to 50 insurgents that were pretty much dug into buildings. They hit them with pretty good fire. 1-227, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ron Lewis, responded with AH-64Ds and his guys quickly engaged the insurgents and did a good job of just destroying that ambush site. We had a battle damage assessment (BDA) of somewhere from 30 to 50 insurgents that were dug into these buildings. That facilitated the movement of those Iraqi security forces into Fallujah and gave them a lot of confidence that the Americans were going to support their movement. Seven months prior, we didn't adequately secure the movement of the Iraqi security forces this way and, as a result, when they got ambushed, the Iraqi security forces just disappeared. This time, the Iraqi security forces had U.S. forces securing their movement, and when they were engaged they took those enemies out and facilitated that movement. The next day, they were engaged again and, this time, it was by a couple of vehicles. We had a couple of our Kiowa Warriors providing security and the guys actually pursued the insurgents, found their vehicles, and engaged and eliminated them with their M4 rifles. The integrated air/ground security of the Iraqi forces facilitated their movement and enabled them to play an important role in the battle. It was one of the first times we had Iraqi security forces doing key things for us. The next thing we were involved in was with 2d BCT, 1st CAV under the command of Colonel Mike Formica, who established an outer cordon around Fallujah and was responsible for setting the conditions for the attack. Mike was responsible for preventing insurgents from entering or leaving Fallujah and ensuring they did not interdict the lines of communications (LOCs) or engage the forward operations bases (FOBs) or attacks positions with indirect fire. As part of this, we provided continuous AH-64D and OH-58D coverage conducting aerial recon and security missions. The attack and CAV pilots found and destroyed rocket launchers that were oriented on the Marine FOBs at Fallujah and they were able to destroy them, which was helpful in the fight. They also found and destroyed



five boats on the Euphrates River that were being used to transport weapons and supplies for the insurgents. There was an outer ring fight going on around Fallujah which set the conditions for the inner ring fight inside the city, and Mike Formica did that. My guys did the reconnaissance and attack missions in support of that. Our lift guys, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bill Mooney, the 2-227 commander, were conducting daily movement of key personnel and critical supplies from Baghdad. Not a lot of glory in those missions but absolutely essential.

MM: Lieutenant Colonel Rainey, the 2-7 commander, was adamant that I speak to all three of these guys. He particularly wanted to make sure that I talked to Bill Mooney, based on the fact that his unit flew a real dangerous mission to resupply 2-7 with 120-millimeter mortars.

JM: That was a very bad night weather-wise; I think the visibility was down to about a half mile. I happened to be flying that night myself on a Kiowa Warrior team along with Ron Lewis who had the Apache team; we were engaged heavily with small arms that night by an enemy that must have had night vision systems. The weather was very bad but the skill level of our pilots was high and this was a critical mission. There was a certain bond between the guys on the ground and the guys in the air. We felt that if they were out there, we'd be out there.

MM: Tell me about your mission that night.

JM: I was with a team of Kiowa Warriors and we were conducting a counter mortar and rocket interdiction mission in some pretty bad weather. I don't like talking about myself; we had a team of Kiowas down there doing reconnaissance and security missions like we did most of the time during the battle. I was flying with a KW team and Ron Lewis was flying with an AH team and we basically provided continuous recon and security: locating mortar and rocket teams, looking for insurgent movement throughout the sector. What we had learned in Iraq was that when we fly, our soldiers don't die, so we couldn't fly enough. We also found out that our mere presence on the battlefield deterred enemy actions. They would set up rockets, we would find them and destroy them; when they moved when they're not supposed to, we would find them and stop them. That night, the weather was bad and a lot of people didn't want to fly that night, but we had a lot of soldier and Marine lives at risk. When Jim Rainey's guys needed a critical supply of 120-millimeter mortars, Bill Mooney and his guys didn't hesitate; in fact, they were ready to fly right into the city of Fallujah and I wouldn't let them do it. I told them to go into Landing Zone (LZ) East and that's what they did. They brought those mortars in. Again, we had a special bond with Jim Rainey. He was with us in Taji and we supported him in An Najaf so we had a special relationship with him. He's a fabulous commander. So we did these tough missions and our commanders flew. Bill Mooney flew all the time, Ron Lewis flew, I flew, and that was how we did busi-

ness. We never had any trouble with getting people in the brigade to fly. Even that dreadful night, the pilots were saying, “Warrior 6 is down there, Attack 6 is down there, our infantry brothers need us, we’ll go right down there.” That’s how it was done. We also had other folks that were picking up the load. Remember, our sector was Baghdad so we were doing many other missions at the same time like “safe skies,” which was making sure airplanes can go in and out of Baghdad unimpeded. Lieutenant Colonel Mike Lundy, the 1-25 commander, was doing a fabulous job of taking care of that mission and the security mission outside of Baghdad – because as you move forces around, they would react to the absence or presence of forces. Dave Parker, commander of 615th ASB, was setting maintenance records by keeping all these aircraft flying.

MM: How did you make all of this work? You’ve got aviation assets from the Army, Air Force and the Marines. Did you have any problems with the Marines, with airspace deconfliction or anything else?

JM: I thought it went pretty well. When you came into the sector, you checked in. We would stay up on their net so we knew where their helicopters were moving – and there are some differences in how we do business. When we operate in a sector, we’re talking to the guys on the ground and we don’t have an air liaison officer (ALO) or some type person controlling our helicopters’ movements and engagements. But when we went into engagements in Fallujah – and you can talk to Ron Lewis about that. When it came time for him to engage, he’s talking to their ALO on the ground. They pretty much put you at an initial point (IP), they bring you in and you engage the targets they say. We still focus on talking to the guys on the ground, so Jim Rainey would be talking to Ron Lewis and that’s how we operate. It was important, though, for us to understand their procedures even though they were a little different, because it was their airspace. Our philosophy was: when they were in Army airspace over in 1st CAV, they followed our procedures; so now that we’re in their airspace, we’ll follow their procedures. We really didn’t have a lot of problems. When you’re flying in real bad weather at night and getting shot at, there are always challenges, but we didn’t have anything of significance.

MM: Were you involved in any planning with the Marines prior to this operation?

JM: I personally was not involved in the planning. I had sent a liaison officer (LNO), Captain Hank Perry from 1-227, and he did most of the initial planning. We pretty much had a set mission and we knew what we would do. Once we were integrated in the scheme of maneuver, it was almost like we had a battle drill. We figured out what we were doing and what our critical tasks were. By this time, it’s November and we’ve been in theater about six or seven months, so we were pretty proficient at working that and working with our guys on the ground.

MM: Were there any key issues or lessons learned specifically from this fight, from an Army aviation standpoint?

JM: I want to get back to the strategic things. Taking out that ambush site had strategic implications because it kept the Iraqi security forces in place. Taking out the rocket launchers and taking out the insurgents that were impeding us. They had to move into the attack position and they wanted to attack at night, so they were moving pretty much during the day and were uncovered. The commander was going to attack early if they started taking a lot of rockets and mortars and taking casualties to indirect fire, so aviation had a pretty big piece in making sure that didn't happen by doing counter mortar and rockets, by finding the insurgents, by taking out their rockets, taking out their boats and really decapitating their ability. So often, those types of things get forgotten.

MM: That's one of the main reasons we're writing this up because you're exactly right. The Army kind of got left out of this equation. People picked up Bing West's No True Glory book and it barely mentions the Army in there. Let me ask you this, if the Q36s or Q37s were picking up enemy indirect fire, were you guys getting a lot of those missions, instead of somebody firing back at those rockets and mortars. Were they calling your guys instead?

JM: Yeah. We also used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to work that. I don't want to get too much into the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), but we used multiple means to find and get those things.

MM: Was General David Petraeus down there at that time?

JM: Yeah. Around 7 November, General Thomas Metz, General Petraeus, the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commander, and the 1st Marine Division (MARDIV) commander – they all came down there.

MM: General Petraeus must have come down there because, at that time, wasn't he in charge of training the Iraqis?

JM: He was in charge of the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), so he came down there to see where his troops were going to go. On another note, one of my pilots was shot on 8 November.

MM: Talk to me about that.

JM: That happened on the southeast edge of Fallujah. CW3 Mike Zanders got a call from Marines that were taking fire on the perimeter of Fallujah and so he went in and did a close combat attack. He got shot through the arm, it hit his seat-belt, but he continued the mission and flew back to the base. When he was done, he walked into the troop medical clinic (TMC) and said he'd been shot so they bandaged him up. When I came back and found out, I asked if he was headed for the

combat support hospital (CSH) and they said, no, that he was over in the debriefing room! He got lucky. The bullet went through his arm and hit his seatbelt; it broke the seatbelt but he only had a flesh wound in his arm.

MM: Where did this happen again?

JM: I think he was supporting the Marines that were on the southeast side of the city. The grid was LB851880.

MM: Did your guys fly any missions for 2-2 Infantry?

JM: No. 2-7 CAV lived with us at Taji and we supported them in Najaf. Jim Rainey did a fabulous job taking over a battalion in combat that was having some challenges, and then he went down to Najaf. This was where you had 2-7 and 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment fighting in Najaf for the Marine Corps. They so impressed them that, when it came time to go to Fallujah, the Marines wanted Jim as the main effort. We fought with 2-7 with our Apaches in Najaf and up around Taji, so they did not want to go without our Apaches and Ron Lewis. Ron fired the opening volleys for Jim Rainey as they attacked into Fallujah through that breach.

MM: Was there any difficulty in communicating with the Marines that you were aware of? Did you have different radio systems or anything like that?

JM: Not really. We did have some challenges with crypto at times, but we worked our way through that. Even though the fills were supposed to be the same, sometimes they're not exactly the same.

MM: Somebody told me they had to change fills in the middle of the fight on orders from the Marines and that that had caused some problems. I was fortunate enough to have Lieutenant Colonel Mooney send me the 4th Brigade "Warrior" Operational Summary Number 8, which was very helpful.

JM: Great. I made them keep those and that's a lot easier to review. I made some personal notes, which I've got right here, and I find it interesting to go back and look at them now. I realize that the time Fallujah was going on, we still had other missions going on as well. I'm amazed just looking at it.

MM: Did you have any press embedded with you or your commanders and, if so, were there any problems?

JM: No. The thing with the press at this time was that most of the time they weren't that interested, mainly because they couldn't fly with us. So we really didn't get the embedded folks that others did.

MM: How many of your helicopters were actually hit during Operation Phantom Fury?

JM: On 11 November, we had four AH-64s battle damaged. We didn't have any shot down. The only one we had shot down during that timeframe was a Blackhawk and that was shot down near Taji.

MM: Do you have a grid on where those four AH-64s were damaged?

JM: No. You should talk to Ron Lewis. He may have better notes.

MM: That's all probably just coming from small arms fire?

JM: Yes, it was light machine gun fire. They'd shoot rockets at us sometimes. We did not take any man-portable air defense (MANPAD) hits down there. There were a few small arms hits to our aircraft while we were there.

MM: But nothing so bad that somebody had to land the aircraft?

JM: No. I'm looking at my notes here: On 14 November, Reaper 6 engaged and destroyed one white sedan carrying four rockets with wires hanging out of the vehicle. Reaper 16 identified and destroyed one indirect fire system at the grid CB99259480. Reaper 16 took heavy surface-to-air, rocket propelled grenade (RPG) and anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) fire from MB03579613 and returned fire with 16 rockets and 80 30-millimeter. 14 November, Reaper 26 reports two RPGs from vicinity – women and children present. Hmm. On 15 November, we continued our operations and were concerned about the amount of fire we were taking.

MM: So you were getting some reports back about your guys taking some small arms fire?

JM: Oh, yeah. I was down there and I was personally taking small arms fire. I was concerned about how much we were getting shot at.

MM: Was there anything specific you did about that at the time?

JM: There were a couple of things we did as far as guidance. With aviation, there's a fine balance between being bold and being reckless. We would not want to risk the crew and aircraft by trolling over urban areas and taking heavy fire unless there were troops were in contact. If we were taking a lot of fire from an urban area and could not engage and there were no troops in contact, we would try to distance ourselves from the fire. First of all, we would break close contact over the city because we didn't want to lose any pilots or the aircraft. Second, we did not want to give the insurgents a strategic win by having an aircraft go down and risk ground troops having to go in and get them. So we really try to balance that. 16 November: We continued to conduct combat operations. Over this timeframe, we started to see that the anti-Iraqi forces (AIF) were really going after the aircraft. We had a sense that they really wanted to take an aircraft down.

MM: Did you guys have a unit historian?

JM: We did, and that's where all of those battle summaries came from. We made up these battle summary books, which are pretty good and each battalion did them. I bet Ron's is pretty good for that month, because they're narrative in nature. I'll send you all the November battle summaries from all the battalions.

MM: That would be super.

JM: It'll give you a good sense of what was going on at the time.

MM: You've given me some great information today.

JM: We had some pretty heroic aviators that fought through this thing and, as I look at my notes, I remember we weren't just fighting in Fallujah. Ron, Bill and I flew a lot because we felt we needed to do that as leaders; but at the end of the day, this fight was about lieutenants, captains and sergeants. When we fought, we fought as lethal, agile teams. Anyone that goes out there is in the fight. It was non-linear so, if you left the FOB, you were in the fight and the troops kind of expected it. The thing that was different about 1st CAV was that we all stayed together and went over together – which is very different than Vietnam. We didn't have individual replacements. We had a hardcore unit that came over and had trained together; and from April on, we fought incredibly well. As you look at history, Colonel Robert "Abe" Abrams, the 1st BCT, 1st CAV commander, was in Sadr City making that happen. I mean, I haven't fired Hellfires where there's 2.2 million people before, with four tank battalions going down the street. People like to talk a lot about Fallujah, but Sadr City was a much bigger fight. It was very well done by Abe Abrams, Lieutenant Colonel Gary Volesky and bunch of other heroes in the 1st CAV. At the end of the day, if you look at it from a history standpoint, the Army had a pretty big portion of Phantom Fury. I don't want to take anything away from the Marines, but they were very quick to highlight their role. It was interesting that when President George W. Bush came down to 1st CAV and said, "1st CAV, first in Fallujah," a lot of guys didn't even know 1st CAV had even been there – and Jim Rainey's guys were the first guys going in.

MM: Was that on a trip the president made down to Fort Hood?

JM: Yes. He came down and gave a welcome home speech to our guys.

MM: Okay, sir. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

JM: No, I don't think so.

MM: Thank you for your time.

## **Colonel Michael Shupp**

### **25 March 2006**

MM: My name is Matt Matthews [MM] and I work for the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today is 25 March 2006 and I'm interviewing Colonel Michael Shupp [MS], United States Marine Corps, who commanded Regimental Combat Team 1 during Operation Phantom Fury. Sir, this interview is unclassified so if I ask any questions that go into that realm, just ignore them or tell me it's classified and you can't answer it. If I could just get some background on you. Where were you born? Where did you grow up? What did you do in the Marines up until the time of this operation? Your various assignments, that sort of thing.

MS: Okay, Matt. I was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I went to the Virginia Military Institute and graduated in 1981. Immediately upon graduation, I was commissioned into the Marine Corps. Upon commissioning, I became a track officer in the Marine Corps and initially went over to the 3d Marine Division where I was a track vehicle platoon commander. I was also an aide de camp for the assistant division commander during that tour. Went to the Marine Corps recruit depot and served as a series officer for two years and then became the assistant director for the drill instructor school. From there, I went to the Naval Academy. I was a company officer at the Naval Academy and was responsible for drill and instruction at the Naval Academy. I was a leadership instructor there as well. Once I finished up there, I went to Fort Knox for the Advanced Armor Course and the Cavalry Leaders Course and went to the 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion. I was a company commander there and took Alpha Company of Task Force Shepherd over to Kuwait for Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. Our company led the advance of the 1st Marine Division into Iraq with a light armored infantry unit acting as a cavalry force. We led the attacks through the Al Burqan oil fields and captured Kuwait International Airport. Upon return back to the States, I became the H&S [Headquarters and Service] Company commander. I then became the operations officer for the battalion and deployed the battalion to the riots of Los Angeles. We were there for about four weeks. I left that and went to program manager, light armored vehicle, and worked on the light armored vehicle program – particularly in the program selling LAVs to the Saudi Arabian National Guard, going back and forth to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I went to the Command and Staff College and then went to the School of Advanced Warfighting. From there, I went to II MEF [2d Marine Expeditionary Force] as an operational war planner. I did two major exercises – Strong Resolve and Battle Griffin – inside of Norway in the Arctic Circle. I was the plans officer for 26th MEU – Marine Expeditionary Unit – and went into Bosnia-Herzegovina as the NATO reinforcement on Dynamic Response. I was

also the Marine Corps ground planner for the land war in Kosovo. I worked on the special assessment team for the supreme allied commander, Europe. I worked humanitarian assistance operations through South and Central America for hurricane disasters that occurred down there at the time. From there, I went down to become the commander of 3d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion out at 29 Palms. I deployed as the ground combat commander for Bright Star where we were the aggressor force for all coalition forces while we were over there. I had a great time. We came back to the United States and continued to train at 29 Palms. Finished there and was selected for the Naval War College, but was pulled from that assignment to become the Marine liaison to the House of Representatives. So I worked on Capitol Hill with the House as the Marine Corps' point man there. Finished that assignment and was assigned to the 1st Marine Regiment. Now comes the story of joining Regimental Combat Team 1. I first went over to Iraq, joined the division, and was supposed to go through a break-in period where I learned the ins and outs of the assignment. I got over to Iraq at the end of May and my wife was diagnosed with cancer, so the Marine Corps sent me back home to help her. They were going to swap the assignment for the regiment with my good friend Larry Nicholson who was scheduled to take over 5th Marines. Sherrye went through a 70-day treatment and she beat cancer, so they sent me back to Iraq around September 9th. On the 14th, I went to Colonel Nicholson's change of command and, that night, the CP [Command Post] at Camp Fallujah was hit by an enemy 120 millimeter rocket. The next morning, the commanding general said, "Pack your bags, you're going up there to take command of your regiment." So I go back into the breach again to take over 1st Marines, and that put me in command of the regiment at that time – about September 15th.

MM: So you were not with the 1st Regimental Combat Team during the fight in April?

MS: No, I missed the first Battle of Fallujah. That was commanded by Colonel John Toolan. I came to see the aftermath of what was left over from that first battle.

MM: After the April fight, could you talk me through what kind of planning went into gearing up for the next assault in Fallujah and what you recall the first time anybody mentioned that you might receive an Army task force like 2-7?

MS: Beginning with the regiment: We lost our communications officer, Major Kevin Shea. He was promotable so he was posthumously promoted to lieutenant colonel, and Colonel Nicholson was severely wounded with a shoulder wound. The rocket went right into the regimental commander's CP. From my experience, in the June timeframe, the regiment and most of our forces were giving the Iraqi people a chance to resolve the differences inside of the Al Anbar province. And



most U.S. forces were concentrating on LOC [Line of Communications] security and on FOB [Forward Operating Base] security, but I believe that was a mistake because of the heavy enemy activity, the number of IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices] and the enemy's freedom of action at that time. The story of the injury of Colonel Nicholson reflects the situation. Camp Fallujah was regularly brought under indirect fire attack from the April timeframe until the end of September. It was not unusual to sustain casualties inside Camp Fallujah, and every time you left it was a tenuous situation on the roads – driving through Al Anbar Province. Fallujah itself was completely sealed off and no allied forces could get into the city. At the eastern approach to the city – at Traffic Control Point 1, later know as ECP 1 or Entry Control Point 1 – it was a World War I-like trench fortification with massive bunkers that had our forces inside there. We had an infantry platoon and a tank section in that position, and the enemy would come out on a daily basis to expend their strength against that position. Our tankers using their 120 millimeter “sniper rifles” were able to squash many of these squad-sized attacks, and our snipers also did a great job at taking these guys. But it was regular occurrences, every day, where they would come out to attack these forces at this traffic control point, at this static position. No vehicles could go in or out of that position. It was completely sealed off.

MM: Was that over on the east side?

MS: Yes.

MM: Was that where the cloverleaf was?

MS: It's about 200 meters west of the cloverleaf into the town. So you can see, at this point in time, that taking command is a tenuous situation. We're under indirect fire attack. I think it was about a week and a half after I took command when another rocket came into the CP complex and hit one of our outer perimeter walls, knocked the wall down and injured two Marines. So this was a pretty regular occurrence that we were getting attacked in this area. During this time, 3/5 came over and there was the exchange of 3/5 and 2-1. 3/5 was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Pat Malay, a very intelligent, very aggressive officer who began taking the fight to the enemy. I had an intelligence officer by the name of Lieutenant Colonel Dave Bellon and he told me, “Sir, if you can attack the enemy and not allow him three or four days to attack, you will prevent attacks against our forces.” And he had it right. No one else had it right except for him. If we could disrupt the enemy's planning and operation cycle, then we could control the battlespace. And that's exactly what we did. On 24 September was the first attack that went against the northeast corner of the town. It was a tank, infantry attack – a tank mounted attack. The infantry was nothing but security for the tankers. The tankers went into an attack by fire position on the northeast corner of the town. They attacked the

town with tank main guns to knock down key barriers and HESCO barriers that were the enemy's defenses on the outer portion of the city. We also started aggressively patrolling. We moved people out of their FOBs and started taking platoon and FOB positions in the countryside and controlling the countryside, versus allowing the enemy freedom of movement and action. So there was a big shift. The success we had stopped the indirect fire attack and stopped the attacks against our forces. It's important to point out that prior to my taking command, 2-1 was going through a RIP [Relief in Place] with 3/1's forces, and the enemy targeted one of their vehicles and killed about 11 people: American and Iraqi soldiers as they were moving across the battlespace on MSR [Main Supply Route] Mobil on the outside of town. These complex IED attacks, these indirect fire attacks, they all stopped – and it was almost as if the enemy was wondering what was happening, because the regiment started taking the fight to the enemy versus just being a punching bag. I think the success the regiment was gaining – because we didn't just stop with the 24 September attack. We continued to probe and attack the enemy's known positions around the entire city, and everything was directed against the northeast, the east and the southeast corners of the city: into the industrial area in the south of the city, the TCP [Traffic Control Point] area on the east side of the city, and the soda factory on the east side of the city. These attacks kept on going and this was part of the shaping. The success that we were gaining, division and MEF were glad it was happening because it was buying us freedom of action and the attacks against our forces were dropping. I think, as the election got nearer, it became evident that we had to stop what was in Fallujah, because as we would go to weekly security meetings, there was no progress. There was no progress with the Iraq security forces that were in that area, who were all Iraqi National Guard, and with the local police. The local police had no control over the city and the Iraqi National Guard were all traitors. They were all corrupt. You couldn't trust them as far as you could spit.

MM: And that was basically what was left over from that Fallujah Brigade?

MS: Yes. Another terrible failure was the Shawani Special Forces that were formed up. A great deal of effort was put into those forces and they were paid an exorbitant amount of money. They thought they were former reconnaissance forces, that they would provide us some inroads, but that was a complete and total failure. As Fallujah would come about, very few of them would go into the fight and support the efforts. Most of them took their last paycheck and ran home or abandoned their positions. There were very few that stayed with us. Out of all the Iraqi National Guard forces in the area, only one company fought inside the city and fought valiantly: the one led by Major Ouda at the time, out of India Base on the outskirts of Nasser wa Salam. The rest of them were broken. They weren't even in the fight. They didn't even take part. So now the September/October timeframe is coming and I'm intensifying the attacks, and we're also running illumination attacks over

the city. We're also running sound bomb attacks over the city: fast movers going supersonic over the city to disrupt the enemy's activities inside there. We're watching the whole city with unmanned aerial vehicles and our reconnaissance efforts, and we're getting great intelligence. Every time we probed the enemy we could see the enemy reacting in the city. So intel was driven by shaping operations. On the outskirts – Karmah, Nasser wa Salam, Zaydon, Saqlawiyah – all these towns on the outside perimeter were now quiet because the enemy was retracting versus going out to the countryside to attack us. I believe it was the middle of October when we received the instructions to start planning for the attack on Fallujah. We went into the Marine Corps planning process: the system all of us have learned, whether it be at Advanced Armor, whether it be at Command and Staff College, whether it be at SAW, whether it be on a joint operation – right down to the rehearsal of concept drills that we worked into the whole play. During this planning phase, we saw that we needed more combat power to thwart the enemy and their defenses. We didn't have enough heavy armor to go in there with us, nor were there enough Iraqi forces with us. So I was told about two weeks prior that I would get 2d Battalion of the 7th Cavalry Regiment to come with us.

MM: Had you worked with them before?

MS: I had not. I had heard, though, that they had been in the battle of An Najaf, that they worked really well with the Marines down there, and that it was a very good unit.

MM: Could you kind of walk me through the first time you met with these Army people, and had you worked with anybody in the Army before during combat operations?

MS: Not in combat. My experiences with the Army have been down at Fort Knox going through the Advanced Armor Course and Cav Leader Course, and my experience at the Tank and Automotive Command working with the Army at those posts. There's also my experience at the School of Advanced Warfighting and my experiences at SACEUR for the Kosovo planning efforts, for both EUCOM [U.S. European Command] and SACEUR, working with the Army planners there. The first time we met members of 2-7 was with their S3, Major Tim Karcher. Great officer. This is another very, very courageous officer. He was either fighting or planning the whole time he was over there, and he was in the middle of the city the whole time. Karcher came to our CP to meet Lieutenant Colonel Chet Chessani, my operations officer, and also to meet the rest of the staff. Lieutenant Colonel Jim Rainey could not break free at the time, so Karcher was brought into the planning immediately. We were going through mission analysis. When we left the planning session, we were in course of action development and we were asking for contributions from all of our subordinate commands as the planners got together and

planned. The big thing that happened is that the Army soldiers wanted to take off a very large portion of the city. Their plan was to go from the western side of the city almost over to Route Henry, and it was just too large an area to take. But the Army was concerned that their tanks have avenues to attack down and, as the planning sessions were going on, we were getting pressure from division to do a single-axis penetration. As you start to study the problem, you realize that you really can't do this inside of the city. But the ground we were given on the Sichur Road on the east side of the train station over to the west side of the city – that only provides you one avenue of approach. That was April that came down from Route Gold all the way down across the north of the city. We knew the enemy was in a strong defensive position on the northwest portion of the town, at the railroad track position, and on the north portion of the town. Do you recall that I told you about the tank attack on the northeast corner of the town?

MM: Yes.

MS: When we did that tank attack – imagine the Olympics when they show those pictures of the crowds with the flashing cameras. With our NVGs [Night Vision Goggles] on, the whole city was lit up with those flash bulbs, but the flash bulbs were actually small arms fire coming against our forces. So there was that heavy of a defensive position on the north and east portion of the city. We were really constrained by the problem. We knew that the heart of the insurgency was inside of the Jolan District; we knew that the regiment was given the main effort; but how were we going to penetrate into the city and get off that single road that came under the train track, under the overpass, and get into the city? The overpass coming into the city was only the width of a single tank. We were really in a quandary. So I got Captain Bodisch, my tank company commander, and I said, "I need to do a recon to the east side of the railroad station, go in there and see if I can get tanks, tracks and vehicles across these railroad tracks on the west side of the train station." If you can imagine it, the train station is relatively flat ground for 100 to 200 meters on each side of the train station, along the track. But as it continues to go to the west and the east, the track rises on a berm that rises to about 30 feet where the overpass is and continues to rise as you go past that. On the other side of the train station – on the east side – is the area where 7th Marines was to launch their attack and come into the east side of the city. So I was constrained with only that one road, the overpass, and the tanks having to go somewhere on the west side of the train station. So we went and did an armed recon with our tanks.

MM: Did you have a whole company of Marine tanks?

MS: I had two companies of tanks and one company would fight with us. That was Bravo Company, 2d Tank, under Captain Bodisch. The other tank company would go out to 7th Marines. Our tanks were split between each of the infantry bat-

talions and they did a tremendous job. They fired over 3,000 rounds into the city. They were just as heavily engaged as the lead elements of 2-7, and 2-7 had a very distinct mission versus the infantry mission. We'll get to that in a little bit. The tank recon – although we came under heavy small arms fire and under mortar fire – allowed us to see enemy positions. They had dug in fortified positions near the cemetery on the northwest side of the city, and we could see that we could get over the top of these tracks. So when we came back to our planning, we said, “Okay, when we get into the city, we have to have 2-7 penetrate to the west side of the tracks and come down, but we have to prep the battlefield for 2-7's advance into the city.” The whole time, Karcher and 2-7 are working like they had been with us all the time. I can't stress enough to you that these guys were incredible, with everything from their language to their morale to their attitude, just fit in perfectly with the Marine Regiment. They were just part of the team. There were no differences. They were complete professionals, and I think a lot of that was established by Jim Rainey when he came down. Very aggressive, very good officers, knew their craft, and were prepared to go into combat and do the right thing. So as we continued on with the planning, we finally realized that we would have 3/5 Marines come from the west side of the city. They would attack the apartment complexes to establish attack by fire positions during the course of the day and prep us for that night's action, which would begin at 1900. A few weeks before the attack, we were receiving 2-7 and they were moving into Camp Fallujah. They took some casualties from an indirect fire attack, but they were going out into our AO. Because of our previous attacks against the enemy, we had freedom of action, so they were not experiencing constant indirect fire attacks. This was just an isolated incident where they happened to get hit with indirect fire. In fact, the soldier was in a protective shelter where a piece of shrapnel came in laterally. Talk about a million to one shot, but it did take his life.

MM: Was that a mortar attack or was it a rocket attack?

MS: I believe it was a rocket attack that came in, but I'd have to go back at the history and look. It's been quite some time now. 2-7 had freedom of action to go north of the town and conduct the recon of their attack positions and also their routes that would lead them up to the penetration point. They were very confident about that. We also had force recon doing some snooping and pooping and going into the outskirts of the city. They found out that that road from the underpass all the way down April was heavily IED'd. They identified 12 spots where there were IEDs, going into the enemy's defensive positions. I think it's worth mentioning as well that we had the Iraqi security forces joined with us too. I think about seven days prior to the battle, I got told I was getting two battalions of the Iraqi Army. I was like, “Oh, great, what next?” because my experience with the Iraqi National Guard had been terrible. Anyway, we bring these guys into the east Fallujah Iraqi

camp and my first task is to greet every one of them. They want to get over there, but the camps are not prepared to receive them. They don't have tents up, the showers aren't up, there's no food contract. It's pretty abysmal. They don't have enough head facilities. It's ragtag at this point. But in the course of 24 to 48 hours, everything's put up and we're back in action. Talking to the Iraqis, I could tell that the two battalions were very scared about what was going to happen. So we put them through classes – small arms firing, first aid – because they had no medical support and they had no corpsmen with them or medical kits. Law of land warfare, rules of engagement, house clearing. We took them to our shooting houses down at India Base, let them fire down there, and really let them build their confidence up. We gave them friendly fire recognition; we talked to them about our surface danger zones, how the effects of weapons carry over and friendly fire. So we had some very good classes that were taught by all of our Marines, and I think the Iraqis were taking to it. We started to involve them in the planning, but they were not involved in any of the decisions. They were just in the receive mode, and they were in the last-minute receive mode, because we didn't know if they would compromise the plan. I had to give them missions that were within their capability. They had no transport per se, except for unarmored vehicles, just trucks. I didn't know what their fighting capabilities were outside of knowing that they could probably perform at the fire team and squad level.

MM: Were these guys having Marine or Army advisors with them?

MS: They had Army advisor teams with them. So not only was I getting two battalions, but I was also getting an Iraqi brigade and, by the way, the division headquarters was going to be staying with those guys too, so they would be visiting from time to time. The 7th of November comes up and we're getting into it; we're going to go into this battle. Our guys using UAVs and our shaping operations have really gotten the enemy in a tizzy: they don't know if they're coming or going. The PSYOP [Psychological Operations] and information ops have got everybody out of the city. Then the last week before, we had checkpoints all around the city to screen people to see if there was any of the enemy getting out. All the forces have moved into the Camp Fallujah area and we received permission to shut down all the highways, so nothing is coming in or out of the area on Routes Michigan and Mobil. On the 7th, I sent Task Force 3d LAR [Light Armored Reconnaissance], Task Force Wolfpack, with elements from the Army – I think it was 1-501st [Parachute Infantry Regiment] from Ramadi, and they had a company of Bradleys, mech infantry, and an engineer platoon. Their mission was to go up the peninsula on the west side of the city and seal the peninsula, capture the bridgeheads, capture the Iraqi National Guard headquarters right at the Fallujah Bridge and capture the Fallujah General Hospital – and they did a brilliant job of it. In fact, 36th Com-mando was with them, and they went and captured the hospital without incident.

Very light casualties, but the enemy had seen us on the side and they were starting to engage us with harassing fires, nothing very accurate. But once fired upon, my Marines now have the ability to fire back at them. With our long range guns, the LAVs and the Bradleys, they're just ripping apart the enemy on that side of the city in these buildings. The engineers have bulldozed berms on the western bridges, had put out tetrahedrons and concertina wire, and with loudspeakers they're telling any people that are left to move to the south to escape the oncoming attacks. So the enemy is fixed to the west and focusing on their action. Now, in the first Battle of Fallujah, we knew they used the river to go and bring in reinforcements and to bring people in and out of the city, so we had a Small Craft Company on the northwest approach of the river, just west of the sea grass islands. It looks like little islands on the northwest portion of the city. I don't know if you can see it on the map.

MM: Yes, I can see it on the map here.

MS: But Small Craft Company could not make the bend, because if they made the bend, they would be under small arms fire from the city. So they had to stay on the outskirts. It worked like a charm, though, because now the enemy is focused hard to the west and they're engaging our forces, but we're starting to rip them to pieces with our accurate fire.

MM: They have to think now, I guess, that the main attack is maybe going to come from that direction.

MS: Correct, across the bridgeheads. On the 8th, Pat Malay's 3/5 seized the apartment complexes on the northwest corner of the city, north of the overpass. There were about 300 people in there. They were cleared out and taken by trucks out to Saqlawiyah, given 300 dollars, food, water and medical support, and then they left and went to their families. They were all screened for gunpowder residue to see if any enemy were in this group as well. We sent EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] through the buildings to make sure they weren't charged, and then we went in and took command of the buildings and set up our CPs inside. My regimental CP and 3/5's CP were set inside those buildings. We knew we could not get into that city down that road I told you about. So at 1400, we dropped eight 2,000-pound bombs on that railroad berm and cut two lanes through it.

MM: Were those Marine aircraft that did that?

MS: Yes. And with our D9 bulldozers, we cut two holes through it, so the enemy has no idea what's going on except huge explosions about a mile outside the city. Everybody's in their attack positions – even the Iraqis are in their attack positions – so we're all looking pretty good. 7th Marines coming from the west, they're chomping at the bit to go into the attack; and you know something, that's pretty

good for us because that's part of the deception. At 1900, 7th Marines launch their attack and I send 3/1 and India Company of the Iraqi National Guard, with Major Ouda, to seize the train station. Major Ouda and 3/1 seize the train station and they fight small resistance in there – probably platoon level. They take the train station on the north side of the city. What this gives us is the protection our Marine engineers need to bring line charges up and send MCLCs [Mine Clearing Line Charge] to open up that field on the north side of the city, because we know it's mined. The Marine engineers go up and they fire the MCLCs in two lanes and opened it up for 2-7. However, the tracks have to be cut, because the vehicles were getting stuck in the railroad tracks. So the engineers take eight charges – one-pound sticks of TNT – and blow up the railroad tracks: four across the top, four across the bottom, and then push that aside – now they have lanes. So we have a delay there, but it's not bad because my tactical air control parties inside my infantry companies are at the train station. The enemy is firing at them and we're putting deadly fire into their positions with precision air that's coming in to strike them. At the same time, the AC-130s are working over Route Henry that 2-7 is going to go down. Henry is the main north/south road that runs through the middle of the city. That was 2-7's primary route, but they also had another route to the west of that. That was sort of our compromise, that they would go down multiple routes. We found out with our reconnaissance and our intelligence that they would be supportable for tank movement down there, more than just one in a single point attack. We couldn't afford to have the tanks go down one tank at a time. If the enemy takes out the lead tank, we're done. So the AC-130s are working over these routes and any vehicle in the street was being destroyed. Any planter in the street was being destroyed by AC-130 fire. Any garbage pile was being destroyed – anything that Iraqis don't normally have outside of their home. For example, Iraqis don't normally park their cars outside on the street; they park them within their privacy walls. As they were destroying these vehicles, there was a lot more than just vehicles out on that road. There were large VBIEDs [Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices] that the enemy had placed out there, but now the AC-130 is cutting a path through it. As you know, I had a very elaborate command post at Camp Fallujah with good UAV visibility of the city, and we templated out the enemy's routes of advance. We had the attack from the west, so the enemy is focused there. 7th Marines are attacking now, so now the enemy is focused to the east. They're focused to the west to the bridges and now they're focused to the northeast portion of the city, an area that we constantly built up to try and attack. 3/5 goes through those 2,000-pound cuts and they start working from the west to the east across the north of the city. This is an area the enemy never expects anyone to attack in, and they are having tremendous success. I could see the IR marks on their vehicles from the apartment complex as I'm watching the battle. They are reaching their initial objectives and we're not having any serious fighting. They're getting into the city. The enemy is displacing



now, but I think the enemy is focused on the bridge sites and to the northeast now. Actually, I think the delays that occurred with the breaching are actually helping us. Although we're coming under small fire and indirect fire at those points, it's setting the stage and opening up a gap on Henry with the enemy focused to the east and to the west, and the center of the city is being exposed. That's where 2-7 goes into the city. 2-7 does an incredible job going down to their objective, which was Regimental Combat Team Objective 1, which was Jolan Park. They just work over that road going down there. Jim Rainey and his company commanders are having a field day, because the enemy is coming out on the north side of the city and the streets run on a north/south orientation. Jim's vehicles were in there so fast that he completely disrupted the enemy's defenses and they have no infantry to blow these IEDs. They're facing Abrams and Bradleys with lethal fire inside the city. Now, as Jim enters the city, the infantry battalion becomes bogged down from a vehicle accident and a Marine was pinned underneath a vehicle.

MM: Was that 3/1 or 3/5?

MS: 3/1. Their mission was to flow behind 2-7 after they entered the city and follow right on their tail to provide them infantry support and start clearing the enemy right behind the penetration. So 2-7 was to break up the enemy's defenses and allow 3/1 to penetrate into the crust of the enemy and get behind their IED belts to move out from that point on. My instructions to 3/1 were to kill everything squad size and larger. Do not get bogged down, stay with the tankers, provide them the infantry support they need, stay hand in hand with them, and make sure you continue to advance through the city, because speed is on our side. We'll clean the city after we get done with our attacks. At the end of the first day, 2-7 had captured the Jolan Park and 3/1 is at the pivot point on Kathy ready to go to the river to strike into the heart of the Jolan. 2-7 can't go west because the roads are so narrow and tight, so it's an infantry fight; and the fight that's going to occur is going to be infantry supported with Captain Bodisch's tanks from Bravo Company, 2d Tank. 3/5 came from the west across the top of the city and reached the cemetery. The mosque on the eastern side of the cemetery was their objective. When they got there and 3/1 entered the city, both forces were to attack south at that point, and the middle of the night/daylight time is when those attacks are starting to go into the south. So by sometime that morning, Jim has gotten that mile into the city at the outskirts of the Jolan Park, but he is starting to face enemy resistance along the perimeter on these outskirts. He's taking heavy RPG [Rocket-Propelled Grenade] and small arms fire. I know I'm not hitting everything, but I'm giving you the broad aspects of the battle.

MM: This is fantastic.

MS: With Jim in this position, we get together and talk and we're just shocked at the success we're having. The infantry is facing a lot of fighting, but there are no battalion-level defenses. The defenses we're finding are platoon-level defenses or IED belts. The enemy is trying to attrit us, but they're not stopping our assaults and our infantry is able to clean out the heavy pockets of resistance. 3/5 is just chomping at the bit coming down the river road, and if I wanted them to, they could have gone past Kathy and gone onto the Old Fallujah Bridge. At this point, we needed to continue our southward movement. We have 3/1 in the center of the city on Kathy and prepared to attack to the west. 3/5 is attacking north to south, held up at Kathy and consolidating their defenses inside their area of operation. 2-7 oriented to the south, southwest. God bless them, 4th Battalion, Iraqi Army did a great job. We gave them a mission within their capabilities. I came back off the attack, got with them, and told them they were going into the city to provide line of communications security for the advancing forces. Jim Rainey gave us a mechanized infantry company and they were on that north/south road from April all the way down to the Jolan Park. The Iraqi Forces went in there. My concern was, as 7th Marines starts their attack, I know 7th Marines isn't going to be able to control all the enemy, and I don't want the enemy coming into my flank from the east. So we berm up Henry's east side, and the Bradleys and the Iraqi forces put obstacles on every alleyway and street to prevent an east/west movement of enemy forces. Any military-age males we're finding in the city we are arresting. We're only finding handfuls of people, and those civilians are being evacuated with our casualties: the males to the prisons to be interrogated by intelligence, to find out whether they're enemy or not; and the women, children and the elderly men were being allowed to go to their families in the outlying communities.

MM: Were you walking them straight north and out of town past the railroad station?

MS: We're sending them up to April and then Marine trucks from my logistics battalion are taking them out. They're being left off at Saqlawiyah and it's working like a charm, but I don't have that many that I'm moving. Total prisoners we captured during the course of this was over 2,000. Estimated killed inside the city was about 2,000. We'll never know the exact truth because many of the buildings were destroyed inside the city. But now the Iraqi forces, reinforced with those Bradleys on Henry, are incredible. They're getting confident, and they know that the Bradleys are going to be there with them and support them in the fight. They know they're not there on their own. They know the Marines are right there with them. The Marines are doing the heavy lifting and they have a mission that's very important to keep these routes open – and we're all visiting and encouraging the troops. Everybody from Jim, Karcher, myself, the company commanders, the Marine battalion commanders: we're all building them up and trying to help them in this, and

they're doing a great job. I've got to take my hat off to them. I really admire them. 2-7 went through the north portion of the city. 3/1 went through the north portion of the city. But I gave a very small, isolated block to 1st Battalion and told them to do very detailed searches of these homes and search out the enemy. They had advisors with them, and I'd taken some of my Marine officers and put them with them as well. I've made a training team to put with them and they're doing a great job. They're finding large numbers of caches of weapons and ammunition inside the city. Unbelievable amounts. Tractor-trailer loads inside of the city. The Iraqi forces are in missions that they could bite off and they're being successful. We'll return to them as we get to the next portion of the battle. During the night, 3/1 plans their infantry attacks and they start their attack. In a steady movement, they make it all the way across to the Al Qabr Mosque along the riverbank. We find huge enemy squad positions and huge caches that we're relentlessly going through. 3/1 is taking the bulk of the casualties right now. They must have had 20 to 30 killed in action and many wounded.

MM: Just in that first 48 hours?

MS: Yes, because of this heavy fighting they're going through. 2-7 continues to push south down towards Fran and Elizabeth, and we were concerned about the height of these tall buildings, that the enemy would use them. But the enemy was never prepared for the level of attack that they're facing and we're able to reach Fran and Elizabeth. So my instructions to Jim were to keep enemy forces from reinforcing from the south and from the southeast. Guard the bridgeheads and 3/1 will continue to work across the city, but make sure that enemy forces don't attack up towards us. We're in such a tight area that, at night, 2-7's tankers are able to pull back into 3/1's outer defenses. Jim's battalion is along that north/south line of communication and they're integrated on the south/southeast with 3/1 for night security. His battalion headquarters is in the north of the city in a cement factory. His battalion aid station is co-located with 3/1's battalion aid station at the train station, and the Army armored MEDEVACs are a godsend on the battlefield because in the Marine Corps we don't have any armored evacuation. These '115s are taking care of our Marines and they're doing a magnificent job. The other thing the Army brought to us was 120 millimeter mortars. Our 60 and 80 millimeter mortars are great to go ahead and attack the enemy out in the open and hit him on the rooftops, but our Marines found out that when you take an Army 120 millimeter mortar and drop it on the top of a building, it's dropping a floor.

MM: Were you using LRAS [Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System] for your indirect fire missions or were these just eyeball sightings?

MS: These were visual call for fire missions with our forward observers. But remember, every building in the city is numbered and all of us have GPSs [Global

Positioning System], so these were extremely accurate. The Marines considered these one of the most accurate weapons on the battlefield and absolutely essential to our success. We went through three combat loads of 120 millimeter ammunition. We had to do an emergency resupply of the ammunition for the 120s, that's how effective they were inside the city.

MM: But you also had a battery of 155s, correct?

MS: My 155s fired over 4,000 rounds inside the city. Mike Battery 314 was great, but because of the urban structures, artillery didn't always work, so you had to use something different. The mortars were on the north side of the city, so their axis of attack was a better axis than the artillery battery had, which was coming from the east. So they worked out like a charm. The enemy came out and expended a lot of his strength. Jim chewed them up and was able to kill them with his main guns, with his .50s, with his 25 millimeters and with his TOWs [Tube-launched Optically-tracked Wire-guided missiles], but we're having detailed house-clearing fights. We have to clear every house. But I can't clear every house. My bypass criteria have to stand because of the speed to take the city. All of a sudden, we have all of our objectives for RCT-1. If you recall on the maps, the original plan was that RCT-7 was supposed to come from the northeast, cut diagonally across the city and go to the southwest portion of the city. I can't tell you how happy we were with Jim Rainey and 2-7. These guys are fighters. These are the best soldiers I've ever seen in my life, and I'll tell you it was just an honor to have them with us. They were adjusting to the battlefield just as quickly as we were. You know, we all had our plan, and we expected the battle to go a certain way, but every one of us accepts the fact that things are going to change. None of us, however, expected it would change this quickly. None of us expected the fighting to be this desperate for these buildings, and Jim was right there with us. And the Marines – 3/1 and 3/5 – along with 2-7 were able to adjust and work as a team so seamlessly that it almost looked as if they'd been doing tank infantry training the entire time they'd been together – and they'd only been together like 10 days. I've got to attribute this to Captain Bodisch. Prior to the attacks, we had a little school where we ran tank/infantry integration training, and everybody went through it. So he was actually giving everybody a refresher course on tank/infantry ops. General [Richard] Natonski is coming into the city every day to visit us and he was just great. One of the things I needed to do was keep him away from the front of the fight, because the last thing I wanted to do was see him get injured. But he was right there in the midst of it. There was this mosque on Henry in the middle of the city and we all had a meeting there. The general said that the 7th Marines had just about reached their objectives on Michigan – the east/west road – and they're going very slowly. We've all been talking about this and we said, "Hey, we're already at our objectives. We should just keep on going." So, on the side, we'd talked about keeping Jim Rainey with us.

We're at this mosque and there's a couple of dead enemy fighters on the grounds of this mosque in the courtyard. The enemy snipers are shooting at the minaret over us and we're getting hit with tiles on the tops of our helmets. General Natonski says to Jim Rainey: "I want you to go to 7th Marines." And Jim says, "I'd rather stay with 1st Marines. I'd rather stay with Inchon." So the general looks at me and says, "Could you keep on going to the south of the city?" I said, "Absolutely, sir, but we need Jim Rainey to stay with us." So we get together and come up with a plan for us to go straight down Henry and Jim would lead the advance again. What worked once is going to work again. And because of the positioning, 3/1 is at the line of departure, which is Fran.

MM: Fran is actually Highway 10.

MS: Right. Although 3/5 didn't have the heaviest fighting, they're positioned in the north portion of the city; and although 3/1 had taken 20 or so casualties, they still have to keep on going. They have to go to the infantry attack to get this through, because we can't do a passage of line or we're going to lose time. So all night long, Lieutenant Colonel Willy Buhl goes and coordinates his supplies and resupplies and gets his men ready to attack. They're dead tired. I'm losing track of days now, but I think it might be three or four days into the battle now.

MM: November 11th, I think.

MS: Yes. That's the Marine Corps' birthday. This is before we've taken over the city center. We looked at the city, and if you look at the southwest portion of the city, you'll see that the Nasal District Street runs along a north/south axis, then it goes east/west axis, then it goes north/south axis, and then east/west axis. It alternates down the city. The city planners must have been on crack. They go back and forth. So the avenues of long range fire for tanks are initially north/south, but very narrow streets. Then, the orientation changes and the city blocks go east/west. So what Jim has to do is attack with his tankers, thrust down once, pull back, go down Henry, thrust east/west against the enemy, come back, go south down Henry, then go north/south, then pull back, then come down to Henry and then go east/west. There's no way there's going to be another penetration there, and we know that you can't. We're also finding out that in the night fight, even with our optics, at close quarters like this, it's almost negated. You're in a room 10 feet apart from a person and the first guy to get his finger on the trigger is going to win. The infantry attack had to have tactical patience. We couldn't just go into the attack. We had to wait at least until the beginning of morning nautical twilight before we could really launch those infantry attacks in earnest, or they would be just groping in the dark. They would have to go through every building and we'd lose our speed. So Jim worked every position: north, south, east, and west. He worked it like a champ and he kept his line of communication on Henry open. 3/1 is staged on Fran to make

their attack, daylight comes, and for some reason 3/1 is not moving, and they're not moving because they're still resupplying. So we moved the regimental CP down there for the second time – we had to move at the train station and now we have to move them to the middle of the city to get them moving again. We finally get out on the street and Kilo Company from 3/1 is stalled. They're stalled because, on the lines of communication, one of the tank companies is involved in a firefight with a mosque that's firing at them on the side and the Marines are afraid to put fire into them for fear of hitting our forces. So I get the company commander and I tell him, "Go knock on that Bradley with a brick and tell those Bradleys to talk to the other Bradleys down the street. Tell him to turn his guns and fire up that mosque because he's getting fired on, and that will clear this approach for you." So he goes and does it in the middle of the battle, bangs on the vehicle: "Hey, fire that up! Tell those guys down there." Those guys go and shift the orientation of their guns and totally take out the enemy position in the mosque – and the green light is on for 3/1. They make their movement and get through Nasal with no problem. They make it through the next step, no problem, but then they come to the last mile of the city. The enemy had realized sometime during the course of the night that if they come out and face the tankers, they're going to die. So the enemy hunkers down inside these buildings and the game plan begins to unfold: they take out two or three Marines in the building, kill the other Marines that try to come in and rescue them, and then kill as many of the Marines as they can. We're finding the enemy with tourniquets on their arms; we're finding syringes of Novocaine and adrenaline around enemy positions – so these guys are fighting to the death.

MM: Did you have any indication at this point whether these looked like any foreign fighter types to you? Was anyone able to tell?

MS: I've got to tell you, there's no way for me to tell whether a guy was a foreign fighter or not. He was just a fighter to me, but we were starting to see some signs of foreign fighters in the city. My interpreter was a Kurd and he was noticing their dress, facial appearance, their dialects, the stories they're giving when we're interrogating some of them. We killed like six of them trying to escape with weapons on beach balls in the middle of the river, and they had plastic bags with their Syrian passports in it. So we're finding these squad- and platoon-sized cells but they're not all foreign fighters. It's one or two and the rest are Iraqis. We're finding these foreign fighters, eventually, who don't know where the hell they are. They don't even know what city they're in – at least that's what they're telling us. They were dropped off in the middle of the night, they came across the border, this is where they were told they're going to fight, this is where they're going to kill Americans. So Jim's vehicles are on that north/south road right now and the infantry is having to do the fight inside the city with Captain Bodisch and his tankers. Jim is providing supporting fires at every opportunity he possibly can, but he's

keeping the enemy from coming from the east over into our zone, and the good old 4th Battalion of the Iraqi Army said, "Sir, we're ready to do the rest of the street." So they came all the way to the south of the city and they are blocking those roads and keeping the enemy out. They're getting into constant firefights everyday – killing the enemy – but there are casualties to our Army forces or to our Iraqi forces on that route there. They're having great success. We're having some casualties, but nothing serious at this point. The last portion of it was India Company, 3/1 and they needed bulldozers to kill the enemy, because in every one of these buildings were mouse holes. If you entered into the doorway, you would face mouse holes facing from every aspect of the room – from the overhead, from the back, from the sides – all focused into the central room that you went into. So it was a kill zone and you just weren't getting out. If we could locate the enemy – if they revealed themselves – then we could do dynamic breaches into these buildings: blow the doors, get a track or a tank and punch through it, use the tank or track to get to the second or third story, and start the assault from the top down. The enemy has also dug rat holes from one building through to another – and remember, all the buildings are covered with privacy walls all the way around them, so they're able to move from one building to the next. They've adjusted and found out that if they stay for more than 30 minutes fighting the Americans, then the Americans are coming in and they're going to drop the building. So they're moving to the next building or they're coming back after the building has been cleared. So 3/1, in desperate house to house fighting, finally clears the bottom of the city. We have 2-7 along my line of communication, 3d LAR on the bridgeheads on the west side, 3/5 has moved all the way down to Fran – so they have the northeast portion. 1st Battalion is asking for more areas to clear and I'm working them west to east and constantly expanding their search zones. We're starting to do our reconsolidation inside this area. 3/5 has started a thing called Task Force Bruno. I don't know if you've heard about this.

MM: No, I haven't.

MS: Task Force Bruno was led by their XO, Silver Star winner Major Todd Desgrosseilliers. He put together engineers, H&S Company Marines, and some infantry that he was able to scrounge up and they make an ad hoc task force that starts clearing district by district. But as we clear these areas, we're putting screens around them. We're marking the buildings and we're creating screens. We have the river on the west, so the enemy can't get in, and we have the north/south approach. As the Marines come by, we're holding our positions each night. We called it the squeegee. So we're clearing house by house, building by building. In many of these houses, the ammunition is so big that you would need a tractor-trailer to move it – or it would be too dangerous to move. We found over 800 caches inside the city, over 160 improvised explosive devices, and this clearing continues systematically

through all the districts. If our forces advanced through it in the assault, we considered that a yellow clearing. If we did a detailed house to house search, that was a green clearing, and we constantly expanded our screens and our zones every day to keep clearing the enemy and driving him to the south, driving him out of our areas of operation. So 2-7 is on that north/south approach. The southern portion of the city is sealed off. 3/1 is in that area; in the north, it's 3/5; Task Force Bruno is working through the north; 3/1 is starting to go back in by company through their zones in the same methodical clearing; and Task Force Wolfpack comes across the bridges and links up with our forces. We do the old bridge first and then we do the new bridge. The old bridge was just 3/5. I know you've probably heard about the writings on the bridge.

MM: Right. I think I saw that in the Bing West book, *No True Glory*.

MS: I don't think he really talks about the truth of what's really on that bridge. According to our interpreters, in Arabic it said: "Fallujah will be the downfall of the United States and the death of the Marines." On the other side of the bridge is where 3/5 put their little epithet that said, "This bridge is dedicated to the Blackwater employees who gave their lives for freedom. Semper Fi, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines." And underneath it was an expletive. We blacked out the expletive because we knew that everybody and their sister was going to take pictures of it.

MM: Were you the ones that blacked that out?

MS: It was sort of like, "Hey, we need to clean that up," and the Marines did that on their own. The Marines knew what was at stake. They knew everybody was going to come to that bridge. They knew the significance of that bridge and that it was no longer an obstacle to anyone coming into the city. That bridge now represented freedom in that portion of the city. So there was none of the theatrics that Bing West brought into it. Bing West didn't spend any time in the city at all. He spent maybe an hour with the commanders on the outskirts of the city at the beginning of the fight, realized how busy all of us were and left us.

MM: I always ask everyone I interview, "What did you think of his book?" and I don't think anybody has had anything good to say about it.

MS: It's terrible because the true heroes of that fight were not mentioned. They're all my sons, and 2-7 was incredible. No one can ever take that away from them. We could not have had that success if it wasn't for that Army battalion: their mortars, their maintenance, their fighting capability inside that city. I think they felt the same way, that they could have never cleared those buildings unless they had Marine infantry with them to go in and do it. No one did it better than Marine infantry. So at night, when those tankers shut down and knew there was Marine infantry around, they felt like a million bucks. I don't think you could have made



a better team. People talk about this joint business? You have it in this fight. AC-130s up above us, firing and clearing paths for us, keeping the enemy busy all through the night, stopping their reinforcing actions, and hitting them as they're in their defensive positions as they uncover. Army soldiers leading the armor penetrations to disrupt the enemy's defenses. Marines giving the assault. Some of the finest assault troops you'll ever find on the face of the Earth. Joint snipers and Special Operations Forces working their sniper teams down to the company level. We had snipers at every company level. All these SOF guys were just binging the enemy.

MM: I've been trying to search through Marine/Army joint history and, as far as I can find, this seems to be the zenith, perhaps, of Army battalions and Marine battalions actually working side by side.

MS: I think it was. All the schools we have – sending Marines to Army schools, sending soldiers to Marine schools – I think all of it's paying off because they all speak the same language and they all do one thing: they know how to fight. It was good to see. There were no differences in language. There was none of the other BS. Those guys were part of Inchon. 2-7 loved it and every Marine out there loved having them with us too, because we knew what special capabilities they were bringing to the fight. It was just a great mix. The new bridge – I didn't feel easy about it. I sent two EOD teams across it and they all came back sort of bad. I finally sent the dogs across it and the dogs uncovered all kinds of explosives. We found 12 to 16 IEDs across that bridge. They were buried in the pavement and put in the light poles with wires going into the palm groves on the south side of the city. At that point, as we're getting in towards about a week or two after the main portion of the battle is over, Jim Rainey and 2-7 went and pulled back to go on to other missions, and that was the last we saw of them. I went back to their awards ceremony just before we rotated out and it was quite an honor for me to see those soldiers decorated. Every one of those awards was well deserved.

MM: I talked to an E-7 who was one of the Bradley platoon sergeants and he said he actually had two Marine engineer corporals in his Bradley and I was trying to work something up on that. That has to be the epitome of joint right there.

MS: What I think it was, Matt, was just ad hoc arrangements between the commanders. "You need engineers? Okay, no problem, we'll give them to you. Throw 'em in the back." But we did not task organize down to that level. I gave my battalion commanders latitude, and I'm sure as the fight developed they said, "Hey, you need engineers to do some of the explosive work as well."

MM: Yeah, he said that these Marines spent the whole fight in his Bradley and they came in handy a couple times by blowing up some walls for them. He also said that on the Marine Corps' birthday, they actually produced some beer.

MS: I don't know how they got it into the city, because they weren't supposed to have it in the cities. There was no alcohol in the cities. Every Marine and every soldier that was part of the 1st Marine Division was given two cans of beer and two little containers of rum to celebrate the Marine Corps' birthday. We celebrated our birthday in the apartment complex on the north side of the city. We read the lineage of the regiment over the command TAC 1, read the commandant's message and General Lejeune's message, and toasted all those Marines past and present.

MM: Did you have any problems at all with the embedded press?

MS: Absolutely not. My experience with the Gulf War was really good with the press. I got nothing to hide from them. My guys are the good guys, and I want them to tell the story of my Marines and my soldiers. The press rode closely with us. Some of them got hurt with us. They lived every day in the field with us, and I just told my Marines and my soldiers to tell the truth. "You don't have anything to hide. You don't have anything to be ashamed of. Treat everybody with firmness, fairness, dignity and respect." That was one of our battle cries over there. "Let the whole world see what you're doing. You're the good guys. Set the example for the rest of the world." I think they did a great job of it.

MM: What about communications? I've been told that you guys had a special intel system – kind of a chat network – which maybe not all of the Army guys were tied into.

MS: We had NIPRNET [Non-Secure Internet Protocol Router Network] and SIPRNET [Secret Internet Protocol Router Network] challenges that we had to work through on the battlefield to exchange data and to exchange emails, but believe it or not, there were many times I could not reach Jim because of VHF problems, but I could email with him. "Ghost 6 this is Inchon 6." And we would be able to exchange emails and talk to each other. Either Karcher and myself or Jim Rainey were able to talk on the Internet without any problem. There were some problems with the fills since we were working off different fill devices, but that was something that was easily overcome. We just needed to let our S6 work those problems out for us, but it was never a showstopper.

MM: Was there anything else that you could tell me – good, bad, what worked, what didn't? Anything you want me to put in writing?

MS: I think I've pretty much talked about everything. The success of Jim stands out the most. 2-7 went into a meat grinder and they cleared the enemy off those streets and prepped the battle for the infantry. If those Army tankers weren't there, we would have had a lot of Marines killed in action. But together, as a team, they were probably able to give one of the most decisive urban victories I think our nation has ever seen, against an enemy that was determined to fight until the

bitter end. There was one incident where we had a media reporter watch the bulldozers knock down a building that the Marines were taking unbelievable fire from. It didn't matter how many tank rounds or how many rockets you put into some of these buildings, sometimes the enemy just wouldn't die inside the building. The bulldozers were bulldozing it down and the driver is getting shot at by the enemy inside. The only thing left on one of these guys is his upper torso sticking out from the rubble – and as the Marines and the reporter are going up to him, this guy threw a grenade at them. It was the last thing he ever did, but that's the kind of fighting my guys faced inside that city. These Army tank commanders and vehicle commanders were fighting RPGs at close range and taking multiple hits. There are no better armored vehicles than the Bradley and the Abrams – and they survived more hits than people will ever know. I think there was such a sense of camaraderie and reliance on each other. We had to take care of our brothers, we had to get through this, and I think that's what allowed us to have the success we had and the small number of casualties we actually had for it. Just good cross-talking. The differences you might see at higher headquarters never happened at the tactical level. It really was one team, one fight.

MM: It seems to me that this was the fight that took place in Iraq. Historically, I can't find anything that compares. You can go back as far as you want in history and look in vain for a situation where a city's been almost depleted of the civilian population and you know the whole city is filled only with bad guys. I really can't find anything like that. It's unparalleled in history.

MS: I think you're right. I can't find any place in history either where we ever had a clean battlefield like this to fight the enemy. It was like a ghost town, and I'm sure that some of the guys talked to you about that. The citizens knew what was going to happen. They knew no one was going to stop on this one, so they left. The only people left were the bad guys that wanted to get the muj' on, and we were ready to get the muj' on with them. There's never a place where the conditions are set up for a good battle, but we were very lucky, and we were lucky because of good soldiers, good Marines, good sailors and airmen that really did their job – and I think the nation should be very proud of them. I'll tell you, I sure am. We had a lot of casualties, but also a lot of great things, and there are quite a lot of awards that are still outstanding. I think there are two Medals of Honor still going through the process, a number of Navy Crosses going through, and I'm anxious for these guys to get these awards, too. PFC Christopher Adlesperger from 3/5 – he fought for over 45 minutes defending his squad and killed at least a squad-sized element. He died later on in the battle, but what he did that day, I don't think anyone of us will ever forget it.

MM: I think somebody who was actually there – maybe you or somebody else – needs to come out with a full history of this fight.

MS: We do. But the problem is, every one of us is running on all cycles and we don't even have a chance to visit our families. I'm on a three-month TAD [Temporary Assigned Duty] to redo the future of the Marine Corps. What's our future vision? And it's that way with every one of my commanders. My XO immediately took over as a battalion commander. My S3 is over there right now as a battalion commander getting ready to come home from Iraq. Every one of us is going back in the fight or contributing to the Marine Corps in one way or another.

MM: I've run into a half dozen people that I've tried to track down and interview, but who are back in Iraq again, particularly some of these advisor types. Sir, I appreciate your time

## **Lieutenant Colonel Ken Adgie**

### **8 March 2006**

MM: If you could just briefly state your name, rank and your position in the preparations for the planning of Fallujah.

KA: My name is Lieutenant Colonel Ken Adgie. I was the 3d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Brigade Combat Team S3 [operations officer] from July '04 to June '05.

MM: Could you briefly describe how your brigade became involved in Operation Phantom Fury or, as the Marines call it, New Dawn?

KA: Early October we knew that MNF-I / MNC-I [Multi-National Forces-Iraq / Multi-National Corps-Iraq] were planning on conducting operations in Fallujah as part of their campaign plan of where they were conducting operations: Najaf, Fallujah. The division received a warning order to provide forces to the MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] – not the first time we've done it. Our brigade also had an out-of-sector mission in Najaf in April, so we had that perspective going in, when we moved the brigade-minus to Najaf. So, late September, early October, we got the mission. 2d Brigade Combat Team was in Samarra, and that was the division main effort, so they were not going to pull forces from there, which left us – and it was a good mission so we started planning. The planning process was initially just “the planners.” Two planners at division – Major Kevin Jacoby and Major Jim MacGregor – who were talking to me as the brigade S3, and then Lieutenant Colonel John Reynolds, who was the S3 for Task Force 2-2. All four of us – not that this has anything to do with anything – we were all SAMS [School of Advanced Military Studies] graduates. So we shared a lot. It was a very collaborative type planning.

MM: And as it turns out, Colonel Craig Tucker, the regimental combat team commander, was also a SAMS guy.

KA: We went down to Fallujah in mid-October: Lieutenant Colonel [Pete] Newell, the commander, John Reynolds, myself, Colonel (now Brigadier General) Dana Pittard, and we met Colonel Tucker. Very good meeting. Had a good chance to talk and explain capabilities, and as Colonel Pittard and Colonel Tucker were talking, they realized they knew each other from somewhere. And it turns out that Colonel Tucker went to CGSC [Command and General Staff College] and SAMS the year after Colonel Pittard did. Over a very large map, Colonel Tucker and the rest of us talked about what the scheme of maneuver would look like; we exchanged viewpoints and things like that. Mainly what we did inside the 1st Infantry Division was to try to figure out what the force package would look like

that we would send from our sector to the MEF. And we spent a lot of time on that, a lot of iterations of that, and it changed a lot over the four to six weeks that we were building. As it turns out, we think we gave the task force that went down there everything they wanted, but it went through many variations. Each time we briefed somebody it was, “Nope, not enough. Too much. Not enough.” We also understood very early on that we could not unplug Task Force 2-2 completely. So it would be the brigade sourcing the battalion from companies throughout the brigade combat team, and we also knew that we would have to look for backfills for 2-2. One of the main reasons Task Force 2-2 was picked was because their Iraqi Army battalion was the best Iraqi Army battalion that we had associated with us. So they were able to step up and fill that void when you unplugged half of a battalion. They were able to do that. We also knew that this would most likely happen around Ramadan – and it did – so we knew we could not strip out our brigade to help the MEF. As much as we wanted to, we still had responsibilities to our sector. So as we went through the force packaging, Task Force 2-2 was the battalion headquarters, with one of their infantry companies. We took a tank company from Task Force 2-63 – a guy named Captain [Paul] Fowler. We gave the brigade reconnaissance troop, F-4 CAV, which was the brigade reserve. Again, it didn’t own any land, but it was committed quite often to reinforce battalions. We gave them an FSB [Forward Support Battalion] enabler package – a FLE [Forward Logistics Element] – and we also gave them artillery: two M-109A6s from Task Force 1-6 FA [Field Artillery].

MM: Those are two Paladins?

KA: Right. Now, they were not the two Paladins that were normally with Task Force 2-2’s base camp. We didn’t want to take their guns from them, so we took those out of hide from 1-6, which was rolled as motorized infantry. So everybody took a little bite to build this package that we sent south; and what that did was spread the loss of combat power among lots of people, so we were able to continue operations. And as it turned out, we had a couple big fights in November while 2-2 was gone south. The brigade had two really big fights. On the 9th of November and the 14th, 15th of November – so we were able to get through that.

MM: Going back to the BRT – at some point, looking at the task organization, that also had an armor platoon attached to it?

KA: No. We gave them the companies and Task Force 2-2 task organized. Again, as we went through the iterations, we worked our way down to what the final look was – and it probably worked out the best. We originally had wanted to let Task Force 2-2 take two Bradley companies down there and then give F-4 CAV to the remainder of Task Force 2-2 that stayed, but that just wasn’t going to work. We wargamed it, and every day we worked it until we came up with what we thought was the optimal solution: have the right mix of combat power but still not

strip out what we had here. Lieutenant Colonel Newell had very strong thoughts of what he needed to execute and Colonel Pittard did an exceptional job supporting him – and one of the things we thought early on was that we needed Paladins. Now, when we went back to division staff, that honestly didn't sell very well, and neither did the thought of taking MCLCs [Mine Clearing Land Charges] because of the understanding of the current operating environment. "What are you going to use MCLCs for?" "Well, we're going to use MCLCs to breach." We got some pushback from the division staff saying, "We don't do that. That's a violation of the ROE [Rules of Engagement]." Well, as we started laying out maps and showing the intelligence picture – that the bad guys had spent the last several months strong-pointing Fallujah – it became obvious to a lot of folks, and then the division commander finally made the decision for us to take the MCLCs, as well as D7s [bulldozers] and the guns.

MM: As you were planning this out, was your decision to bring the two Paladins along and the MCLCs based on having talked to the Marines?

KA: Not at all. That was the way we had fought as a brigade. It was a combined arms mentality that Colonel Pittard had brought to the brigade. We all had shot artillery in Diyala Province, and we knew that when it was time to fight the enemy, if he stood and fought, we needed to use our combat multipliers: use CAS [Close Air Support]; use field artillery, use mortars, use your information operations – basically, use everything in the toolbox to kill the enemy. So Colonel Pittard felt pretty strongly that we were going to set this battalion up for success, and one of the ways was to give him two artillery pieces. We had enough to do it and it made sense to do it. That was quickly agreed to at the brigade level. It took a little more work on the division level but, in the end, everything Lieutenant Colonel Newell asked for, he got – to include a light infantry company that backfilled his forces on FOB [Forward Operating Base] Normandy.

MM: That was the Oregon National Guard, wasn't it?

KA: I don't think it was. I think it was a company from 1-14 Infantry out of the 25th [Infantry Division]. I want to say it was Bravo, 1-14, but I'm not sure.

MM: Somewhere floating around I saw a single platoon from Bravo Company, Oregon National Guard –

KA: Those guys came in after Task Force 2-2 had redeployed from Fallujah around Thanksgiving. In December, we were given another out-of-sector mission to Mosul, and that's what we did. We then had an overlap of when forces were going to RIP [Relief in Place] in with 2d Brigade, 25th – of the guys coming from whatever National Guard unit that was. 2d Brigade, 25th, it was decided to freeze them for 35 or 45 days so they could get through the election. So now we had these

extra couple of battalions from the National Guard, and they were given to us to help us pull FOB security in January while the rest of the forces were out there doing kinetic operations and setting stuff up for success. That was after Phantom Fury was executed. But back to how we got the force package: a very strong piece of staff work at the division and battalion level, with the brigade staff being the middleman. We also gave them combat camera teams, MPAD [Mobile Public Affairs Detachment], the brigade PAO [Public Affairs Officer] went down with them. So we allocated resources for them to accomplish the mission and it worked out pretty good. That was the planning piece.

MM: When you met with Marines, was there any talk about Marine communications and their radios, Blue Force Tracker type things? Was there any consideration given to the fact that maybe the two wouldn't be able to talk to each other?

KA: When we went down to visit them the first time, we brought the brigade S4 [logistics officer] and some other folks to marry up with their counterparts. The first thing we worked through was the logistical plug-in piece, and there are a lot of similarities between the systems – more similarities than differences. There are some munitions and Class IX repair parts that the Marines don't have in their system. The 201st FSB SPO [Forward Support Battalion, Security and Plans Officer] came down with us and they worked out a fairly detailed system that allowed Task Force 2-2 to get what they could from the Marines. But things that were not like-items – parts for our Bradleys, for example. They had M1s in the Marine Corps, but they didn't have Bradleys, so a lot of that stuff was a push system. We packaged some sustainment packages that went down with them, but what the brigade did for Task Force 2-2 during the fight was to sustain them from about 170 kilometers. That went exceptionally well, through the efforts of the 201st FSB. Just an amazing organization that used a combination of convoys. Probably about every second or third day, a ground convoy would drive 170 kilometers and push right up to the back of the field trains.

MM: I've interviewed Major [Erik] Krivda and he mentioned something about using Chinooks to fly –

KA: The other thing the 201st did was aerial resupply, and the nights and the days we didn't push ground packages, we used CH-47s. We successfully did that about five times and probably had about three missions canceled because of priority switches. But we used CH-47s to push pallets of 155 [millimeter] rounds, big heavy things, small arms ammunition, mail, people. We were still doing the R&R [Rest and Relaxation] thing, so key people were coming in. We put them all on a bird and they'd go join the unit. So there was an incredible effort by the logisticians to ensure that Task Force 2-2 had what it needed. And then as the fight developed, it was like, "Holy shit, we need a lot of ammunition!" – 900 rounds of 155,900



rounds of mortars. We quickly depleted our supply, so we started going to the 2d Brigade Combat Team and we'd say, "We need some of your 155 rounds." We dipped into the division reserve and everybody emptied out their wares, because they understood what was going on down here. We took the division down to about 60 percent ammunition, going into Ramadan and going into a couple of big fights. But everyone understood that the main effort right now was Task Force 2-2. And Lieutenant Colonel Newell said something great when he got back: He said he never wanted for anything. So I think we did a pretty good job there. I can't remember the details of plugging in with their situational awareness technology. I know they had Blue Force Tracker, their SINCGARS [Single Channel Ground to Air Radio System] worked, but I can't remember the details. We had DSN [Defense Switched Network] connectivity to them. Major Krivda would be able to tell you better because he was the assistant battle captain.

MM: He just told us that he had to stay connected to this DSN line.

KA: Blue Force Tracker sent text messages and the DSN line was how we communicated with them. There were some other new things we did to help 2-2. About the third or fourth day of the attack, John Reynolds comes up and says, "We're in a pause right now but getting ready to attack south into this area right here. We're not the main effort, so we're not getting the UAV [Unmanned Aerial Vehicle] feeds that we need." The Marines had a marvelous collection of UAVs that we couldn't tap into. So they had their "Shadow UAV remote viewing station" – or whatever it's called – which is a TV screen [inaudible] and we flew that down to them on a LOG bird. And then from Ba'qubah – 170 kilometers straight line distance – we flew our Shadow UAV to support their attack into Fallujah, so we were flying from Ba'qubah and they had their UAV video stream and were seeing it. We were exchanging information from the 3d Brigade TOC [Tactical Operations Center] in Ba'qubah, at FOB Warhorse. It was amazing. We were sitting in our TOC watching their attack. Unfortunately, we proceeded to have one of our key bridges damaged that day, so we had to turn that bird around and bring it back. But it worked and it took a lot of coordination at division level, through MEF and the airspace management.

MM: So that's actually on film somewhere then?

KA: Oh yeah, down in a warehouse somewhere. It looked like the moon landscape with all the damage. But we probably flew for them for about two hours, and then we realized that something was happening in our own backyard.

MM: On that particular aspect of it, I talked to the acting S2 [intelligence officer] at the time, Captain Natalie Friel, and she said that it seemed as though the insurgents may have left the city before the attack started. They may have started

launching attacks elsewhere, she thought, when Operation Phantom Fury started. Did you get that same impression?

KA: We did, and you can pick your poison on what caused it. Was it the latter stages of Ramadan? This is out of my lane, but there was discussion on whether or not we should have delayed this attack out of respect for Ramadan. Well, they were still doing bad-guy stuff; they voted to be bad guys still, so we initiated the attack. But the first two weeks of November, there was a spike in violence in our sector, in western Diyala. A lot of violence. Not terribly organized, but you could see more ad hoc contacts: more IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], more sporadic fire, more mortars and artillery rounds. On the 9th of November, there was a concerted, deliberate, well-organized operation inside Ba'qubah in which the insurgents attacked and destroyed several police stations. We wound up really killing a lot of them. Of course, it was a reaction, but we dropped artillery, 500-pound bombs, killing guys in the city. That was one of the few times they decided to stand and fight. They would occupy a building. Okay, we'll attack and destroy it.

MM: Do you think that may have been a plan?

KA: That would be speculation on my part. The second attack happened about five days later, about 14 or 15 November, and that was even bigger. That was when they caught us with our drawers down. They severely damaged the key bridge in our sector, the Diyala River Bridge. They did a couple significant attacks; and whereas, on the 9th, the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police did a very good job of fighting, on the 15th they did not. There were a lot of reasons for that, some anecdotal. But the real, "Yeah, no shit, we should have realized it earlier," was the Eid al Fitr religious holiday. It's kind of like an Easter or a Christmas where lots of guys go on leave, so a lot of the leadership of both the police and the army went home on leave. One of the things we had to deal with is that the individual leadership of the Iraqi Army has a lot to do with the cohesion and fighting ability of that unit – and a lot of those units broke rank. We had a battalion commander who, on the 13th, died of a heart attack. His battalion melted. Company commanders went on leave, the battalion commander had just died, and the unit that had fought so well on the 9th got smoked on the 15th.

MM: Do you remember the designation of that outfit?

KA: They were tied to the Task Force 82d, the 82d Engineers. Lieutenant Colonel Gerry O'Connor was the battalion commander; he'd probably remember. They started changing the designation after we left. It used to be the 205th Infantry, which was the one for 2-2, and the one for 204th was with 2-63 – so it would be the 206th Iraqi Army Battalion. That has since changed, and I don't know what it's been changed to. But they were the ones that had Ba'qubah and just north of Ba'qubah. While this was going on, we also had a fight, so we didn't see all those

things coming together. We did have a good plan, but it would be speculating to say the enemy's plans were tied together. There was violence across – if you go back and look at the reports, there was a considerable spike in violence in November '04.

MM: Did Pete Newell make a decision to take Alpha Company? Was that his decision alone, with Captain [Sean] Sims' company, or was the brigade saying –?

KA: No. When we did the force packaging, we sent a mech company and Lieutenant Colonel Newell picked Alpha Company, which was the right choice. They were a very good company, a very experienced company. When we went down to Najaf, we had taken both Alpha and Charlie. Sean was the more experienced commander. Lieutenant Colonel Newell picked it for lots of commander-type reasons. It was a good company. Charlie was a good company, also, but Adam Reese had just taken over probably four months prior, so Sean was the more experienced company commander and that's why he picked him; that's my guess.

MM: Did Colonel Pittard and Pete Newell get along okay? I got the impression there might have been some friction there. I interviewed Pittard a couple weeks back and he said, "There was a lot of friction between us," but he kind of left it at that.

KA: Yes, but it was the good kind of friction. Brigadier General Pittard is a great commander and we were blessed with lots of really good battalion commanders, so there was always that commander-to-commander discussion on how we were going to conduct operations. I was with 2-2 for two years. 2-2 Infantry pushed the edge of what was allowed as far as working things hard, whether it was kinetic ops, whether it was training the Iraqi Army. At the brigade, we decided we would steal 2-2's program on training the Iraqi Army, and it worked great. I would never say they didn't get along. It was just a healthy commander tension of trying to do what's exactly right for your unit. Now, what's right for the brigade isn't necessarily right for 2-2 – and Colonel Pittard always did what was right for the brigade. He understood the impact on the battalions, but what is right for the brigade? That led to a lot of the force packaging decisions and how we structured it.

MM: How did Captain Friel end up as the S2? Can a female S2 be in an infantry outfit now?

KA: When we were in Kosovo, she was the HHC XO [Headquarters and Headquarters Company Executive Officer] for most of Kosovo. And when we got back, she went back to the S2 shop and then she got promoted. Well, we looked around and tried to figure out where to put a captain XO. Her husband, Jamey Friel, was my battalion S4 when I was the XO.

MM: And during this operation, he was the BMO [Battalion Maintenance Officer].

KA: Right. The thing about Nattie was that she was wonderful. She was smart. She was hard. She was physically fit. She could stand up and brief, and I would take her as my S2 in a heartbeat. She was a female, so what? That's what she brought into the TOC. People didn't care because she was really, really good – although the fact that her husband was a Golden Gloves boxer probably didn't hurt at all. Jamey was a physically fit monster. He was a Golden Gloves boxer from West Point. He could clearly kill you in a heartbeat. But she was the battalion S2 and stood on her own legs. She was great.

MM: So that's something that's okay?

KA: It is an oddity. Females are not authorized to be assigned to infantry battalions. We all winked, and how many females were in Task Force 2-2 the entire time? We had 16. They were the medics and they were the mechanics – and they were assigned to 201st FSB, because that's what the rule said. But they were crossed-attached to us – there were females in our organization – so we could conduct searches of females. Plus, there were some females in the maintenance support teams because that was their MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]. So we had about 16 females. Our battalion surgeon was a female, Major Lisa Dewitt. She was a stud and she saved Task Force 2-2 soldiers' lives. No one cared that she was a female; she was a good cutter.

MM: That's another question I have. Was that a decision made in the planning process to bring your aid station and her all the way up there?

KA: That was a very deliberate thought, and we backfilled from the 201st FSB to FOB Normandy.

MM: Had the Marines offered the use of their stuff?

KA: We plugged into their brigade system, but we wanted to know what we could source inside this battalion, because we know they're headed to a good fight. What could we source? So Lieutenant Colonel Newell took people who were good and who he had confidence in. Could we have given them a doc out of the 201st FSB who had been living and working at FOB Workhorse for the last eight months? Sure, but that wasn't the 2-2 doctor. Lisa was. So those were easy calls. I'm going to take the boys we have fought and trained with for the last eight months. So that was an easy decision. Now, what the brigade did was to put a doc on FOB Workhorse, so there was not a degradation of skills and assets there; it was just different people, and it worked well. We had help from DISCOM [Division Support Command]. The division sent us folks to backfill 2-2 at FOB Normandy. It worked out well.

MM: As you guys monitored this fight – I guess Task Force 2-2 had about 84 wounded. A large majority of those returned to duty.

KA: That number sounds high. That sounds more like the entire year. I know there were four killed: Sergeant Major [Steve] Faulkenberg, Sean Sims, Lieutenant [Edward] Iwan and Sergeant [James] Matteson. There was one soldier killed at FOB Normandy, but I would say that number was more in line with what they lost over the year.

MM: Lieutenant Colonel Newell sent me the after action report and he's got some numbers in there. He's also got the ammo expenditures, which are really good. Is there anything that you can tell us about this operation, as I write this thing up, that might help other officers in joint operations?

KA: There has to be a part of your book that you talk about the loss of Sergeant Major Faulkenberg, Iwan and Sean and the effect on the unit. I don't know how they reacted, but I know that First Sergeant Peter Smith – who's down at the Sergeants Major Academy now – he'd probably be a great guy to interview, because he was the commander for about 48 hours and did a marvelous job.

MM: Did you make that decision from the TOC to send the first sergeant in to take over or was that made by Lieutenant Colonel Newell?

KA: No, I was an observer by that point. We, the brigade, made no decisions in here – none whatsoever. We observed and we filled requests and needs, but we did not make any kind of tactical decisions.

MM: This was all Newell's fight?

KA: Him and Colonel Tucker. Colonel Pittard was on R&R when this thing happened, which is a side note. But we clearly understood that once we sent this force to go out with a new daddy, they had a new daddy. Now, when Sean died, I got a hold of Colonel Pittard, briefed him, and he was like, "Holy shit! We need to get a company commander there." And he said Captain Doug Walter. He's now an OC [Observer Controller] at JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center]; he's now a major working at Fort Polk. Doug was the Alpha, 2-2 commander in Kosovo. Doug got real sick and they didn't know if he was going to be able to stay in the Army. So he did not deploy with us. Sean took over the day before we deployed in February. Doug got healthier through treatment and medication at Landstuhl and he joined the brigade in July or August. He worked for me as the Iraqi Army guy, and then we moved operations and him to FOB Normandy. He was doing the Iraqi Army training there. When Sean was killed, Colonel Pittard asked my thoughts – but I don't remember who the final decision-maker was. I don't remember Lieutenant Colonel Newell's position. I know Colonel Pittard said, "Let's get Doug Walter in there." The brigade commander positions company commanders. There

was probably about a millisecond of, “That’s the right guy” – and it was. That was his former company and it was helpful to the company to have a guy they knew.

MM: And 24 hours before that, you had lost Lieutenant Iwan, the company XO.

KA: So the penetration into the box with losing Sergeant Major Faulkenberg. The next afternoon we lost Iwan. The next day, which was a Saturday, we lost Sean – so there was some trauma in the unit that they handled exceptionally well.

MM: Can you tell me, as far as you know, what happened to Sergeant Major Faulkenberg?

KA: From what I understand – and this is secondhand information – they did the initial breach into the city. The two companies did a penetration, began their movement, and there was an Iraqi Army unit that was following them. F-4 CAV was in the flank. The two companies were inside the city fighting and the plan was that the Iraqi Army was going to follow and secure behind them. Our guys were going to do the killing but, because of the craziness of the area and missing people, the Iraqi Army was securing the area behind them. Well, they were having problems finding the breach point and things like that, so Sergeant Major Faulkenberg had gone back to the breach point as was acting as a guide, getting the folks in there. He was dismounted outside his up-armored Humvee and he was killed with an AK-47 round to the head.

MM: When the Iraqi battalion was coming through, did the sergeant major have any contact with the U.S. Army advisors for these guys?

KA: I don’t know. He was dismounted, so my guess is that he wasn’t in radio communication. It did not sound like he was on the outside of the breach, other side of the railroad tracks, but he was actually in here as he was pulling them up to get them into position.

MM: They had no radios or night vision?

KA: No. The advisors each had manpacks. One of the advisors was in Kosovo with us and he changed command and went off to Hohenfels to be an OC. When I ran into him later, he was part of the early teams and he was humping a radio. I don’t know if he was with 2-2 or who he was with. I don’t remember his name now. Those guys would have an interesting perspective on this.

MM: Yeah, that’s one of my priorities. I’ve talked to individuals who were advisors to other battalions in this fight, but I can’t find anybody who was with this outfit.

KA: Here's a guy to look up: Colonel Dave Sage. He was the former Task Force 2-2 commander in Kosovo in my first year as the S3. He was "Timberwolf 07" at Hohenfels when we were in Iraq and he sent guys to be part of that brigade. One of the guys he sent was an air defense battery OC who wound up being on a MiTT [Military Training Team]. He was our guy in Kosovo and he would remember the guy's name. He would also be able to tell you the names of other guys who were part of the Fallujah fight, so you can start calling them and maybe get the guy who was with Task Force 2-2. Colonel Sage is getting ready to become the garrison commander at Fort Polk. He's down at Fort Hood right now.

MM: How was your working relationship with the Marines? Were there any problems?

KA: They treated us exceptionally well. Once Colonel Pittard and Lieutenant Colonel Newell and the rest of us flew down there and linked up, once we did the face to face, we, the brigade, backed out of interaction with 7th Regiment. I never talked to them again. John Reynolds was talking to them a couple times a day. The last thing they needed was a gomer like me filtering tactical information during the planning process. From what John told me, they had a very good relationship. What was unique and something to consider – Task Force 2-2 had one Bradley company of 80 infantrymen or whatever it was on the ground. The Marine battalion next to them had 1,200 infantrymen. We had tanks and Bradleys; they didn't have nearly as much. So we had more stuff, more combat power, more protection and we moved faster – and that became an issue as they were attacking and clearing. So was 2-2, but it started to go like this. And then 2-2 started getting assigned more and more battlespace until they got way down here and were doing some significant fighting well outside of what was supposed to be their box.

MM: Is there any truth, that you're aware of, that Task Force 2-2 did become the main attack?

KA: I would say they did, but I don't know if it was officially deemed that. Because at one point, the graphics looked like this on who owned what space. And then here was 2-2 owning a lot. They chopped boundaries from a Marine battalion to Task Force 2-2. Were they ever identified as, "You're now my main effort?" I don't know.

MM: I think John Reynolds arrived at Fort Riley today, if I'm not mistaken, and I'm supposed to be setting up an interview with him.

KA: Jim MacGregor, the division planner, is also at Riley right now. He's the now 1-33 FA; the scarlet letter "S" on your forehead for SAMS kind of pulls you back in. So he's down there doing some planning for 1st ID as a tasking.

MM: John said he had a box of stuff he was going to send my way if I could link up with him.

KA: All these guys are in the G5 shop at Fort Riley. Jim MacGregor, John Reynolds, Jeff Jager, Sergeant Major Rodney Lewis.

MM: Yeah, I may be making a special trip out there to Fort Riley to talk to these people. It's my understanding that Reynolds is going back to Iraq.

KA: John was a battalion S3 or XO when 3d Brigade inactivated or drew down, and then he got moved back to being the chief of plans for 1st ID. He's staying focused on moving 1st ID back to CONUS [Continental United States]. Now 2d Brigade, 1st ID looks like they're going back to Iraq. They're at Hohenfels right now doing their MRE [Mission Readiness Exercise]. That decision has not been made yet officially, but they're preparing as if it has.

MM: I was also told by some people I interviewed that the Marine battalion to the right of Task Force 2-2 attempted to do a stealth breach of some kind, it didn't work, and they had to actually come around and use 2-2's breach?

KA: I was told their breach failed and they entered into their sector using 2-2's breach. I was told that probably by the same person who told you.

MM: I was wondering if that caused some confusion or mix up as they brought in the Iraqis.

KA: I don't know. I heard it was hours afterwards.

MM: Anything else important that we need to know? I'll keep your email in case I have any other questions.

KA: I know Sergeant Major [Cory] McCarty – the CAC [Combined Arms Center] sergeant major – he flew down there with Major General [John] Batiste on about Day 10, probably the 18th of November. They flew down and saw the guys. I don't know what impressions they formed, but I know that after the casualties they had, Major General Batiste was concerned about the effect on the unit. Redeployment was pretty straightforward. Another angle, and another person you might want to talk to is Jane Arraf from CNN. We had an incredible relationship with Jane. She's currently taking a one-year sabbatical and sitting on the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. She and her team spent about eight weeks with us in the brigade in August. Then she went elsewhere, then came back, and she deployed with 2-2 – in the column with them, in the road march – and she was with them the entire way and broadcast from Fallujah. She's a great American, and she would have a very unique perspective on this fight. I don't know if it's good, bad or indifferent, but she was clearly the one media person that had the closest relationship with 3d Brigade, 1st ID.



MM: So was she broadcasting every day live? She was right there with the company?

KA: She was in the back of Newell's Bradley for a lot of it. She was there during the rehearsals, during the briefings. She was up there. She had a good perspective – and she's just a wonderful person. She actually came to visit the brigade for our welcome home ceremony, so we had really built a great healthy relationship with some of the media folks.

MM: That's super. General Pittard had mentioned something like he felt the Marines pawned off some media types on him, which he was more than willing to accept.

KA: He was a magician when it came to things like dealing with politicians, imams, sheiks – getting the media to do things to help the fight. Now, he wasn't maneuvering companies daily on the battlefield, but he could do the IO [Information Operations] piece incredibly well. And we, the brigade, actually sought out media. He would ask them, "What are your objectives? Okay, here are my objectives that I'm going to get out of you." He'd give them a brief, place everything in context, and then get them to a unit that would accomplish the objectives that the media person wanted. So they were happy. "We're getting treated really well. We've got full, unfettered access to everybody." And that trickled down to the battalions. Not every battalion was as opened-armed as 2-2 was. 2-2 was exceptional at how they treated the media. Lieutenant Colonel Newell understood the power of Jane Arraf on 30 January reporting from Ba'qubah on the Iraqi elections saying, "Phenomenal success." So she helped us. Jane could probably give you a good idea.

MM: Time magazine did a good article on 2-2.

KA: They did. I forget who the writer was. Made the cover. It was a good article. Let's see, who else would be interesting? Have you interviewed Kirk Mayfield?

MM: He's on my list. He was the BRT commander.

KA: He is in Vilseck, Germany. He was one of the guys that stayed in command during the draw down [inaudible], but again, using your organization to the best capabilities, what F-4 CAV did along the flanks. Captain James Cobb – the artillery fire support officer – he's up in Alaska.

MM: One of the lieutenants, the platoon leader who was attached to the brigade reconnaissance troop, wrote some big thing that I found on the Internet – "Armor-geddon" or something – I can't remember his name, but he apparently is back in Iraq now. He wrote a major piece on a blog, and at the very end it says that the

Army had to pull the plug on it. I don't know if you've seen this or not. I'll dig through my files and find his name.

KA: They had Bradley platoon attached to them the whole year, so it might have been his habitually attached Bradley platoon. Kirk deployed with his Bradley platoon, two scout CAV platoons and this infantry platoon, and then they had given him two tanks and took two Bradleys away, so he'd have tanks out here also. But Kirk was a great company commander. That's about it.

MM: Okay, thanks very much for your time.

## **Lieutenant Colonel William K. Mooney Jr.**

### **19 April 2006**

MM: My name is Matt Matthews [MM] and I'm an historian with the Combat Studies Institute. Today is April 19, 2006, and I'm interviewing Lieutenant Colonel William K. Mooney, Jr. [WM], the commander of 2d Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment (2-227) during Operation Phantom Fury. Is that correct?

WM: Yes. We were technically a general support aviation battalion and I commanded the Blackhawks that supported the 1st Cavalry Division and Task Force Baghdad.

MM: Could you talk me through when you first found out there was going to be a mission involving your unit and perhaps an attack on Fallujah? How did things unfold before the operation began?

WM: I don't recall the exact date that we were notified and received the operations order for Fallujah, but I know it was sometime in October when movement started to set the conditions. We actually began to support the movement of 2d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division – augmented by Task Force 2-7, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James Rainey – in late October; and by the 31st of October our battalion had been formally tasked to conduct a daily aerial logistics run in support of that operation. We were to support Task Force 1-227 – the attack battalion in 1st CAV that was supporting in that sector – and also any divisional requirements to move people, equipment, parts, mail or ammunition. So we began doing that on the 31st. In addition to that, you need to understand the context. Our battalion, at that time, was made up of 16 UH-60 Blackhawks supporting seven ground maneuver brigades, and we also had the mission to support the interim Iraqi government, so there was a daily prioritization drill – but that mission received priority enough that two aircraft at a minimum every day were dedicated to that task. In addition to that, once combat operations actually began around the 7th of November, we began a daily standby downed aircrew recovery team. We were required to have an aircraft team on standby with a 30-minute notice to launch to recover any downed aircrew and/or move an infantry rapid reaction force that my battalion also had control of. They were an infantry dismounted platoon from 1st Cavalry Division and they fell under my administrative control until they were implemented. My mission would then be to insert that force and they would fall underneath the operational control of whatever sector they were put in. Every night, we were still doing our logistics resupply to several locations around Fallujah in support of the Black Jack Brigade and Task Force 2-7. We would go to Taqaddam Airfield and to what we called LZ Fallujah on the eastern side of the city, and then any other movements as required. Something that was particularly noteworthy was that we

also moved the acting Iraqi prime minister, Iyad Allawi, to Fallujah before the line of departure was crossed. A lot of active coordination and communication there. I don't know the particulars about what went on in that meeting; all I know is that we were tasked to do that.

MM: Do you know who he was meeting with at that time?

WM: I would assume it was the senior task force commander, the Marine general that was in charge, but I don't know that for a fact. All I do know is that we flew him in and we flew him back out; and shortly thereafter, the combat ensued full-scale with the invasion of Fallujah itself. Once the heaviest fighting began, around 9 November, it primarily became an attack aviation operation. We were still providing daily logistics and downed aircrew recovery standby, but the focus and the stuff you need to hear about would be from Lieutenant Colonel Ron Lewis who commanded 1-227. His guys did some spectacular things over the course of the 8th through the 10th of November. Somewhere around the evening of the 11th, Task Force 2-7 went black on ammo, and they were particularly short on 120 millimeter mortars; and the Marines, who they were fighting under, could not provide that for them. We received a mission to do an emergency air resupply of 120 millimeter ammo. The weather that night had fallen pretty badly; there was dense fog and the conditions were pretty awful. Night vision goggle flying in between Baghdad and Fallujah was made particularly more hazardous by the lack of visual cues. Once you get outside of Baghdad, it becomes a little more desert-like and flat, contourless terrain, and it was extremely dark at night and very difficult to fly with goggles. Our normal procedures for a resupply, even in a combat zone, would be to fly if we had a ceiling above 700 feet and visibility of more than two miles. That was to allow us to gain sufficient altitude to clear any obstacles and any attack aircraft working at a lower altitude. I think on the night we did the emergency resupply, the weather conditions had been reported as low as 200 feet cloud height and about a half a mile visibility – so given those conditions, we normally would not have gone. There was some dialogue directly between Lieutenant Colonel Rainey and myself, and he relayed how important it was that he got that ammo. We discussed within my headquarters how we could mitigate that risk and do that mission. I then discussed that with Colonel James McConville, the brigade commander, and we made the decision that we would attempt to do the mission and we would stack the deck, if you will. I hand-selected the best crews I had available in terms of flight hour experience. The team lead was Chief Warrant Officer Patrick McGurk, a CW3, and he just did a tremendous job in putting together that mission for the unit.

MM: How many Blackhawks went on this mission?

WM: Just two. I can't recall the total number of mortar rounds. Once they're packaged up they're fairly heavy. I want to say it was several hundred rounds that we were able to get into the back of these two aircraft. Initially, we wanted to fly them right to the battalion trains of 2-7, which would be fairly close to the line of contact, and we had anticipated that. I had coordinated with Ron Lewis to get a gunship escort and bring them all the way to the point at which they were needed, and Lieutenant Colonel Lewis made the ultimate decision because he was actually in an aircraft in the sector at that time. He said that both the enemy situation and the weather would preclude his ability to safely get those aircraft all the way up to the front edge of the battle area. So it was decided that we would fly the ammunition to the logistics airstrip we'd been using at what we called Fallujah East. We flew the ammunition there and I believe it was trucked from that landing zone to 2-7. I don't know how long that drive was. Anyway, we still made the mission happen, but we would have liked to have flown it all the way to the point of impact. And we weren't able to do that mostly because of the enemy situation. Lieutenant Colonel Lewis reported his aircraft had been taking pretty heavy fire in supporting 2-7, so the combination of the threat and the weather made us change our plans. P.J. McGurk and his flight of two Blackhawks loaded up the ammo, took off into that weather, made it through, delivered the ammo and safely got the aircraft home.

MM: Is there anything else that stands out during this time period? Were there any other significant missions that your men went on?

WM: Just the movement of the interim Iraqi government and the prime minister. We continued to do nightly resupply, but it was fairly routine. We would receive not well aimed fire routinely, but we were fortunate that, at no time, did we have an aircraft hit during that battle. The hardest part wasn't necessarily the enemy, it was the environment. Battling the low visibility and the weather conditions at that time made things difficult. No other missions flew that night from my unit except for that emergency resupply.

MM: Is there anything else about this operation that you would like to get out there to other members of the Army, maybe a lesson learned type thing?

WM: We had been operating throughout the entire Iraqi battlespace. Supporting the interim Iraqi government had forced us to very routinely fly into non-U.S. sectors and non-Army sectors, like the Marine Corps battlespace. The first time we did that, it was somewhat challenging for us. Their radio procedures are different, their radio frequencies are different, their terminology is different – their requirements and expectations. So we had to battle through that. By the time this battle of Fallujah had come up in November of '04, we had been in Iraq for nine months and were extremely proficient and skilled in the local area. I really recall that that was the best example I had personally seen of true joint service communication

and cooperation and joint warfighting. It was extremely impressive how the Army and the Marine Corps worked together, both in the air and on the ground.

MM: I agree wholeheartedly. My research so far tells me that this is one of the best joint operations I've ever come across.

WM: We somewhat built on the success of this, and you may want to take a look at this as a follow-on. We later did some joint air assaults with Marines down in the North Babil Province that I think were built upon the trust and the relationships forged during the Fallujah battle. That's what stands out in my mind, that this was a well orchestrated, well run, well coordinated example of joint warfighting.

MM: Sir, I greatly appreciate this and I may have a few more questions later on.

WM: I would like to provide you with the names of all the crews who were involved in that mission.

MM: That would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

# **Lieutenant Colonel Peter A. Newell**

## **23 March 2006**

MM: My name is Matt Matthews [MM] and I'm conducting an unclassified interview with Lieutenant Colonel Peter A. Newell [PN] who was the commander of Task Force 2-2 during Operation Phantom Fury. Sir, if you could just give me some background on where you went to school, where you grew up, your assignments prior to this operation.

PN: I'm a military brat from day one of my life. I graduated from high school in Junction City, Kansas, while my dad was a brigade commander at Fort Riley in the 1st Infantry Division. I went to Kansas State University and started my career as a private in the 635th Armor Battalion in Manhattan, Kansas, as part of the Kansas National Guard. After I was commissioned in 1986, I ended up in the 82d Airborne Division with 4th Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment. Did the Advanced Course at Fort Knox, did a tour as a company commander in Germany, and spent a couple years after that in the 3d Ranger Battalion. After CGSC [Command and General Staff College], I was the S3 [operations officer] of 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry at Fort Carson and then the brigade S3 for 3d Brigade, 4th ID. I then spent three years in the National Military Command Center as part of the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then assumed command of 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry while they were forward deployed in Kosovo. Six months after returning from Kosovo, I deployed the battalion to Iraq.

MM: Could you talk me through your arrival in Iraq and what your battalion was doing up until the time you were notified that they might use your battalion for Phantom Fury?

PN: We deployed in February 2004 to Kuwait. We spent three weeks there generating combat power and then conducted a road march up into our area of operations. We were based in what was called FOB [Forward Operating Base] Normandy, which was an old Iraqi corps headquarters, about 75 miles northeast of Baghdad. An area called Muqdadiyah, Iraq. It was kind of melting pot. It was not quite on the Green Line, but the population was probably 50 percent Sunni, 40 percent Shi'a and another 10 percent Kurdish. This was the one place in Iraq where if you went northeast people were primarily Kurdish, if you went southwest they were Arab, if you went northwest they were Sunni, if you went southeast they were Shi'a. We covered an area that was about 1,500 square kilometers consisting essentially of 19 cities and a population of about 240,000 people. Mainly an agrarian economy. Agriculture was certainly the prime means of living. In most cases, the area looked more like Vietnam than any desert you've ever been to. A lot of triple canopy vegetation. Very difficult to move in. Essentially we were there to develop

the Iraqi security force, the government, the infrastructure and eventually to hand off that area to the Iraqis.

MM: What was the first indication that they were going to possibly use your battalion for this operation?

PN: We initially got a warning order in early October. It was one of those cases where you said, "Yeah, right." Having been through that once before, though, we were launched into Najaf three weeks after we got into our sector, so we'd already done the, "Hey, we've got something for you to do. Move 400 kilometers and occupy a different AO [Area of Operations]." So in early October, we were given the initial warning order that said it may possibly happen, and we actually conducted a visual with the 7th Regimental Combat Team Headquarters out in the Al Anbar Province, sometime in that month.

MM: And that would have been Colonel Craig Tucker that you met with and his staff?

PN: Yes.

MM: Could you talk me through how you decided to set up your task organization for this particular mission, specifically why you picked Alpha Company, 2-2? And it is my understanding that you were given Alpha Company, 2-63 and F Troop.

PN: Yeah. We had a lot of lengthy discussions about task organization. I would have been happy with any of my companies. The requirement that MNC-I [Multi-National Corps-Iraq] gave 1st ID was for two heavy company teams and a battalion headquarters. Colonel [Dana] Pittard tasked us to do that and the bottom line was I had one company team that was mech heavy and one that was one Bradley platoon and one motorized platoon. Then I had a mortar platoon that did stuff with them, so it was kind of a moot point. I had one company that was always built that way. Colonel Pittard fought hard for us to get some additional forces and, in fact, he allowed me to take one more tank platoon as part of Alpha, 2-2 and then offered up the brigade recon troop that also had one of my Bradley platoons attached to them. So that's really how the task org came together.

MM: Now the tank platoon you added to Alpha, 2-2, did that come from Alpha, 2-63?

PN: No, that came from Bravo Company, 1-63. Bravo, 1-63 had been tasked org'd to me from all the way back in Kosovo. My Bravo Company, 2-2 Infantry, when we went Kosovo, it had been left behind as part of Task Force 1-63. So Bravo 2-2, as we were deploying into country, was actually with 1-63 Armor in Kirkuk as



part of that initial assault of the heavy battalion. I had Bravo, 1-63 attached to me for the better part of three years.

MM: I was not aware of that. Could you talk me through the initial planning stages, through the major events that happened until November 7th or 8th?

PN: Sure. Throughout the month of October, we went back and forth with 7th RCT. In the initial briefing we had with them, they wanted us to provide an outer cordon. After we had some time to talk to the regimental commander and the regimental S3 about what was an appropriate role, we assumed the northeastern corner, which was our recommendation. It put us on the outside and let us go a little harder and a little deeper. We went back and forth across over the course of the month, did a couple of other runs out to 7th RCT to kind of form up plans. At some point in here, I actually went home on R&R, nobody thinking that anything would happen during Ramadan. My division commander said to go because he didn't think anything was going to happen. About two-thirds of the way through my R&R, I got a phone call that said, "Time to come back now."

MM: Had you gone back to the States or back to Germany?

PN: No, I was in Germany. I was actually in Garmisch when I got that phone call. I was able to get back to Vilseck and, over SIPRNET [Secret Internet Protocol Router Network], pull off the last version of the order that 7th RCT had sent us, as well as the course of action development sketches that John Reynolds had done. So in a space of about an hour sitting in the skip in the brigade headquarters in Germany, I was able to redraw the course of action, rewrite the COA [Course of Action] statement and send it back to him so that he could continue planning while I was attempting to get myself from Germany back into Iraq. The division pulled out every stop in the world to get me there, and I think it was less than 24 hours from the time I walked out my front door to the time my PSD [Personal Security Detachment] dropped me at battalion headquarters in Iraq. It was literally walk off one plane, jump in a car, go out to another plane, get on it and get there. At some point, we sent a two-man LNO [Liaison Officer] team to Camp Fallujah and then finally, on the 2d of November, the S3 – John Reynolds – and a couple of the guys went to the 1st Marine Division at Camp Fallujah. We received FRAGOs [Fragmentary Orders] on the 7th, 11th, 20th and 28th of October. On the 28th, we actually published the op order and that was based on that last series of exchanges over SIPR between the S3 and myself.

MM: At this time, how involved was the brigade commander, Colonel Pittard, and the brigade S3?

PN: I would say Colonel Pittard was very involved in getting us the task org we needed. I know there was that fine line between the division commander say-

ing, “I can afford two companies” and the brigade commander saying, “I want to send an entire battalion,” knowing we were looking at Fallujah and nobody knew what was going to happen. The brigade S3 – who was my former battalion XO when we did the deployment to Najaf in March – was very focused on ensuring that our movement from the FOB to Camp Fallujah went much better than our movement to Najaf did.

MM: I have one quick question about RCT-7 initially wanting you guys to be the blocking force. Was that going to be similar to what the Black Jack Brigade ended up doing?

PN: It was, and I think it was initially built without the Black Jack Brigade involved. What they wanted from us was to cover the rat lines that came out of the southeastern part of the city.

MM: So once they found out that the Black Jack Brigade was going to be involved, was that the key turning point to have you guys go in with RCT-7 as part of the assault, or did you feel that you kind of convinced them?

PN: I think it was my argument that it was an inappropriate role for us. Again, it’s not a Marine thing but a light infantry thing. Guys talk about MOUT [Military Operations Urban Terrain] being the right place for light infantry, but very few understood the power of a mechanized heavy battalion in an urban environment. As we looked at the plan and talked about the things we could do, they were very concerned about their MSR [Main Supply Route], the one that went from west to east in Fallujah. I think it was Phase Line Fran. That was the only way they were going to be able to resupply the units once they were in the city, which was eventually what drove them to give us the eastern portion of the city with the role of getting to and opening Fran early on.

MM: On my map, I’m showing that’s Highway 10.

PN: That’s the one that goes from the cloverleaf to the west.

MM: Right.

PN: I think it was a combination of both. They realized that they didn’t know how long it would take them to get there and then getting it open fast enough to get some support.

MM: Can you talk me through how you went up and found where you wanted to do the initial breach for this operation? Could you also tell me about how you convinced them to bring a MCLC [Mine Clearing Line Charge] along for the operation?

PN: I actually had to have the MCLC argument with Colonel Pittard first. He initially said, “No, you can’t use a MCLC in an urban environment.” We went back and forth about it, then I showed him a piece of video that my S2 [intelligence officer] had given me of a weapons storage house up in northeastern Fallujah. It had been hit by a 500-pound bomb and, as it detonated, there were literally IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices] surrounding the block that began to detonate in sympathetic detonations. We counted 12. So my discussion was, “If I’ve got to go into this place, I have to be able to go in without fighting IEDs to break the ring to get into the city. I can achieve the same thing with a MCLC that you can with a 500-pound bomb, but it’s much faster and it’s under my control.” That kind of won over Colonel Pittard, and then we had a similar discussion with 7th RCT.

MM: Were they concerned that this may create some civilian casualties or something?

PN: No, that wasn’t it. If you look at the history of what the Marines had done in Fallujah, at all of the feints and those little pinprick fights they had after the initial cordon on the eastern side of the city: the eastern side of Fallujah was essentially the al-Qaeda Maginot line. They had mined it, they had booby-trapped it, they had rockets that literally lined the roofs of the buildings, and that’s where they fully expected the attack from the Marines to come from.

MM: It’s my understanding that you personally supervised and said, “We’re not going to do two breaches; we’re going to do one breach.”

PN: That was kind of a function of terrain. When we got up to Fallujah on about the 5th or 6th of November, we were going to do a leader’s recon the first day we got up there. When we got out there, we were still at that point where we were trying to get the right radio fills. There was also a fire fight between some Marines and some Iraqis up at the cloverleaf up on Highway 10, so the 7th RCT said, “Nope. We’re having problems across the brigade with the fills right now. We don’t want somebody stumbling into a fight so come on back.” The next night we did a full-up rehearsal – essentially drove up as a reconnaissance to the place we’d identified as our breach point. At one time, we looked under the bridge where the railroad tracks were in the northeast corner, but that place was so thickly IED’d that we ended up passing it up. We took the leader tracks across the highway and down towards the northern side of Fallujah – at night – with the intent of actually identifying the place where we wanted to do the breach at. I had Alpha Company all the way up against the highway with Alpha, 2-63 on the other side of our area next to 3d Marine Battalion. I was in between the two of them. The terrain sucked. It was hard to move around in and hard to find a place to penetrate, and then you had that railroad track embankment.

MM: Just how high was that embankment?

PN: It was a good four or five feet. It was not enough to stop the tracks, but the combination of the height plus the metal rails were enough to stop the Iraqi five-ton trucks that were carrying them through the city. So we were really digging around trying to figure out, “Okay, I can get the two heavy guys in there,” but my plan was predicated on going fast, breaking up any organized resistance, and then filling the void with the Iraqi Intervention Force battalion – so it was imperative that I keep them tied behind the two heavy companies. That night, I literally took my Bradley, along with the ops sergeant major in his Bradley, down to the closest point I could find to where I wanted to cross. Eventually I got frustrated because I couldn’t see, so I got out and walked probably within 50 meters of that berm, and 75 meters from the town, looking for where I wanted to go. Probably not the smartest thing I’ve ever done, but I did have a tank sitting 300 meters behind me. I wasn’t worried a whole lot, but quite honestly the first time I’d seen the place was in the dark – and knowing I had to come back and do it again, I was not willing to pick a point to breach without actually walking down the lane myself.

MM: Had you had much interaction by this point with your Iraqi battalion?

PN: Some. They arrived the day after we did, and there was only a span of about 72 hours between when we arrived and when the fight started.

MM: Did you link up at all with Major Fred Miller? I assume he was the lead Iraqi advisor for that effort?

PN: Yes, he was the LNO or their advisor. He showed up as soon as we got there and we talked a little bit about the plan for them. The next morning, he brought the commander and the S3 and a couple other guys up to the TOC [Tactical Operations Center]. We had planned a rehearsal for that day, so we brought them in separately into the plans area of the TOC and walked them through the plan. The next morning, John Reynolds actually walked them through a mini rehearsal by themselves before we started the full rehearsal. They actually went through a pre-order with us, the actual order, a pre-rehearsal and then a rehearsal with us. I found them to be fairly well trained and Fred Miller did a good job of getting them where they needed to go when they needed to be there.

MM: Could you walk me through the night of the breach and your fight all the way down to Phase Line Fran?

PN: We actually started moving in the daylight about early afternoon. The plan was to set the brigade recon troop up in the northeast corner, on the high ground overlooking the city, so he could look down into the daylight into where the breach area was and the two blocks to the south. The bottom line is that I wanted him to shoot anything that moved in that area. I wanted to move the AIF [Anti-Iraqi Forces] that were defending the north side of the city out of that two block area,

so we had room to get the breach in and room to get Alpha, 2-2 deployed and then Alpha, 2-63 around behind him and back out to his flank. Kirk Mayfield sat up in that intersection with three snipers, a Bradley, a tank and a couple Humvees, and literally shot mortars, artillery and anything he could get his hands on any time something moved anywhere near that area.

MM: He was using visual and LRAS [Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System] for that?

PN: He had LRAS up there looking deep, and they're not exactly static. They're driving up and down looking at the crossroads behind the blocks, so as they shoot something, they'd push somebody south along the road. They were looking to see where the guy tried to move away from that area or moved back. Essentially they were ambushing guys. They were chasing movement, or they'd take fire from a building and they'd hit it with direct fire, sniper or mortar fire. As the guy pulled out of the building and tried to drop deeper into the city, they would catch his movement from another block further south. They were very effective in cleaning the area out for several hours. I had one of those CTC [Combat Training Center] moments leaving Camp Fallujah where it starts raining in your face, my FSO [Fire Support Officer] calls up and says his Humvee was dead. The guy sent to get him had a flat tire, and then the quartering party started taking rocket fire so they had to move 1,000 meters. And this was all before we moved out of Camp Fallujah. It cleared up pretty quick. We crossed the LD [Line of Departure] and the recon troop reported his first contact at 0940 in the morning, so he starts calling fire. That goes on until at least 1700, and Sean Sims started his movement out of the assault position at about 1700. The first of two Raven [unmanned aerial vehicle] crashes happens right after that.

MM: Where were those Ravens being launched from?

PN: They were being launched right up there just north of where we intended on breaching. What we found was that our Raven signals were conflicting with the Marine battalion next to us. So it would go up, cross signals with the other one, suddenly you'd be looking through the other guy's Raven, and it would crash.

MM: Who was getting the visuals on this? Whose track was that going through? Was that going back to the heavy TAC [Tactical Command Post]?

PN: It's going back to the TAC. The LD was at 1900, so from 0940 to 1900 Phantom sat up there doing his thing. Sean Sims led the way through the breach and fired a MCLC at 1915. I was literally only a quarter of a mile behind him and watched five or six secondary explosions go off. He was through the breach in about 10 minutes, marked it, and the first vehicle went through at 1940.

MM: What did you use to mark the breach?

PN: Chem lights and engineer tape.

MM: And then he basically headed straight south?

PN: Yeah, straight south. Then right behind him was Alpha, 2-63 – and actually Sean led the way through with a plow tank. We breached it with a MCLC and went through with the two plow tanks, knowing they could take the bulk of the fire coming in. Fortunately, Phantom is still sitting on the high ground, and any time somebody moved towards the breach area, he would engage them with direct fire. So they were able to keep at least the block south of the breach empty of AIF. The plow tank, I think, had either two mines or two IEDs go off on him as he went through, and that was the last guy through the breach that had any issues at all. About an hour after that, Sean starts taking mortar fire, which turns out to be rocket fire from the southern part of the city.

MM: Was anybody picking that up with Q36s or Q37s?

PN: Yes. That's why I can say it was most likely rocket fire because it was coming straight and was barely clearing the buildings.

MM: Were the two Paladins that you brought along responsible for any counter-battery?

PN: No, they were strictly shooting for me. There was a Marine 155 [millimeter] towed battery that was doing counter-battery and then a battery from Black Jack that was supporting the rest of the division. I had my two guns supporting just me. That was huge. Having two Paladins under your control, our two Paladins shot more ammunition than the entire battery that was supporting the Marine Division.

MM: Why do you think that was? Do you think it had something to do with Task Force 2-2 being able to identify targets better than the Marines?

PN: Yes, absolutely. The Marines have a number of things that they're dealing with. On foot in the city, what you can see is 10, 20, 30 yards in front of you. Sometimes you can get to the roof and see further, but it's fleeting. By having that LRAS sitting on the high ground looking down into the city and deep, we were picking up targets frequently and shooting every time we had a chance. One of the other benefits I had was that I was not nearly as worried about dropping rounds closer to me because the bulk of my guys are mounted, and I was very comfortable with the accuracy of my guns. I donated at least one set of tires and a windshield to my own shrapnel in the process, but in an urban environment, the minimum safe distance just doesn't work. The other issue was that I didn't have any air to clear. The Marines were worried about flying their Cobras and other things; and because we're the supporting effort to the supporting effort, I didn't have to worry about clearing

airspace because I wasn't getting any. Nor did I need it because I was moving too quick. It actually worked out very well for us.

MM: After Captain [Paul] Fowler comes through the breach and gets into his blocking position facing west, does the Iraqi battalion come along behind them?

PN: We got hung up for a little while. They got some dismounts through, but they ran into problems getting the trucks over the top of the railroad tracks. This is where I lost the battalion command sergeant major, Sergeant Major [Steve] Faulkenberg. He was supposed to be behind Alpha, 2-63, and he kind of latched into Fred Miller to ensure there wasn't a disconnect. The last thing we wanted was the Iraqis in front of Alpha, 2-63 and fratricide because the guys were confused. So he was there to make sure that somebody had hold of them and knew where they were and got them to where they needed to be. So he was the guy who had the tail end of the tank company and he was going ensure they got to where they were supposed to be.

MM: Was he just in an up-armored Humvee with his driver then?

PN: He's in an up-armored Humvee. Alpha, 2-63 has got two tank platoons, but he's got a Humvee platoon kind of cleaning up his rear end as well. So he's got a Humvee-mounted tank platoon as far as his task force. So it's not a case of one Humvee chasing a bunch of tanks; it's really six or seven of them back there. The IIF got guys across the breach at about 2151, and then we got all hung up with the trucks trying to get across the rails. Eventually we had to have the engineers blow a section of the rails out of the way in order to get the trucks across.

MM: So when you actually did this breach, this was not necessarily through a section of that track. Am I following that correctly?

PN: We went across a section of the track.

MM: But even with that, the trucks were still getting stuck?

PN: No, no difficulties at all. In fact, the railroad track is a good 20 or 30 meters outside the city. We had to actually go up over and down and then drop probably another 30 yards before you hit the road on the lower side of the city.

MM: My understanding is that Sergeant Major Faulkenberg was standing in the breach when he was killed.

PN: No, he was through the breach and moving south behind Avenger. The report I got from his crew was that he was turning the Humvee around and had gotten out to ground guide the Humvee because they couldn't see very well. The gunner was looking one way and the driver the other, and when they looked back

they couldn't find the sergeant major. They then got out of the Humvee and found that he'd been simply shot over his right eye.

MM: It's dark when this happened.

PN: It's dark as hell.

MM: So it really couldn't have been an enemy sniper or something.

PN: We expected that it was just a stray AIF round that came from the Marine sector next to us. We honestly don't know. Nobody saw it happen; all we know is that it did happen and where he was at the time. This was about 2300 and both Alpha, 2-2 and Alpha, 2-63 were in contact. Phantom is taking fire at Phase Line Donna, which is the phase line south, so he's actually a little further down the highway looking into the city.

MM: During this initial phase up until the death of Sergeant Major Faulkenberg, are Alpha Company, 2-63 and Alpha Company, 2-2 under a lot of direct fire this whole time?

PN: Quite a bit.

MM: And these are RPGs [Rocket-Propelled Grenades]?

PN: RPGs, small arms and a little bit of what I say was rocket fire. They were finding a lot of IEDs, buildings that were rigged and HESCOs that have IEDs inside them. There's a lot of fire coming off the rooftops.

MM: What do you know about 1-3 Marines on your right flank? It's my understanding that they had some problems initially getting in.

PN: 1-3 at this point is unable to get through his breach. I think he had two big D9 armored bulldozers. At about 2330, they call and ask to send their tank platoon through our breach. Right after that, he asked if we could help him with his MEDEVACs, because that's the only way out for them. He got dismounts across because they could walk in, but they can't get any of their other stuff across the railroad tracks and through the IED field.

MM: So he got his dismounts across but couldn't get his tanks across, and then had some casualties that you had to evacuate for him?

PN: He evacuated them, but we let them out through our breach. That went on for a while. I don't know how long he used the breach, but it was for a while.

MM: Someone told me in one of the interviews that he was trying to do something called a stealth breach.



PN: That's a typical dismantled breach. You go forward, move dismantles across and clear the far side. Unfortunately, that means you can't use the big stuff to open things up with. Then the terrain was wet and hard to move in, and combined arms breaching is not something the average Marine battalion trains. It's just not a task they do, so when they gave this guy bulldozers and other stuff, they probably got them stuck. They ran into the railroad tracks and these were just things they had not anticipated, I guess.

MM: Talk me through your fight all the way down to Phase Line Fran. It just seems like you guys got there quicker than anyone thought could be done.

PN: We told them that when the sun came up, we'd be sitting on Fran. Remember, we've had eight months of fighting in our AO and, in a number of cases, company-sized fights where the AIF has stood up and said, "We're going to pick a fight with 2-2 today." We'd literally gone through an eight-hour block to block to block fight, so we had – particularly with Sean Sims – a very experienced company commander in that kind of fight. We also had a very good idea of how to fight it. One of the lessons we learned in Muqdadiyah – and one of the things that frustrated me for the longest time – was if you get into a linear fight in an urban area, the guys you are fighting use little white pickup trucks to pick up guys and move them back and forth three blocks deep. So while you'd be fighting on one line of blocks, they'd be two blocks away repositioning and moving around. And unless you were able to get behind them and take away their lines of communications two and three blocks behind from where the fight was, they'd keep it up for hours. By putting the recon troop up on that elevated highway, we took away their deep fight. He was my deep fight. So now these guys that wanted to stay and fight had no place to go. If they stayed, they would end up fighting Sean and Paul Fowler; and if they moved, Kirk Mayfield was killing them. It was literally no contest.

MM: Was Colonel Tucker stunned that you guys got down there that quick?

PN: I don't think he was stunned, I would never say that. He took me at my word when I said I'd be there by whenever. I don't think the division was prepared for us to go as fast as we did. There were several cases where we were flat out told not to move, because we were too far ahead. I think it worked well for Colonel Tucker. It was good news for him because he was able to push the AIF back towards the center city and back in front of the two Marine battalions, so folks weren't getting out.

MM: And because of that, it's my understanding that they did not go with the original plan for you guys just to sweep west and everybody would just continue to go south.

PN: The original plan was that we would stop at Fran and then had a bunch of “on orders.” “On order, you go south and clear the industrial area, or go here, or go here.” There were five or six of them, and it was one of those, “We don’t know what’s going to happen.”

MM: So what happened after you got to Phase Line Fran? They wanted you to go back and do a sweep north again?

PN: We got to Fran, and my original plan was to go hard, go fast and break up any organized resistance – which means there were guys probably left behind us that we left the IIF to deal with initially. In one case, the IIF got in a pretty serious fight, which is where they lost two of their guys, and we lost one of Fred Miller’s guys. I then sent two tanks back to stay with them. One, to bolster their morale and, two, to ensure that nothing got organized behind us. When we got down to Fran and got Fran secure, we were so far ahead of the regimental combat team that, had I gone any further south, it would have created a gap between us and them, and anybody who was still fighting the Marines would have just flooded the gap to get out of the way. So we were kind of stuck. Paul Fowler’s now stuck on the blocking position in the west and I was stuck on Fran because we can’t go until they caught up a little bit. So we used that time to turn around and go back to the place where we’d made contact, knowing that these guys would try to regroup. So we went back and cleared every one of those things again. Sure enough, there were guys out there.

MM: It’s my understanding that Colonel Tucker would come around every day and you guys would have a “chalk talk” – a piece of Plexiglas and plan out the next day’s events. How did that work?

PN: At least once a day. Generally it was towards the end of the day. He would show up and we’d pull out the Plexi-glassed-over imagery with the block map on it. I don’t know if any of the guys showed you, but there was an imagery map of Fallujah that literally had all the blocks numbered. That’s how we kind of adjusted phase lines and CFLs [Coordinated Fire Lines], was by saying, “Hey, I’m going to push into this block and this block and this block. I need to move the division CFL a little further over here.” Instead of a straight line, it kind of bent around my battalion so I was able to occupy more space. We did this from my TAC, from the front of a Humvee. That really became the TTP [Tactics, Techniques and Procedures] for every plan we put together. We’d essentially, with him standing there, sketch out a course of action of what we intended on doing. Then he and his S3 would go back to the regimental TOC and then sketch out the regimental plan that supported that. The regiment essentially wrote the orders to support us, but where we went, they followed.

MM: Can you talk me through how all these embedded reporters ended up with 2-2?

PN: Yeah, it was because nobody else would talk to them. We had a previous relationship with Jane Arraf from CNN, her producer Arwa Damon and cameraman Niel Hallsworth. They'd been out to visit us a couple of months before that and, in fact, they were down in the brigade AO someplace when this started. But the Marines have a very different approach to the press than the Army does, and 1st ID and 3d Brigade, 1st ID had a very different approach than the rest of the Army. They were very open with the press and very accepting of them. So essentially, they got shut out of all the Marine battalions. Many of them had had a bad previous experience with units in the Black Jack battalion and essentially said, "Well, we'll come to 2-2." And the bottom line was that, as long as they didn't get in our way, we would help to ensure that the right message got out by talking to them about what was going on. I think that was a huge advantage to us, because it was obvious that there were no civilians in the eastern part of Fallujah at all. So rather than hear report after report of the possibilities of massive deaths of civilians, we had reporters sending out reports that there were no civilians there. Also, you did get to see what the al-Qaeda guys had done to that part of the city.

MM: Did Major Dave Johnson, the attached historian, take pretty good care of those folks? It's my understanding that they were all in his track.

PN: When the CNN guys showed up, they had so much crap with them. It's not like you could just throw one of those things in the back of your Bradley, so we decided to take a '113 that we had no use for – that we never moved. I had a sergeant first class and a driver who were assigned as the guys who would keep tabs on them, and then Dave Johnson showed up. We put him in there and then Colonel Pittard sent me a guy who was acting as his PAO [Public Affairs Officer]. Between them, they kind of rode herd on most of them. Then I had the standard combat camera folks we had worked with all along who were embedded in the companies, and then we had some additional reporters and it was much easier just to embed them. There were 21 members of the civilian or the military press embedded at one point or another. A lot of them kind of came and went. There were some that were part of the pool. They would come in as far as the TAC and then they'd go back and write a story based on the pool information. I had others who would come in and stay for a couple days, but my experience with the press was different than most other folks. I did not have a problem. In fact, there was a case when we were in the middle of a fight, after we had taken Phase Line Fran. I wound up in a house full of Iraqi Intervention Force guys without my interpreter, and the only other person with me was a female Spanish reporter who spoke Arabic. I was trying to sort out what was going on and she finally said, "You know what? I've always wanted to

be an interpreter.” So she spent the next two hours acting as my interpreter while I was trying to work with these Iraqi guys. Never wrote about it, never talked about it, but that was the kind of experience we had with the majority of the press folks that embedded with us.

MM: Do you recall her name at all?

PN: I could look it up. I’ve got a picture of her somewhere actually standing there interpreting for me. The great thing about having some of the press that close to you as a battalion commander is that you’ve got somebody to challenge what you’re doing, what you’re saying, and you actually have to think things through a lot more. I think it worked out to my advantage. It got to the point that I was able to look at the footage and the stories that CNN was putting together before they went out, and I was able to express an opinion on the quality of what they were doing. There were things they did that I was able to say, “Hey, I’m really uncomfortable with that. I don’t like the way you said it. I don’t like the way you put the scenes together.” And we could have an honest discussion about the effect of that versus what was really happening. In some cases, they would rewrite it or re-say it; on others it was just whatever. The press was at our orders. They were at our rehearsals. And I never worried about one of them giving up something that would jeopardize us. Actually, it was more of a benefit that they knew what was going on so they’d leave us alone in the middle of things and not ask questions. Scott Rutter was a former battalion commander, and it was fortunate they had him up front as well. As a former battalion commander and a member of the media, he was able to explain stuff to the press folks that I just didn’t have to worry about.

MM: Can you talk me through the rest of the fight from Phase Line Fran into the industrial park up until when you guys were ordered to go back to your original positions?

PN: Yeah. On the 11th at 0400, we got an order to hand over our AO north of Phase Line Fran. They essentially expanded 3d Marine Battalion across to take up that space so we could go south. At 0700, we issued a FRAGO to start that attack to clear the industrial area. The intent at this point was to put the F Troop – the BRT [Brigade Reconnaissance Troop] – out on a flank and allow us to get in there. We started again with Alpha, 2-2 and Alpha, 2-63 side by side and went into the industrial area. I would say the industrial area was the heart of the school for terrorists. It had laid out defensive positions, wired for sound between fighting positions. It had mortar positions dug into the rear, IEDs to the flanks. Eventually we’d go back and clear this place again and we found at least one VBIED [Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device] factory, a bunch of IED factories and a couple classrooms – there were literally drawings of how to engage jet aircraft with an RPG. We spent the bulk of that day and that night cleaning out that area and trying to get to the

southern side of the industrial area. In fact, that night I tried to get my TAC in there to set up and stay, but I could not find a place to stop. It had mines around it or IEDs – and everywhere you went, you stumbled over something else. There wasn't a safe place to sit. We continued further south and intended to go down to Phase Line Isabella, which was kind of a negotiation. We wanted to go south because we knew that's where the fight was waiting for us, and south of Phase Line Fran is where things really changed. Up north, it was the remnants of the Fallujah Brigade, and in the south it was clearly nothing but foreign fighters. In fact, we learned later that the foreign fighters had chased out all the native Iraqis in that district months ahead of time. We'd come to a building that had a wall around it and it had a spider hole next to the wall, which would lead under the wall and back into the house. We found out that these guys were staying in these holes at night and, in the morning, they'd go back through the wall, eat something in front of the building, and then go back down the hole. So even if you tried to hit them with artillery or something on the building, you never got to them because they were always in a hole outside. We had some difficulty getting the battlespace south of that area cleared. Originally we talked with RCT-7 about continuing to attack south, got the go ahead to do it, only to be told at about 2000 to stop. They were trying to move portions of the Black Jack Brigade and the Marine tank task force that was down there out of the way, so they weren't caught in our fires. We were finally given a limit of advance on what we called Phase Line Isabella, which in hindsight was horrible, because it was dead center in the middle of this built up area. Not knowing any better, we didn't think it was a big deal. We started this attack at about 2000 at night at Phase Line Heather – actually, we were stopped at 2000. At 2330, we were able to start again and attacked until about 0530 in the morning when we hit Phase Line Isabella. As the sun came up, all these guys came out of their holes.

MM: So that's on the 12th?

PN: Yes, about 0500 or 0600. So we're pulling our NODs [Night Observation Devices] off and trying to sort things out – and we've been on the move for 10 hours now. Alpha, 2-2 is now to the west and Alpha, 2-63 is to the east. They actually switched sides of the battlefield as we went south, knowing that the bulk of the fight would be to the west, because literally we're so far ahead of the Marines now that anyone who wants to fight can gravitate that way. So we hit the limit of advance. The sun is coming up, we're pulling NODs off. I'm sitting to the side of this open area next to a wall and these guys come out of the holes and start shooting RPGs. I lost count after about 12 or 13. Sean Sims was to the west side of this open area and he had an RPG actually skip off the ground and penetrate one of the tires of his Humvee. It didn't explode, though.

MM: Was he in it at the time?

PN: No, it was just one of his Humvees. He was actually in his Bradley. So he's trying to do a recovery op and these guys are now around us. My biggest concern was that I've got AIF and al-Qaeda guys between me and the Iraqi Intervention Force battalion, and the last thing in the world that I wanted was a cat fight going on between us. There was a tank probably 150 meters from me who was in and out of contact with a guy, and he eventually takes an RPG shot to the turret. It splits the outside of the turret but doesn't penetrate the inside. So I've got a tank that's on fire, and the guys never get out of it. It backed up a little bit and it's almost like you see the tank shake its head a little bit and then go right back after the enemy. I've got the scout platoon that's on the ground next to me in contact with four or five different pockets of guys to the southeast. Sean is now in contact to the southwest, Alpha, 2-63 in contact to the northeast. About this time, I get the Alpha, 2-2 XO, whose Bradley is coming across this open area – he stops about 15 meters in front of me, kind of pointing the other way. He takes an RPG round that skims right over the top of the turret and, unfortunately, catches him standing up in the turret looking behind him. It mortally wounds him. This is where we lost Lieutenant [Edward] Iwan, who is Sean Sims' XO. This is probably 0620 in the morning. It takes us a while to sort this out. We're stuck because it's the limit of advance and I've got guys behind me now between me and the IIF – so I made the decision to back up. We backed up two phase lines to the northern part of that section of the city. I think it was Phase Line Lana. We were essentially trying to get everybody back and reorganized and get the IIF tightened up behind us. Rather than go fast and break things up, we're going to have to go through every single room of every single house on every single street from here to the end of the city to get rid of these guys. We essentially sit on Isabella that night to get the 8th Marine Battalion down to catch up with us, so we've got somebody on our flank. That night we issued a warning order to do another attack on the 13th. Then that night, we used AC-130s and anything we could get our hands on and literally pounded anything that moved in that part of the city.

MM: That would have been anything south of Isabella?

PN: Anything south of Lana. We sat on the north side of Lana and the CFL was about 200 yards south of that. There was nothing out there. The 8th Marines were still all the way back up on Fran, still trying to move. The morning of the 13th, we issued an op order for an attack on Phase Line Lana, for an attack that was supposed to LD at 1400. Kirk Mayfield came to me and said, "I know that Alpha, 2-2 is smoked." So he offered to take on clearing the two blocks south of Phase Line Lana. We decided to have him come from the east and sweep west across the front of the LD to open up some maneuver room for Alpha, 2-63 and Alpha, 2-2. Then he would establish a set of blocking positions in the far west. His intent was to attack south, come back north again, move over to the west in front of 8th

Marines, and then attack south again. The intent was to get these guys up and get them moving, knowing that they would move and get Alpha in front of us. Use the brigade recon troop to kill them once they started moving, and then roll over and finish them by using our mobility to move faster than they could adjust to it. The technique we pushed was to use those tracks to move around faster than the AIF could think about what they were going to do next. At 1030 – and, again, this was going to start at 1400 – Sean Sims went into a building with the intent of putting his FO [Forward Observer] on top of the building. It was one of those buildings that, apparently, a guy had been living in a hole outside of. One of Sean's squads had been in the building the night prior, and then as he was readjusting guys, they moved out of the building. Sean asked if the building was clear; they said it was, that they were in there last night. So he went into the building and, apparently, this guy had come out of his hole and into the kitchen was digging around for food when Sean walked in the door and walked right into the guy. So about 1030, the day after we lost the company XO, we lost the company commander.

MM: Was there a fight that ensued to go in and get him? Did they get the guy that killed Sims?

PN: The guy who killed Sean shot one of his own guys in there as well. The guy had his AK on full auto and just pulled the trigger and then took off. So there was some confusion as those guys extracted him from the building. At the same time, we're moving the brigade recon through, which was in a fight of its own. After that happened, I pulled the Alpha Company first sergeant – who had been acting as the platoon leader, who'd been acting as the XO, back up to the TAC just to make sure they could get the company back together enough to get this attack going. The bottom line was: the only way to put an end to this fight was to clean the area out, and I did not want to wait another day. I was mostly concerned about the foreigners having time to regroup, reorganize and come up with a plan. Because the Marines are moving so slow, the foreigners who are very well trained are having time to regroup, change their tactics, come up with plans, and are doing some damage to them. Whereas in our case, they didn't have time to think – and I wanted to keep it that way.

MM: And that's pretty much verified by some of the radio intercepts in the first 48 hours of your attack down there.

PN: All that just reinforced upon us that we knew what the effect would be from our fights in Muqdadiyah, and we knew what we were capable of from the northern part of Fallujah. What we did not want to do was stop. We just did not want to turn this into a deliberate fight, where I take a turn and then the other guy takes a turn, then I take a turn. I had a short discussion with the first sergeant and the platoon leader. I told the first sergeant that I wanted to continue the attack and

that he was capable of it. Being the great guy First Sergeant Smith is, he said, “Absolutely,” and he took the company south.

MM: At that time, he is really in essence the new company commander in there, right?

PN: He was acting company commander, and I trusted him to do it. Not that I didn't have faith in the platoon leader. The young platoon leader was an okay platoon leader, but the first sergeant I trusted to take that company and he did, without a doubt. We got delayed a little bit crossing the LD waiting on 8th Marines to catch up, and that cost us probably three hours. We were supposed to LD at 1300 with the two line companies. We didn't LD until 1615, and we went straight south as hard as we could. At 1700, we came out the southern side of the city, went back north, did a hot rearm/refuel, and went back over in front of the 8th Marines. I went up on the roof of a building with the commander of the 8th Marines and the regimental commander and did some quick coordination about where we were, where they had problems, where we were going, and then essentially attacked south again. At this point, the brigade recon troop in the strong point is literally seeing guys grouping in the streets in pockets of six to ten, confused about where to go, because there'd just been a huge fight next to them and now we're coming at them again. So the brigade recon crews did quite a bit of damage to guys who were lost and confused.

MM: They were just continuing the drop those 155s on them from the Paladins?

PN: In some cases, they were using tank main gun rounds straight down the streets. This is one of the places we realized that the over-pressure from a 120 tank main gun round is almost as lethal in an urban environment as the round itself. It is physically painful to have that thing go off next to you if you're not inside a vehicle, so imagine what it's like in front of it. In fact, we used it quite effectively sometimes to get guys up and out of their holes. You couldn't stand it. It would make your ears bleed, your nose bleed. We had them up and moving, and it got dark about this time. We had AC-130s supporting us; we had armed Predators. My assistant S2, Natalie Friel, was back in the TOC looking at a GVS downlink that the division had deployed with us, chatting with the armed Predator pilots who are now engaging targets that are less than 350 meters away from me. It was awesome to experience, to literally listen to the conversations on the radio: “I got eight guys just went into this building. Can I shoot them?” “Absolutely.” The hard part about moving around in the dark is that we eventually had two tanks fall essentially into collapsed tunnels and, in both cases, their front ends are literally sticking straight up in the air. We finished the attack at 2200, but it takes us another three hours to extract the tanks from the battlefield.



MM: Are you able to get any M-88s down there to do that?

PN: Yes, we sure did. An '88 will go anywhere you want it to, it just takes time.

MM: On the 15th and 16th, you continued to battle south?

PN: We went back up and we just did it again, although the contact on the 15th and 16th was negligible. That last night fight, I think we destroyed any remnant of any organized resistance there had been. After that, the only guys we ran across were the ones that weren't smart enough to get out or couldn't. There was very little left after that point, but we still went building to building and room to room and went through every one of them. At that point, we started clearing the caches. A credit to the IIF guys – who pulled up behind us – without us telling them to, they were re-clearing the buildings behind us. A pretty good TTP: As we went through an area and they flooded into it, they would immediately section off blocks and send platoons out and start clearing the buildings again. Then they started pulling the caches out.

MM: So would you basically describe operations from the 15th to the 20th as more of a mopping up type operation?

PN: I would call it a deliberate effort to clear everything. We even went back up into the industrial section and opened up every single garage and building in it. On the 16th, though, we did send the headquarters section from Alpha, 2-63 and a combined arms platoon – two Bradleys, two tanks – up to work with the 3d Marine Battalion, which was still cleaning up some pockets of guys up north. Paul Fowler took his XO and a platoon up north and left his other platoon to work with the Iraqi Intervention Force guys. He went up and spent the better part of a day moving from hot point to hot point clearing for the Marines. He was a very active QRF [Quick Reaction Force] for them for a day. On the 17th, we moved back up to the industrial area and started hunting for all the caches and the IED factories. We were told at one point on the 18th to go all the way south out of the city and down towards the canal. Apparently, somebody thought there was still stuff down there; as it turned out, though, there was nothing out there but a minefield. That's pretty much what we did until the 20th when we loaded up and pulled back up and went back to Camp Fallujah. On the 21st and 22d, we redeployed from Fallujah back to FOB Normandy. At the same time, there were issues about the loss of two soldiers from the task force, back in my own AO, the last week I was gone.

MM: Was that due to IEDs?

PN: One was an IED and one was an RPG ambush in an area where there had never been an attack before.

MM: Where were these soldiers from?

PN: One was from Charlie Company and one was from Alpha, 1-6 FA [Field Artillery]. The Paladin section I took to Fallujah was not the one from my artillery battery. It was actually the one from FOB Gabe. I had the artillery battery headquarters, a platoon, a Q36 radar and some other stuff that sat up on what we call FOB Echo. It was up on a huge ridgeline above us. It also had the division retrans and a bunch of other stuff there.

MM: Tell me about Major Lisa Dewitt. The standard interviews I've been getting say that basically she was a stud and the greatest cutter of all time.

PN: Hopefully you can do an interview with her.

MM: I hope to do that this Sunday.

PN: She's a one of a kind. When I deployed to Iraq, I was given a surgeon who was less than qualified to do what he was supposed to. In fact, at some point after we got there, we found out that he had failed his boards. And this is a PROFIS [Professional Filler System] doctor. I had a phenomenal PA [Physician's Assistant] and a phenomenal medical platoon, but my complaint to anybody who would listen was, "Here I am 60 miles away from my brigade headquarters, I'm a 30-minute helicopter flight to any help, and I've got the worst doctor in the brigade." So they agreed to take him off my hands. I guess Lisa Dewitt joined the Army and previously had been the head of the emergency room physicians residency in Miami-Dade Hospital. She decided to join the Army and get away from that life for a while and wound up in Kuwait. Doctors normally do a 90-day rotation and then go back, but she got to the end of her 90 days and said, "I'm not ready to go back. I'm liking life and I want to see Iraq." So she hitchhiked a ride into Iraq with a HET [Heavy Equipment Transporter] company that was moving north, and was eventually found by the DISCOM [Division Support Command] commander on FOB Speicher. The DISCOM commander, being a great guy who knows of my problem, he finds out that she's a qualified and very good emergency room physician, so he said, "I have just the place for you."

MM: At that time, when he finds her, she's just literally on vacation or something?

PN: I don't know what she was thinking. There are questions I never ask. Anyway, Dan Mitchell brings her up, introduces me and says, "I realize what this looks like, but if you want to keep her and she wants to stay, great, it works for us." And we lived happily ever after. It was phenomenal and it was a blessing to us, because there were many cases where she was able to keep guys alive who would not have otherwise made it to the hospital – both Iraqi and American.

MM: Did she stay with you guys after?

PN: She did. There was a period in the later summer, early fall, where she was making noise about going home. We had a long talk and finally all she wanted out of me was a motorcycle to ride. The Iraqis had found her a motorcycle to putt around on, so I coughed up the money for the Iraqi motorcycle to let her ride around the FOB. After that, she decided to stay with us until we redeployed home.

MM: Is there any other important information that you'd like me to know and get on the record about this operation? Maybe one of the most important lessons learned that you'd like to get out there to the rest of the Army?

PN: It comes back to leadership in virtually everything you do. There are a million different stories I could tell you about things that happened or things that people did – and not just the guys from my unit. A conversation I had with General [John] Batiste after Command Sergeant Major Faulkenberg was killed – he was very supportive. Then after Sean Sims was killed, I called General Batiste and he asked me what I wanted. The story of Doug Walter taking Sean's place is an interesting one. Doug was the previous commander of Alpha, 2-2 and he got an intestinal parasite that made him very sick to the point that, right before we left for Iraq, we took him out of command and could not deploy him. So literally Sean Sims assumed command of Doug's company the day he landed in Kuwait. Doug stayed back as the rear detachment S3 for the brigade, and eventually they were able to control this disease he'd acquired in Kosovo. They brought him down in late September, early October, and he was eventually going to take command of my HHC [Headquarters and Headquarters Company]. In fact, when we left for Fallujah, he was on the FOB getting ready to do inventories to take command of the headquarters company. Sean Sims was one of his best friends. When Sean was killed, General Batiste asked me what I wanted and I told him there was only one guy that could step in and take this company in the condition they were in – and that was Doug Walter. He was very well respected by both his first sergeant and by the soldiers in the company. And General Batiste, without any discussion, launched a set of helicopters to FOB Normandy – and our conversation took place at about 2100. At 0400 the next morning, Doug was sitting on the ground with me in Fallujah, and at 0730 he crossed the LD on one of those last clearance missions to clear the buildings. Ken Adgie, who was the brigade S3, was literally coordinating Chinook flights to go from FOB to FOB on the 1st ID AO to pick up 155 and mortar ammo for us – the stuff we were going black on, or close to it. They were making it happen.

MM: It's my understanding that you guys fired so much artillery ammo that you basically depleted a large majority of the 1st ID's artillery.

PN: We put a hole in everybody's stuff for a while. Those two Paladins – the guys were literally driving their ammo carrier up to the other batteries that were there at Camp Fallujah, getting ammo from them, driving back over to the Paladins, shooting it, then going back and getting more while they were waiting on their own ammo to come in. There are many different stories we could go through about people who were just phenomenal. The interpreters. We took seven or eight of our own interpreters out of Muqdadiyah to Fallujah with us – voluntarily. And time after time, you would find an Iraqi interpreter carrying an AK-47 standing next to an American soldier. And in more than one case, an Iraqi interpreter with an AK-47 pulling guard while a medic was working on a wounded American soldier. They fought just as hard as we did. These are the kinds of things you don't see in the news and the press, but they're just amazing to watch happen. The biggest lesson learned is about leadership. It's all about common sense and leadership. John Reynolds and I talked about writing a book titled, "Leadership in a Plug-and-Play War." Literally you're pulling bits and pieces out of lots of different places and launching it somewhere on a moment's notice. I don't know if you're aware, but a month after I got back from Fallujah, I got a call and in less than 24 hours launched my Charlie Company from FOB Normandy up to Mosul. In less than 18 hours notice, he moved. We had that kind of thing going on all over the place. Guys were showing up and were literally able to plug into whatever unit and be able to function and perform – particularly if there's a big fight coming up – without missing a beat, and that's what I'd call my relationship with 7th RCT. Not knowing what any other folks on my staff have said, but I don't have any bad stories to talk about.

MM: Yeah, and I haven't got any from anybody either. Just some minor things. They talked about the Ravens crashing and that sort of thing, but everybody said they were great to work with. As part of this project I'm doing right now, I'm also covering 2-7 over with RCT-1 and I'm getting a different impression of things over there. I'm nowhere near putting their picture together. The key here with you guys, I think, is that you had Dave Johnson and all the reporters. For whatever reason, there's a phenomenal amount of information on 2-2.

PN: There is. It is very well documented. We hope it turns into a good book.

MM: I hope so too.

# **Lieutenant Colonel James Rainey**

## **19 April 2006**

MM: My name is Matt Mathews [MM] and I'm a historian for the Combat Studies Institute. Today is 19 April 2006 and I'm interviewing Lieutenant Colonel James Rainey [JR] who commanded the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment (2-7 CAV), or Task Force 2-7, during Operation Phantom Fury. Could you please start off by giving me your full name and some background information on where you were born, where you went to school, how you got commissioned and your assignments up until Phantom Fury?

JR: My name is James E. Rainey. I was born in Brockton, Massachusetts, but I grew up in Akron, Ohio, went to college at Eastern Kentucky University and was commissioned in 1987 as an infantry officer. My assignment history is as follows: I started out as a light infantryman in the 82d Airborne Division and moved to the 3d Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment. I commanded a company in the 1st Cavalry Division (1st CAV) and a company in the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment, the Old Guard. I was a Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) intern for a year, did Command and General Staff College (CGSC), the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), and then I was a division planner and chief of plans for the 2d Infantry Division. I went to the 1st CAV and was the operations officer (S3) for 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment (1-9 CAV). I was the executive officer (XO) for the III Corps commander. I went to the initial invasion of Iraq as an augmentee and I worked for General William Wallace in his command and control vehicle (C2V) as a planner. Then I went back to 1st CAV and was the XO for 3d Brigade, and then took command of 2-7 CAV.

MM: Could you talk me through the whole history of 2-7 being deployed to Kuwait and then eventually up to Iraq?

JR: They deployed as part of the division and 2-7 CAV was task organized to the 39th Enhanced Separate Brigade (ESB), an Arkansas National Guard brigade that was part of the 1st CAV. 3d Brigade of the 1st CAV and the 39th swapped battalions, so 2-7 went to the 39th, did reception, staging, onward-movement and integration (RSOI) through Kuwait, and then moved forward up to Camp Taji, Iraq

MM: Did that swap of battalions actually take place while you were in Kuwait?

JR: We were task organized for Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and then we deployed pure and then task organized formally in Kuwait, but the 39th was integrated into the 1st CAV back at Fort Hood. But for accuracy, I was the 3d Brigade XO during that deployment, and then I assumed command of 2-7 in Iraq

on 17 May. I was not the 2-7 commander during the train up, the RSOI portion, the move forward and the first 30 days or so in Iraq.

MM: What happened when you first found out that the Marines might be using you guys in Fallujah?

JR: Before we start on that, I need to talk a minute about the 1st Cavalry Division. The 1st CAV Division was absolutely an incredible team and I'll tell you why. The 3d Brigade commander, Colonel Mike Murray, got 2-7 ready to go through the train up, JRTC, deployment, equipping. He was an absolutely outstanding commander and fully adhered to the Army ethic and value system where if you task organize somebody, you send them a great unit that's well equipped. General Peter Chiarelli, our division commander, it's a matter of record what he did; but as far as building a team ethic, Colonel Murray and our CG were behind that, as well as the cultural aspect and the train up for this unique kind of warfare. Lieutenant Colonel Larry Phelps, the G4 – the effort that he put into 1st CAV from a logistics standpoint in terms of equipping us, making the transition to up-armored Humvees, having everything we needed to fight – logistically speaking, it could not have been better. There were four infantry battalions in the 1st CAV, all of them great units. It's important from my standpoint that people understand that the reason 2-7 went initially to Najaf was about what we were doing at the time and what those other three infantry battalions were doing. Every brigade has got one infantry battalion. 1-5 CAV is fighting every single day in Sadr City at this time. 2-5 CAV is the main effort for 2d Brigade. 1-9 CAV is with 3d Brigade and owns Haifa Street in downtown Baghdad, which was one of the toughest places in Baghdad. 2-7 CAV is working for the 39th north of Baghdad and we had an important daily mission. We had a huge area and our primary mission up there was to protect Taji – which is where all of our aviation assets were and where our Division Support Command (DISCOM) was based out of. We were out fighting every day and we had 685 square kilometers that we owned up there. But the area we were in was not someplace where we were winning the hearts and minds of the people. It was 90 percent Sunni with the other 10 percent being Wahhabist/Salafist kinds of guys. So when General Chiarelli was tasked to give a battalion up for Najaf, I personally think he could have sent any one of his battalions and they would have had the same success that 2-7 did. It was a tactical decision based on the fact that the other three battalions were more decisively engaged and more critical to the overall division fight than us.

MM: Could you expand a little bit on what it was like to work with the 39th ESB, Arkansas National Guard? That has to be something fairly unique, I would think.

JR: I wasn't with them for the train up and deployment, so I have a limited scope – but if I could, I will get to that later. Let me go back to the teamwork thing with the 1st CAV. I called Lieutenant Colonel Gary Volesky, the 2-5 commander, and talked to him because I knew he was fighting platoon- and company- sized fights every day, and actually went to school on what he was doing. They developed some great stuff. They developed this box formation for urban fighting that was a very good, non-doctrinal tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) based stuff. I also talked to Lieutenant Colonel Myles Miyamasu with 1-5, and his guys were down in Najaf at the same time 2-7 was. Lieutenant Colonel Tom MacDonald down in 1-9 had a really complex civilian population mixed in with insurgents down in Haifa Street. They developed these sniper stay-behind TTPs and all kinds of other stuff. So I went to school on all of three of these guys and then shared those TTPs. To be honest with you, the armor battalions we had were all fantastic, too; it was just that this urban environment was a mech infantry fight, so it probably had to be an infantry battalion. I just cannot say enough about what a great team we had, and that's very important to me that that comes out. Anyway, 2-7 gets sent to Najaf really based upon the availability of forces. We fought well down there. It was a tough fight and we were successful there based on a lot of things, primarily great young leaders and noncommissioned officers (NCOs). We worked with the Marines there as well, so when it came time to go to Fallujah, 2d Brigade got tasked, the Marines asked for an extra battalion and 2-7 was the path of least resistance. The same factors applied. We were up north and the other battalions were critical aspects of their brigade combat team fights. I did hear that General John Sattler did ask for 2-7 CAV to come back, but I'm not privy to his conversations. General Chiarelli sent us over there and so that's how 2-7 ended up in Fallujah. Back to your original question, the 39th ESB thing presented a lot of challenges. At different times during the year, we had parts of four different National Guard battalions placed under the operational control of (OPCON'd to) 2-7, and we worked through a lot of things. My personal experience would tell me that, about 90 days into a military operation, a National Guard platoon or company either is already or becomes a very competent platoon, equal to a baseline Active Duty unit. Also, in the type of fighting going on in Iraq, there's some huge value-added in that the soldiers are generally older, more mature and they bring some very unique skill sets. The National Guard unit that was OPCON'd to us for the duration – Bravo Company, 2d Battalion, 162d Infantry Regiment (2-162) – the company commander was a policeman full time.

MM: Were they an Oregon National Guard outfit?

JR: That's right. When it came time for 2-7 to work with the Iraqi police, he really brought something to the fight that the Active Duty guys didn't. As far as above company level, there are issues and there are successes. I was a battalion

commander, so my ability to comment on my higher headquarters is obviously not where my expertise lies.

MM: Major Tim Karcher was telling me that when word started filtering down that something might be coming up and 2-7 might be deployed to Fallujah, he was having a hard time getting the information he required from the 39th ESB. He used some contacts he had at division to find out what was going on.

JR: That's probably accurate. Major Karcher and Major Scott Jackson, the S3 and XO respectively, came down from division and corps, so that was a huge advantage that 2-7 had as far as reachback. I wouldn't say that they were working around the 39th; I'd say that the 39th was focused on their area of operations (AO). Our ability to get information was enhanced by the fact that those guys had reachback and experience from those two higher headquarters.

MM: Can you start from the beginning, from when you guys first figured something was going to happen, the planning that went into that, and how you first made contact with the Marines? Basically the initial stages of what happened.

JR: We received a warning order from the 1st CAV, and everybody kind of knew something was going down in Fallujah. The Marines had asked for more forces and we got that warning order probably about 3 November. We did put together a small package with Tim Karcher and some intel guys – I think Captain Mike Erwin was probably with them – put them on a helicopter and send them out to Fallujah. We found out we were going to be working with the Marines' 1st Regimental Combat Team (RCT), got them linked up and got them started in the planning process. Simultaneously, Scott Jackson and our forward support company commander, Jake Brown, started working on the movement aspects of it. 2d Brigade, Black Jack, had OPCON of us for movement.

MM: I wasn't aware of that.

JR: We moved with them, doing a tactical road march; and it was a deliberate decision, as a show of force, not to put our guys on heavy equipment transporters (HETs). So we did the movement from Taji out to Fallujah, closed on Camp Fallujah initially, got into the process of planning with 1st RCT, conducting reconnaissance and getting our logistics footprint set. We had a great move; it's not a simple matter to move and deploy in the middle of the night. 2d Brigade Combat Team (BCT) had a good plan, it was well supported, and then they chopped us over to 1st RCT.

MM: Did any of your units encounter any sort of enemy ambushes or IEDs?

JR: No. We didn't make contact, and I don't know if 2d Brigade did or not. They had moved several elements ahead of 2-7 so any contact they would have



had on the route, they would have cleared. The fact that we had no contact is a testament to their reconnaissance moving ahead of us. So we get in and I had been talking to Tim Karcher on the phone. The initial plan he got from 1st RCT was a very narrow penetration into the city along one axis of advance. When I got my first brief on the plan from our guys, I liked the fact that they had a pretty good intel situation – unlike Najaf, where we had no idea where the enemy was or what he was doing or how many civilians were there. The Marines had done a very solid intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). They knew where the mosques were, they knew how many civilians were in the city, they had pretty good numbers on the enemy, they'd done a lot of analysis and they had really good maps, overhead imagery and such, so I felt really good about that. I liked the fact that 2-7 was going to be the main effort for 1st RCT, who was the main effort for the Marine Division (MARDIV) – so obviously I liked that for a lot of reasons. I knew their doctrine was the same as ours in terms of a main effort, and I knew we'd be resourced in terms of fires and collection assets as we needed to be. What I didn't like was the very narrow, limited mission. I had not talked to Colonel Michael Shupp yet. Tim briefed me on that. Tim had been working with their S3 guys and he kind of explained that that might not be the optimal use of a mech battalion. I finally met Colonel Shupp: great guy, all about team building, and he went out of his way to make sure we had everything we needed. We were well received. It sounds like a simple thing, but rolling in there and having clean tents and places to bed down our guys, the chow plan – things like that went a long way to getting us off on the right footing with them. I was very impressed. He's obviously a very competent, successful infantryman, a warrior spirit kind of guy and very aggressive. He was really looking forward to finishing the fight in Fallujah. Initially, my concern was that we needed more of a frontage, the ability to get more of our firepower into the fight than we could get on one main route. I looked to the west and there was a major road a couple blocks to the west.

MM: What's this Phase Line Henry?

JR: No. We were oriented on Henry. The initial mission we had was Henry; and that was a battalion-sized penetration on that two-lane road and then turn west towards the two bridges in the city. That was the penetration. I asked Colonel Shupp for some more battlespace and explained to him that Route Henry was an axis of advance that would let us get maybe two tanks into the fight at one time. We had 14 tanks and 30 Bradleys and I really felt like we could do more for the RCT if we had more battlespace. So I looked west for more space because the east was a very limited option, because that part of the city had the older Byzantine type architecture, the streets don't make sense, etc. He told me he did not want to buy off more battlespace. He liked the fact that he was the main effort. He was concentrated on one quarter of the city, 7th RCT had the other three, and he didn't

want to go that way. Obviously, he was the commander and so that was fair. The initial mission had 3d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment (3-1) attacking the Jolan Park, which was the geographical center of gravity of the area 1st RCT had. It was the only open area and was the logical rallying point. There was a Ferris wheel, you can see it pretty well from a distance, and 1st RCT's intel assessment was that the enemy would use that as a rallying point. So 1st RCT thought the enemy would fight all over the city and then fall back to Jolan Park as a final defense; and the MARDIV's plan was to directly attack that with 1st RCT as the main effort and give the other three quarters of the city to 7th RCT. As we're looking at this – Tim Karcher, Mike Erwin, Captain Dave Gray, the intel guys, and my fires guy – we came up with an option that would take Alpha 2-7 and attack as the 2-7 main effort, do a frontal assault, direct attack on about three different roads, with a platoon on each road. We thought we could seize the Jolan Park with Alpha 2-7, acknowledging that we weren't going to go building to building. We'd kill anybody we saw that presented themselves, within the rules of engagement (ROE), but we were not going to clear towards the Jolan Park; we were just going to attack it and then seize it. At the same time, we could put Charlie 3-8 on Henry and still get everything in the fight that we would anyway – because we could only get a couple tanks up front – and use them as a supporting effort to Alpha 2-7. So we would move them on parallel and Charlie 3-8 secures the flank, still conduct the penetration and still kill anybody that wants to fight. We offered that up to 1st RCT and Colonel Shupp said that if we could do that, it would be great, so that's the plan we settled on. Alpha 2-7 as the main effort, frontal assault, north to south, with two tasks: destroy enemy forces and seize the Jolan Park. That was supposed to take about a day. 3-1 would follow Alpha 2-7 and do the detailed clearance to complete the destruction of the enemy. They would use the Jolan Park to do a passage of lines through us and then turn west down to the river, while 3d Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment (3-5) secured the initial foothold in the corner and also had a detailed clearance: a complete-the-destruction type mission. It wasn't a negotiation. Colonel Shupp denied my first request and granted my second request. He listened to feedback and made a decision, just like good commanders do. The fact that he was receptive to listening and acknowledged the fact that we probably were the experts on how to employ mechanized assets impressed me very much.

MM: When the Marines blow the breach to the west of the train station, can you talk me through how your companies came through there and where they went from that point?

JR: Sure – but let me go back to one thing that's important about the 1st Cavalry Division. I read a lot about guys not having stuff and being poorly equipped. In 2-7, we had everything we needed. The only Humvees we had down there were the up-armored '1114s. We had M1A2 tanks, all with the system enhancement

package (SEP), with lots of parts. We had M2A3 Bradleys – the best Bradleys that we had. We had the new 120 millimeter digital mortars; we had Barrett sniper rifles. Despite the fact that General Chiarelli had the main effort division in Baghdad and had already given up a brigade and given up 2-7, I felt like 2-7 needed a third company, which originally I had been directed to leave with the 39th so they'd have some mech forces. This is Charlie 2-7. So when I briefed General Chiarelli and briefed him on our plan, he asked me if I needed anything and I told him I really felt like I needed that third company – and it was really a difference of a platoon in terms of combat power. I was taking one of Charlie 2-7's platoons anyway. I wanted to take a second platoon and a company headquarters. I really thought having Captain Chris Brooke and his guys and the ability to have a third company headquarters was critical to our mission; and, at great pain to the 1st Cavalry Division, General Chiarelli told me that if I needed it, to take it. Then we had had a problem with the enlisted terminal air controller (ETAC) – the same thing from Operation Anaconda all the way through OIF II. The ETAC thing is a huge problem. Not because they're not great guys, but because there aren't enough of them and we can't certify Army guys as ETACs. It's something that needs to be fixed in the Army and it's definitely an after-action review (AAR) point. But when we had not had ETACs in Najaf, we really had problems because of that. So when I asked for ETACs, General Chiarelli gave us an air liaison officer (ALO) captain at our battalion headquarters and ETACs with all three of our companies, which was basically almost the entire 1st CAV allotment of Air Force ETACs. We also had a lawyer. I felt that since we were operating independently of the division, I asked if I could have a lawyer and I was given one, a captain.

MM: Why did you feel you needed a lawyer?

JR: As it turned out, it didn't turn out to be a big deal in Fallujah because our ROE were actually pretty good. But in Najaf it was just torturous in terms of ROE. Just having the ability to have a guy in our tactical operations center (TOC) that we could talk to about these things was great. And this is illustrative of what kind of commander General Chiarelli was. He'd give a commander a mission, the commander asks for something, and he provides everything we needed. So that's how we got the third company. Getting back to your last question: We were leading with tanks, and the intel we had was that the area from the railroad tracks to the road was mined. We had brought rollers from Charlie 3-8 and, in all honesty, we had not done a good job maintaining them because we hadn't used them in the six months that we'd been there. It wasn't for lack of patriotism – I mean, the mechanics were busy and we had to prioritize our stuff; and since we weren't using them, they got pushed aside. So it was hard to get the rollers back working. Anyway, we were going to follow the Marine breach with our lead tanks and, once they got a lane set, we were going to roll it. What really ended up happening was that the breach

was very hard to get in. The light engineer company did a great job, but in terms of equipment and getting down there and actually breaching a railroad track on a trestle, it was not a simple thing. We actually didn't get through the breach until 0130 and there wasn't a lane, so Charlie 3-8's lead tank – Staff Sergeant Reyes was the tank commander (TC) - led with a roller. I remember doing breaches at the National Training Center (NTC) as a younger officer thinking, "When the hell are we ever going to do this shit?" and here we go. So we rolled the lane, marked it, the rollers went through the open area and hit the main road, and the breach was easy to find because the kid who was doing it just jammed the rollers right into the wall on the other side of the road. To get a roller off a tank, you have to dismount the tank; so now we've got two tanks through the breach and a young hero gets to jump out of his tank in contact to get the roller off, because you can't turn with it. He gets out and drops the roller – now we've got a lane marked and we've got a good point to orient on because the roller's stuck in the wall on the other side of the road. Charlie 3-8 led, then myself and Major Karcher and our command section. They turn west on the initial road and then turn south on Henry into heavy contact. We were followed by Alpha 2-7 and I'd given them three axes of advance, a platoon on each: one tank in the middle, mech on each side. They conducted an attack in zone oriented on the Jolan Park. Charlie 2-7 was initially the reserve and they had to be prepared to follow and assume. If Alpha didn't make it to Jolan Park, the main mission was to put Charlie 2-7 behind Alpha and have them do a passage of lines and complete the mission of securing Jolan Park. The secondary mission was if Charlie 3-8 couldn't get far enough down Henry, I was going to put them in there. We didn't see them doing a forward passage of Charlie, because anything tanks couldn't do we weren't going to do with Bradleys. But I talked to Chris Brooke and Charlie 2-7 and said they may have to come in and secure parts of Henry that would let Charlie 3-8 continue the attack south, which is eventually what ended up happening. Before all of this, when we were still at Camp Fallujah, once I understood the mission I was very interested in getting up there, getting eyes on the objective and conducting some reconnaissance. I sent Scott Jackson out, he had picked our assembly area to the north, and it was a real good location. We were pretty close, but this wasn't conventional doctrine: the enemy could hit us with mortars at Camp Fallujah, so we went with "closer is better," shorter turns to the fuel point. We were north of the train station, up pretty close. The RCTs had been doing limited objective attacks, reconnaissance's by fire, and the purpose was to keep the enemy guessing about our orientation and when we were coming. So 7th RCT was attacking the city from the east and the south and 1st RCT was doing some limited objective attacks with dismounted infantry guys from the north. Colonel Shupp agreed to let us go up and do one of these limited objective attacks the night before the actual attack. He was rightly concerned and didn't want us to take too many tanks and Bradleys and tip our hand. Our thought was we could do

a limited objective attack and the enemy wouldn't know that that was the actual one we were going to use, because they'd done dozens of them all over the city. As I said, Colonel Shupp was rightly concerned so he gave me some real clear guidance about how close we could get and not getting decisively engaged. He did give us authority to engage targets within the ROE: so if we saw an enemy defensive position, or armed enemy forces in contact en route, we were cleared to engage and destroy them. So we took Captains Pete Glass and Ed Twaddell and they took their lead sections. It was the platoon leader, the Bradley that was actually going to be leading Alpha 2-7's attack, Charlie 3-8's roller guy and his lead platoon leader. We went from north to south and got up close to the city. We got close enough to leverage our optics and actually made sure that we all understood what three roads Alpha 2-7 was going to attack up. Then we identified Henry and the train station. We couldn't really see Henry because the train station was blocking it, but we got a good orientation on the breach. Captain Glass identified three enemy in a prepared defensive position up in a bunker on top of a building just south of the train station, and he engaged them with a main gun round from about 1,500 meters. It was a very long shot against three individuals in a bunker with weapons. That ended our limited objective attack for the night, but we accomplished our recon objective, so that was a very good advantage we had. Our scouts, led by Lieutenant Jimmy Campbell, had been out the whole day marking our route. There were some danger areas I was real concerned about that I wanted him to mark. That way, the next night when we actually did the attack, he could get in there with engineer tape and infrared (IR) chem lights so we didn't roll any tanks or Bradleys, because the route was pretty precarious and dusty and there was a landfill – risk assessment type stuff. In fact, the reason the breach took so long was that 3-1 actually did roll a vehicle in a similar place.

MM: Was that a tank they rolled?

JR: No, it wasn't a tank, but it slowed things down a little bit. The second thing was the shaping ops, and Scott Jackson and Captain Coley Tyler will be able to give you more information. As I see it, while we had a lot of tough fighting in the city, we had won the fight by the time we crossed the line of departure (LD) based on how effective two things were. First, there was the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) collection of 1st RCT. They had UAVs all over the place. They had way more than we do – about three per company and eight per battalion, I think. What I liked about the way the Marines flew them is that they take full advantage of them being “unmanned.” There's a reason they're unmanned. They fly them around, they crash them and they don't really worry about them too much. So thanks to them we had pretty good intel. The second thing was that we had two AC-130s committed to this the night before the fight. As the main effort for 1st RCT, we had eight hours of one AC-130 dedicated just to 2-7 to shape this fight. It came with a

second load of ammo, and we actually ran out of ammo before we ran out of station time, which had not happened in my experience in the military before. You usually run out of air before you run out of ammo. We destroyed obstacles we'd been able to identify with 105 millimeter munitions from the AC-130s. We'd collected and engaged numerous targets in the Jolan Park and taken away the enemy's prepared defenses. Also, anybody who moves at night with a weapon when there's an AC-130 up is going to die, so there was a very lethal eight-hour prep. Then we shot artillery and some 120 millimeter mortars – but we didn't have eyes on so we couldn't really get our 120s in the fight.

MM: Speaking of your indirect fire, who did most of the 155 millimeter shooting for you guys?

JR: 2d Brigade had a 1st CAV division artillery (DIVARTY) battery, and Colonel Michael Formica could tell you which battery it was. But they shot a ton of ammo. Because we had so much air with the AC-130s over the city, the 155s were shooting from Camp Fallujah and were primarily supporting 2d Brigade's efforts as part of the isolation of the city. They did shoot a lot in the city but not for 2-7. Our 120 millimeter mortars were unbelievably lethal, though. The first time we'd ever fired them was down in Najaf; and we'd fired 200 to 300 rounds there, so we knew what other people didn't know about how lethal they were. Everybody knows 120 millimeter mortars are lethal, but if you grew up in a 4.2 inch mortar Army, understanding the difference between those and even the 120s – between those and this digital, ballistically computerized system that we had fielded in the 1st CAV. Those are the stories you're hearing from the Marines about the lethality and the accuracy of it. I was itching to get those in the fight but didn't really need to because we had so much air. We had 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment (1-227). We had Marine attack aviation and the 1st CAV Apaches. 1-227 was there, and we had worked with them every day in our AO back in Taji, we'd fought with them in Najaf, so just knowing they were there was just a tremendous advantage. There were all sorts of fixed-wing stuff in the fight. Marines are very good at joint fires, and I would say significantly better than the Army, which is hard for me to say. But the reason I say that is because they're so dependent on fires and they train with it. Their platoon leaders and company commanders do it on a routine basis when they're out doing floats, doing Marine expeditionary units (MEUs) and train ups. Whereas generally speaking in the Army, if you get live close air support (CAS), it's out at NTC or a couple training missions at Fort Hood, but it's not a routine thing. The Marines also have commo capabilities to talk joint fires that we really don't have organically in the Army, without getting those ETACs. So anyway, the joint fires and shaping ops the night prior started at dark and went well into the night. The decisive point, where we started winning and the enemy started losing, was right about the time we LD'd because the enemy was reeling. Then we

hit them very hard with a very lethal mechanized force followed by dismounted Marines all over the place. If you've heard any of the enemy radio intercepts, they clearly show that the enemy was panicking and reeling from this attack. There were basically six battalions attacking from north to south and the enemy's making contact on a broad front.

MM: Why don't we now focus on when the Marines actually blow the breach and the actions that occurred right after that.

JR: Sure. We were staged, waiting for the breach to get put in, and they had some troubles with just the normal fog and friction of combat. So we were waiting about four to six hours, trying to keep everybody alert. We were frustrated, as you can imagine, because we were burning that darkness up and we really wanted to have the entire period of darkness – limited visibility – to fight. Our plan was pretty simple. We were going to go through the breach with Cougar (Charlie 3-8). They were going to come down, turn to the east, orient on Phase Line Henry and attack along that axis. Alpha 2-7 would follow them through the breach. Then, as our main effort, Alpha 2-7 would conduct a frontal assault on three avenues of attack, but primarily three axes on three main roads, directly into the Jolan Park. It was risky; and when we did our wargaming and developed our plan, we realized that a frontal attack is not the optimal form of maneuver. However, if you're a rifle squad or a platoon in an urban environment, everything is a frontal assault. If we'd gotten sexy and tried to do some maneuver, we would have exposed a whole bunch of flanks, complicated the plan and end up hitting the Jolan Park anyway. No matter which way we did it, it would ultimately be a frontal assault for those young guys down there in those squads and platoons. So we opted for the frontal attack and mitigated that risk by having Cougar with tanks on Phase Line Henry. The plan was to keep those guys on line, so if Cougar needed to get in there and help, they could conduct a spoiling attack on any one of the east/west roads from the east to the west. If Apache (Alpha 2-7) got in trouble in there, they had the mutual support of the three platoons; and if it got real bad, they could get out to Phase Line Henry. One of the things about this terrain was that once you were committed to a route, your choices were to go forward or turn. Turning around was not an option. The attack went pretty well. We started getting through the breach and, according to the IPB, the enemy had mined the open area that ran from the railroad tracks to the first east/west main road. So we had our rollers on our lead tank, went through the breach, went through the open area into the road, and just put the rollers into a standard six-foot concrete wall on the far side of the road. As I said, this turned out to be pretty good, because when they detached the rollers and continued to attack, everybody was able to orient on the roller stuck in the wall, which turned out to be better than any terrain feature. Cougar turned and made contact initially. They had to turn their flank to the enemy and skirt that road, and they did a great job. They

dropped off a platoon in overwatch and were engaging while the remainder of the company turned east and got on Phase Line Henry. Once there, they conducted the attack in-column as a company. They could get two tanks on line on the road because it was a pretty wide road, although one set of tracks were on the sidewalk. They followed that with two Bradleys so they could actually engage distant targets with the 25s shooting over the tanks if they had to. They made steady contact with the enemy: initially swarm tactics with the rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and a little bit of small arms fire, but really ineffective in terms of fighting the tanks and Bradleys. But there were a lot of RPGs. We also reduced one obstacle with 105s from the AC-130. But the primary contact was two to three man groups with RPGs jumping out from alleyways and off of roofs.

MM: It was my understanding that these RPGs penetrated some of the vision blocks on some of the tanks. Is that true?

JR: Yes. It's really a constant throughout the fight. We combat lost six M1 tanks in this battle, which is indicative of the ferocity of the combat. What the enemy was doing – and I don't know if it was intentional or just luck – but the M1s were pretty vulnerable when they took an RPG shot in the vision blocks. It would blow the glass back into the turret, which caused minor problems. Our guys were actually wearing ballistic goggles and everything inside the turret after this happened the first time. We had two penetrations of number one skirts. We had one track blown off. Captain Glass ran over a Brazilian mine that blew the track off and damaged the turret. We had a couple pretty deep penetrations in the front hull armor. So we lost six tanks that had to be replaced, carted out. We had a lot of vision blocks blown out, some weapons systems damage, and one of our main guns took a RPG through the gun tube. But despite all this, we did not lose any tankers in the direct fire combat. So anyway, swarm tactics, RPGs, guys jumping in and out – really hard to clear fires, especially on the flanks. In the meantime, 7th RCT was attacking behind us; the boundary was a little bit to our east. We actually got through the breach and were in the city first, as per the plan, so you don't have a secure flank. Even though Apache is off to the west, there's a block of housing between Apache and Cougar; so when the enemy's jumping out in there, shooting RPGs, your ability to return fire is really important to understand where everybody is on the battlefield. We wanted to get Cougar all the way on to Henry, which would give Apache the room to get in there, get on those three avenues of approach, and start his attack with the two mech platoons and a tank platoon. Apache took a lot of small contacts – hit and run type things. We didn't have enough infantrymen, nor was it our intent to dismount and clear in detail as Apache attacked north to south. They were to destroy enemy forces they made contact with, and I told them not to bypass a squad-sized element if they saw it. So through the night and as dawn approached, Apache attacked all the way to the Jolan Park and got there right as



the sun was coming up. Cougar had maintained that guard mission, that flank, all the way along Henry making heavy contact also. Major Karcher and I were behind Cougar on Phase Line Henry and then bounded east to west to check in and make sure Apache was doing fine.

MM: At this time, Charlie 3-8 and your element, you really have no protection on your left flank as far as the Marine battalion that was coming in on your left. Were they on line with you at this time?

JR: No. They were a little bit behind and there was a block or two of urban housing. The RCT boundary was a block or two to the east, so even if we were on line with each other – and they had the same problem. It's not like they weren't taking care of our flank; we weren't taking care of theirs either. We intentionally planned to leave some dead space in between us and them, and I'll get to that in a little bit. That's what Comanche (Charlie 2-7) ended up dealing with, along with a bunch of other stuff. So, Apache gets up to Jolan Park. Once we got close enough to it to start taking fire from the enemy defending there, we were able to really leverage the fires. That's where we got our 120s into the fight and got a couple close air missions into it. The AC-130, before it ran out of ammo, was able to pick up targets and armed men in Jolan Park, too, so they did a real good prep. Apache hits that, dismounts two infantry platoons, and basically drives the tank platoon through the Jolan Park from north to south. The plan was to attack through the objective mounted, dismount and clear backwards through it, which totally devastated the enemy. They were still trying to get out of the way of the tanks and the Bradleys and our infantry squads were on top of them. They killed a few guys, policed up some detainees, found a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory. Imagine you're a young team leader clearing vehicles and you come up on a VBIED and don't know if it's going to go off or not. So they wisely got the hell away from that and got into a building. The sun's coming up, they've secured the four corners of the Jolan Park, and we're getting ready to do a passage of lines with 3-1 Marines, who'd been following a couple city blocks behind Apache getting into that tough clearance of building by building. I think what happened was that some of the enemy had seen the tanks and Bradleys and all the firepower and had just gone to ground in small two to three man elements. We just bypassed them. Even though we knocked out the big pockets of enemy and prepped all the terrain in terms of destroying cars that were VBIEDs, knocking down a couple obstacles, 3-1 still had a tough fight behind us rooting those guys out. So we're getting ready to do this passage of lines with 3-1 who was supposed to come up and pass through Alpha through Jolan Park and then turn west and attack downhill, if you will, to the river. We took a 127-millimeter rocket the enemy fired into Jolan Park and, unfortunately, it hit a building and we took about five or six wounded. We didn't lose anybody but had some pretty serious casualties. We lost one of our sniper teams,

lost our air and naval gunfire liaison company (ANGLICO), so a little bit of chaos there. 3-1 was taking a little longer than they had thought, based on the tough fight, to get up there. So now we're getting ready to do forward passage of lines of 3-1 Marines; and the only good thing that came out of the delay with the breach taking an extra four hours was that now it was daylight and that was better than doing the passage in darkness. It's hard enough doing a forward passage of lines in contact – because we're still taking random sniper fire, guys are jumping out and shooting RPGs into Jolan Park, we're taking some mortar fire and that one rocket. But now, you've got a U.S. Army unit doing a passage of lines with a Marine unit in contact, so this is about as complex an operation as you can get going here. Cougar is still in heavy contact on Phase Line Henry and we had not been able to rehearse the passage of lines. As far as we'd gotten was that Major Karcher, our S3, and the S3 of 3-1 had met and gotten some shared graphics, made sure we'd done all the comms. Captain Twaddell had guys in contact so Major Karcher and I decided that that was the decisive point in the battle. We bounded up to Phase Line Henry three or four blocks over to Jolan Park and linked up with Captain Twaddell – who was doing a great job doing the passage of lines. I told him to get back in the fight and concentrate on the enemy. Major Karcher dismounted and the 3-1 S3 dismounted and the two of them stood on the corner talking on the radios. After a little bit of friction, they managed to complete the passage of lines and we got contact points set up. The challenge of doing a passage of lines is always finding the lanes. You've got to use what works for you, but in an urban environment the lanes are the roads. It's pretty easy to identify them. Everything else is impossible, but that part is easy. So we got them on about four lanes and turned to the west. 3-1, over the course of about four hours, passes about two of their companies through us and got turned down to the west, which then freed up Apache to consolidate and complete actions on the objective and secure Jolan Park. As soon as we were sure that was going to happen, we pushed Cougar all the way to the southern boundary of our initial objective. Objective Pennsylvania was Jolan Park and Apache got that secured. By 1230 on the 9th, we got 3-1 passed through us and decided that that night we were going to push Charlie 3-8 to what we called Objective Virginia. So they're going to turn the corner from Phase Line Henry onto Fran and attack down to this open schoolyard-looking piece of terrain. The thinking behind that was that down in Najaf we'd had real good luck. Going back to my thing about the infantry associated with the mechanized formation that, in an urban environment, is pretty much committed to protecting the tanks and the Bradleys. Their job is to dismount, grab a building, get some elevation, get a piece of decisive terrain and, if the enemy has an obstacle set up, they can dismount and clear the obstacle. But they're not going to clear in detail. What we found worked real well in Najaf, and what we're trying to do here in Fallujah, is grab a piece of open terrain – a school, a park – something we could take away from the enemy so we could get our mechanized guys good

fields of fire. What we saw in Najaf was that the enemy's going to defend that because it's important to him, too. So you have an opportunity to kill or capture the enemy as part of the initial assault, and it gives you a marked advantage in terms of terrain. Usually, the enemy will counterattack against that, therefore giving you even more of an opportunity to kill or capture him. So we're trying to do that here. As Cougar pushes south on Henry, we start to not have enough of Charlie 3-8 to maintain Phase Line Henry. Charlie 2-7 was our reserve and their initial mission was to follow and assume Apache's mission as Apache culminated or got bogged down going to Jolan Park; and its secondary mission was to follow and take up the slack on Henry so Cougar could continue the attack. Once we knew we had Jolan Park, that's how we committed Comanche. So Comanche comes in, led by Captain Chris Brooke – a great officer – and he gets onto Phase Line Henry. The S3 and I are forward so we're just talking on the radio. He pulls in there with his company and he's got an unsecured flank to the east, unsecured flank to the west, he knows there are friendly Marines on both of those things, he's got Charlie 3-8 forward of him, and he's still making contact. The enemy is still counterattacking with those two to three man teams, jumping out, using RPGs, so he's not in there just mopping up the road. I told Charlie 2-7 that they had enemy on their flanks, they probably had enemy between them and Apache 2-7 and 3-1 Marines, and definitely between them and 7th RCT. They couldn't be whipping 25 rounds all over the battlefield, but using precision fires they could get it all mopped up. So they secured the road and Captain Brooke had his platoons dismount and took one set of buildings on each side of the road. They did have enough infantry, in that case, with the Brads on the road in support, to start detailed clearance of at least the first set of buildings on both sides of the road. That's what he spent the next day doing. He eventually expanded that to the west – all the way out to the 7th RCT/1st RCT boundary. Not your typical secure line of communications (LOC) mission. Anyway, it gets to be about 2300 and we decided to commit Cougar to Objective Virginia. We thought it would be Cougar but we had Alpha 2-7 prepared as well. This was our success option where Alpha was sitting on Jolan Park, we'd passed the Marines, and Cougar still had enough combat power to turn. At this time, as I recall, I think we're a good way ahead of 7th RCT. I'd say they were about halfway to Fran over on their side. I knew Cougar was going to have an exposed flank to his west, but when he turned this corner, he'd be doubling the amount of exposure because the enemy was going to be on his south. Just to the west of Objective Virginia is the cemetery and we used the same kind of thought process as with Jolan Park. Now we've taken away their rallying point, the enemy isn't going to know where to go, and so they'll be congregating in there. We're getting reports of 10 to 20 guys milling around here and there and people on the roofs of buildings. When they did pick up weapons, the AC-130 was back up again that night and we would have them shooting in there. We also had our 120s shooting some prep fires. The

problem was that there was a protected target – a mosque – near the southwestern corner of Objective Virginia. We knew the enemy was going to take advantage of that, but we couldn't strike it until we actually picked those guys up. So Cougar turns to the west on Fran and comes down on a couple different axes. Again, same basic TTP: we're going to lead with tanks, attack through the objective, dismount and clear back. He does that, gets on the objective and, sure enough, we start taking a lot of fire from that mosque. Of course, by this time, we've got dismounted squads on the streets, in the buildings and all around there, so we've masked all of our indirect fire ability. We can't shoot an AC-130 on it, can't shoot 120s, can't call for artillery, and we surely can't do any kind of CAS or fixed-wing strikes. We're kind of in a predicament here. I've got good comms with Captain Glass. Major Karcher and I are sitting on Fran about halfway between Jolan Park and Objective Virginia. We get a call from Attack 6, the 1-227 commander, who is our organic 1st CAV aviation battalion. They were based out of Camp Taji and we'd worked with these guys pretty much on a daily basis when we were up in Taji, so we had a good working relationship, good interoperability. So Attack 6 says he thinks he can get a Hellfire missile shot in. It took about 30 minutes. I told Captain Glass to get all his dismounted squads, get the situation under control, so at least his guys are in buildings so they can be secure. Once we did that, we cleared the objective and were able to get two Hellfires shot in by lasing the target. 1-227 shot two Hellfires into the building and that was it. They destroyed the enemy. I really don't think they were expecting that kind of attack because we were so close to them. We were within 100 to 200 meters of the building probably. After the shots, Captain Glass did a great job of immediately getting his infantry back on the offensive. They got into the building and killed a couple guys, captured a couple more, but really their fate was decided prior to the squad getting into the building. So a day and a half into the fight, we've got our Day Two objective, which was Objective Virginia. We thought it would take us a day to get to Jolan Park, another day to get to Virginia, and then a third day to get down to Ohio and Kentucky, which were the two bridges. We're already a little bit ahead of schedule and we had a long discussion about whether we should hold what we got during the day time and wait for another night – because we were really having our way with the enemy at night because of our optics. At this time, 3-1 was fighting but they were doing well; and 3-5 was up in the northwest corner of the city, which was their objective. They were in some really tough terrain and rooting the enemy out down there. I called Colonel Shupp and told him what we had and where we were. I said that I believed we could continue the attack, if that was his intent, or if he wanted we could continue to hold and consolidate what we had. He said to continue the attack. Now we had a couple different options. We could have pushed Cougar down to the bridges – Ohio in the north and Kentucky in the south. The good news is that the far side of the bridges had been secured by one of the Marine reconnaissance units and the enemy didn't

have the ability to counterattack us across the bridges. The Marine UAVs were looking, all the aircraft we had up were looking, and they were all saying there were 10 to 20 man dismounted defenses around these things. We assumed – especially Ohio, the contractor bridge – that they had a psychological or information operations (IO) importance. Our IPB said there would be about a platoon of dismounts, RPGs and some automatic weapons at these two places, so I didn't think we needed to send the tanks. They had just fought all night. Apache had fought all day and all night in Jolan Park, lost a couple guys to casualties, but basically had been static for about 12 hours. So we decided to have Apache go up to Henry, go south of Henry and come down Fran and conduct two platoon-sized attacks against those bridges and take Objectives Ohio and Kentucky. Captain Twaddell came back up on the net and said he could do that. But as he was looking at it, he wanted to go south of Objective Virginia and take Kentucky and then attack up into Objective Ohio from the south into the north. Everything had been a north to south fight and he thought that attacking south to North would give him a marked advantage over the enemy. He also didn't want to get in between Jolan Park and Objective Virginia, because he had to turn over Jolan Park to the Marines and Cougar was sitting up on Objective Virginia. He didn't want to shoot the gap in between those two guys because there wasn't a lot of room. Captain Twaddell had done everything I'd asked him to do and he did a great job down in Najaf. And you know, the ability to acknowledge that one of your guys doing the fight might have a better idea than you is not something that's lost on me, so I told him if that's what he wanted to do, he could do it. He started that attack at about 0900 on the 10th. He made some contact as he was going south around Objective Virginia and that was then in the southernmost flank of 1st RCT. He got to Objective Kentucky, the enemy had a squad or two sized element on there, but it was downhill and the 25 millimeter Bradley machine guns made quick work of that defense. They dismounted when they got there and the Navy SEALs we had attached to us as snipers weren't doing anything. I asked their platoon leader if he knew anything about explosives and he did, so we put him in the back of Captain Twaddell's Bradley and he went down there with an infantry squad and checked out the bridge so he could render a good report. We weren't going to try and cross it; that wasn't part of the plan. We just had to render a report on whether any visible explosives had been wired or detonated. Then they continued the attack south to north and saw the same type of thing: 10 to 15 guys on Objective Ohio trying to make some impassioned last stand that lasted all of about three or four minutes. They secured Objective Ohio and they were all done early on the afternoon of the 10th. It's now starting to get dark. Since we'd taken the objectives, we didn't want to give them up so we called back to 1st RCT and cross-talked with 3-1 and 3-5, because we weren't sure which one of them was going to take the bridges. It was very unlikely that the enemy was going to try and take those back; and if they did, it wasn't going to be

much of a defense. Our other option was trying to do a battle handoff between a Marine platoon and an Army platoon at night. What we recommended, and what Colonel Shupp agreed to, was that we'd pull off those objectives, maintain overwatch and let the Marines come up and take them over that way, instead of doing a physical handoff of the two objectives. I think 3-5 was the one who eventually ended up doing that. Now it's the night of the 10th around 2100 and we've accomplished the first 72 hours worth of objectives. The Marines are having a good but tough fight, they have some casualties, but they're rooting out the last pockets of the enemy in the 1st RCT sector. They're well on their way to having that secured and I think they got that clearance complete and got out to Phase Line Fran around the morning of the 11th. So it took them about 48 hours. At this point, we've got Apache down by Ohio and Kentucky in overwatch; we've got Cougar on Virginia screening along Phase Line Fran and then the southern road that runs from Henry to Objective Kentucky. Comanche 2-7 has got Phase Line Henry from Fran back to the train station secured, and that's where we stood on the night of the 10th.

MM: Can you tell me a little bit about the SEALs that were with you?

JR: They were snipers that we had attached to our companies. We had done the same thing down in Najaf and it worked really well in Fallujah as well. These sniper teams come with a real good capability because they're all joint tactical air controller (JTAC) qualified and can call fires also. So we put them with our companies and when we got to a key piece of terrain – an extra tall building or a real good field of fire – we'd dismount them and put them in there. We'd use that cover to get them in position and secure them. We'd give them quick reaction force (QRF) capability, so if they had to break contact, they can get back to you. That worked pretty well. Their platoon leader would be in our TOC, usually. It was a good improvisation and my XO, Major Jackson, was the one who thought of that. Okay, so it's the night of the 10th and we're about a good solid day and a half ahead in terms of 2-7, and a day ahead in terms of 1st RCT. The original plan was for 7th RCT to take the other three quarters of the city, to attack south and kind of wheel around and attack the southwestern quadrant last. They had a tough fight over there, and no plan survives contact with the enemy. What's really happening is 7th RCT and 1st RCT are about on line and they've each taken about a quarter of the city. Their quarter was bigger, obviously. So we're all arrayed on Phase Line Fran and this is when we had the conversation – the night of the 10th, morning of the 11th – where there was some talk about 2-7 moving over to 7th RCT and completing that attack. I was actually talking to Colonel Shupp while we were on Phase Line Henry at this mosque and General Richard Natonski, the 1st MARDIV commander, rolled up and we had a quick huddle. I just told him that it was not easy to break contact, disengage, get back and go get integrated in a new regimental combat team, so I offered the suggestion of just continuing the attack south along Phase Line Henry. It

would just be easier, purely from a re-task organization perspective for 2-7. I don't know what the rest of the conversation was after that. He and Colonel Shupp talked for a while and, basically, Colonel Shupp came back and gave us the new mission of continuing the attack to the south. He wanted me to continue to attack down to Phase Line Henry all the way down to the southern part of the city. Then his plan was to take 3-1 and 3-5 and push them through the urban area to the south. So between 11 and 13 November, we continued the attack with Cougar down Phase Line Henry from Fran all the way down to the south. We attacked with Charlie 3-8 and Alpha 2-7 on the night of the 11th. We attacked down to the south – not on a clearance mission – but we did pick some zones where we thought the enemy was concentrated based on terrain and intelligence. Cougar continued down Phase Line Henry all the way down to the southern part of the city. Alpha 2-7 launched from Phase Line Fran – again picking up one or two roads per platoon – and attacked about halfway through that fourth quadrant, about two kilometers into the city. They made really heavy contact there.

MM: Was that about the 13th when Captain Twaddell's Bradley got hit?

JR: Right. The 13th was a bad day. We were fighting nonstop and were pushing the Bradleys and the mech platoons into that southern part of the city to try and prep it. We knew we couldn't clear it all. We knew 3-5 and 3-1, primarily, were coming behind us and our guys were in there really trying to make contact with the enemy. By this time, the enemy wasn't stupid, so they're not really looking to make contact with tanks and Bradleys. They'd shot their best stuff at us, they'd shot RPGs, but the tanks are still out there. Every time they shot at a Bradley, they got a 25 millimeter response followed by dismounted infantry squads, so my assessment was that the enemy wasn't going to make contact with us unless we found them. We're pushing into these urban areas, knowing that the Marines are going to have to go building to building behind us. My guidance to the company commanders was to get in there and destroy the enemy where you can because, if not, he's going to be fighting on his terms inside a building against the Marines. So we got in there and had several small engagements. The enemy really got a lucky shot into the ramp of Apache 6, Captain Twaddell's Bradley. They had a couple of seriously wounded guys in there and the commander's vehicle is now inoperable. I'm listening to all of this on the radio, and I'm about five blocks north of that when it happened. I'm just thinking that it sounded like the beginning of a Black Hawk Down kind of thing, but we had some unbelievable heroism on the part of some young soldiers. Specialist Scott Cogil – Captain Twaddell's medic – jumps out of the back of one Bradley, runs through open fire and gets in to the casualties. One of our sergeants had his arm blown off by the RPG and he got in there, put a tourniquet on, and saved his life. The guys in the back of the Bradley were seriously wounded but were still trying to do buddy aid on each other. Captain Twaddell has

wounded guys but he's up there staying in charge of his company. Lieutenant Michael Duran and Lieutenant Daniel Kilgore, the two mech platoon leaders, moved to the location, got a good security perimeter and continued to engage and destroy the enemy. Over on Phase Line Henry, at about the same time, is where we had the engagement with 3d Platoon of Apache where they took some pretty heavy fire from a building dismounted. The enemy had built a bunker inside the room so they survived the initial entry blast; and as our guys went into the room, they opened up with an RPK machine gun and inflicted five casualties out of the squad in seconds. So we get everybody out on the street and the enemy is up on the roof throwing grenades down into the alleyway. Almost the entire squad is wounded at this time. Specialist Jose Velez had a squad automatic weapon (SAW) and basically stood over three of his wounded comrades in the alleyway and returned fire, suppressing the enemy and keeping them off the wall so they couldn't throw grenades. He got hit by a sniper and unfortunately lost his life. He earned the Silver Star doing that. And Specialist Benny Alicea, who was in the same squad and was already wounded at this point by a grenade fragment that hit him in the leg and lower back, he stepped up and did the same thing. He put his body in between the enemy and continued with the SAW until the rest of the platoon could get up, get a Bradley in there, and start suppressing with 25s so they can evac the casualties. Then one of our armor platoons under Lieutenant Matt Wojcik moved to the location and was able to put a tank section's worth of fires into the building – and the enemy that survived actually surrendered. As a result of just that one squad contact in the alleyway, both Alicea and Velez were awarded the Silver Star. Unfortunately, Velez's was awarded posthumously. But it was just unbelievable heroism and bravery and small unit leadership, and that engagement was indicative of what was happening everywhere: Marines, 2-2 Infantry, 2-7 – just all over the battlefield. In another instance, Cougar had lost one of his tanks; the vision block had been blown out. The platoon leader and the TC had both been wounded and evacuated, so Sergeant Jonathan Shields was trying to get the tank back to the task force support area. He was a great young sergeant trying to get his tank fixed so he could get back to the fight, get back to his buddies. The TC's hatch had been damaged by the RPG round and he's up in that hatch. Well, the tank went into a 60-foot strip mine that was north of the train station that nobody knew was there; the tank flipped and unfortunately he lost his life. That was a great young sergeant. All he could think about was getting back and getting the tank fixed, or jumping on another tank and getting back in the fight, because he knew his buddies were at it. For me, that's the main difference between our soldiers / Marines and the enemy fighters. The enemy had some committed fighters and some competent fighters; and they had strategic leadership and operational level leadership just like we do. A different value system but effective. The difference is the enemy doesn't have the young sergeants like we do and the fire team leaders like Alicea and guys like Sergeant Shields. When you



make contact, four enemy equals four fighters; for us, though, four Marines or four soldiers equal a well-trained fire team led by competent leadership. “Go where I go. Do what I do.” That carried the day in every single engagement that I saw in Fallujah and in Najaf.

MM: One of your soldiers was kind enough to drop off the memorial ceremony sheets. I’ve got Sergeant Shields and Specialist Velez’s pictures here from the ceremony.

JR: That would be a good one to put on the cover of the book. That’s what it’s all about. They were very tough losses. You can say the battalion fought a tough fight and only lost two guys, but to me that’s ludicrous. Others may say it was a big success, but whenever you lose an American fighting man in your command it was not a success. We accomplished our objectives, we destroyed the enemy and it was a big victory for the U.S., but it’s never going to be a great thing based on guys like that making the ultimate sacrifice for their country. So, we’re back on the 11th, 12th and 13th, continuing these spoiling attacks with Apache 2-7 and trying to make contact. Cougar is dominating the road to the south – again, exposed flanks on both sides, pretty steady contact here and there. Sniper fire is dying down now, so are the RPG fires. 3-1 is moving behind Apache. The last piece is that the Marines were making pretty steady contact; and as they got south after they passed through Apache, there was some great work by some young company commanders like Captain Glass and his Marine counterparts who were down there talking to each other and coordinating the fight. He would ask where they were, what their next objective was. As a preparatory shaping operation to that, Captain Glass would take a tank section and attack east to west along an avenue of approach which would put him in proximity of those objectives, hopefully drawing fire from the enemy. That would then give us the ROE we needed to engage and destroy the objective, shape the fires, and greatly reduce the casualties that the Marines would take. We had real good crosstalk. About the night of the 13th, we got another mission to continue the attack all the way to the south and continue to conduct those attacks in support of 3-1, and that lasted until about the 19th. Then we pretty much controlled Henry all the way to the train station with Charlie 2-7 and to the southern outskirts of the city with Charlie 3-8. On the night of the 19th, we were told that the Marines had it under control from there and they released 2-7 to get back in the fight with 1st CAV.

MM: During the last few days as Charlie 2-7 is controlling that LOC, is he pretty much constantly still under fire?

JR: Yes. I need to talk about that. He’s got a seam between him and 7th RCT. Apparently, there were 5,000 to 10,000 enemy in the city at one time and I don’t know how many of them stayed and fought, how many left, or how many fled.

There were a lot of them in 2-7's axis of advance and zone of attack. The enemy's basic strategy was to stay in three to four man pockets, stay behind in the buildings, and wait for somebody to come into the buildings in order to take away the advantage of indirect fires and all the other advantages we had over them. By now, we're monitoring all this and we know what's happening to the Marines. They went into one building and the enemy detonated the building on them; there were several buildings where the enemy had set booby traps and IEDs. The one incident we had was where the enemy had built a bunker inside a building and there were satchel charges. So inside the buildings was no way to do business. My guidance to Captain Chris Brooke was that he needed to destroy those pockets of enemy but he needed to make contact on his terms. Chris spent the whole time with some great sergeants and platoon leaders dismounting and moving fire teams through the urban area, making contact with the enemy, breaking contact, remounting, and then destroying the enemy in detail both mounted and with fires. He basically made movement to contact to make contact, fix the enemy, back up so he could clear fires, and then destroyed them primarily with the 120 millimeter mortars. We were so confident in those things: you can shoot them behind you; you can shoot them between units. As long as you're confident in the grid you're calling, you're going to hit exactly what you shot at, and that was a great asset. The 4th Battalion of Iraqi Army was OPCON'd to 2-7, basically to pick up that security of Phase Line Henry from Fran back to the north. I tasked Captain Brooke to integrate them and he did a great job of that. He used them to do the search and security missions. They'd find a cache, maintain security on it, which then let Chris maintain his combat power for these mounted and dismounted urban search and attack missions he had to do to clean up that scene. Basically, three companies in heavy contact at the same time, all different fights but all doing a great job, and it's 100 percent due to the skill and the will of the individual soldiers and Marines, which was very high. The real difference maker, I would say, was from team leader through platoon leader, and then three great company commanders.

MM: In your unit's AAR comments, they have a slice in there on roles and missions. They have the commander managing the chaos, the XO controlling the fires and the S3 controlling maneuver. Do you have any comments about that, particularly your role in managing the chaos?

JR: We made that slide when we came back because we really wanted to capture these lessons for efforts like yours. We did some officer professional developments (OPDs) with other units that were deploying, and this was just something Major Karcher, Major Jackson, Sergeant Major Timothy Mace and I, along with the platoon leaders' and company commanders' input, put together. In my career growing up as a platoon leader and a company commander, I'd spent a lot of time and energy trying to get my guys going, trying to get the support by fire position

up, trying to get a squad to bound – all the way back to platoon live-fire stuff. However, the thing I was struck by is that that's not what happens. In the absence of guidance, these great soldiers are going to act. They want to make contact with the enemy. They want to do their job and, quite frankly, within the ROE, they want to kill everybody they can kill. The challenge as a commander is harnessing that energy and that violence of action – because they're going to go somewhere. It's not about getting them to go; it's about getting them to go where you want and stopping a company when you need to stop them so you can get your other company up on line. Like in the beginning of the fight when Cougar's out on Henry: their whole purpose is to stay parallel with Apache, secure Apache on the flank, and give them the ability to get out or be able to counterattack. Well, left to their own devices, Cougar would have attacked all the way through the city the first night. The ability to know where you're at on the battlefield is important, so you can do things like call fire. There's no doubt about it: you can't win at anything without infantrymen on the ground physically taking it. But the easiest, most effective and least casualty-producing-on-friendly-forces way to fight the enemy – even in an urban environment – is with fires, and Major Jackson did an incredible job, as did all the guys in the TOC. But in order for them to be able to their job, my job as commander was to make sure we knew where everybody was and that we were controlling that violence. The best analogy I ever heard came from one of my former company commanders. He said that fighting in an urban environment was like playing tackle football in a hallway. Then you throw tanks and Bradleys in there and it's like a demolition derby in a hallway – and that's the kind of chaos you need to manage. You're the guy behind the main effort company or in between two companies, and you listen to the radios, leverage your digital systems and you pay attention to who's really where and make sure you're doing the right thing.

MM: One of the Marine battalion commanders was telling me that, in the course of planning this operation when they were discussing the ROE, he said your S3 raised his hand and said something to the effect of, "When you unleash a heavy mech battalion like this in the city, it's going to be Armageddon." That apparently got somebody's attention.

JR: [Laughter] Well, I don't know about that. But, you know, they know that. Colonel Shupp and Lieutenant Colonels Willy Buhl and Pat Malay are career infantrymen. Marine infantry and Army infantry are probably closer than Army infantry is with other branches in the Army. They're pros, but maybe they do have a bit of angst: they don't have Bradleys and they don't fight mech warfare the same way we do. But at the risk of overstating the obvious, we did go to great pains to point out to them that a mechanized task force is not a precision instrument. Things are going to get broken and there's going to be some damage. Sometimes, when a sniper is placing effective fire on somebody and, depending on where he's

at – and the fact that we can see him wherever he’s at – sometimes we’re going to shoot a tank main gun round at a sniper, which happened a lot. It does break a lot of stuff and those 120 millimeter mortars are great. We shot 580 of them, and every single one of them is going to destroy something. Literally leveling buildings with mortars. I think some of the Marines would tell you the same thing, that those guns were one of the big lifesavers out on the battlefield – a big enemy killer and a devastating weapon system. So out there on the battlefield, that’s kind of how we divided the labor with the two majors. I would figure out what’s going on, I’ll talk to Company Commanders and control the big picture. Major Karcher knew the plan and, passed down from me, he issued clear, direct task and purpose orders. He would listen to what I would tell the company commanders and would follow up on it to make sure it happened, make sure they understood exactly what I meant. He would look at implications of that movement to other things in the task force and would make sure we were adjusting a phase line or moving a fire support coordination measure. Calling over to 3-1 and reporting back to the TOC. Major Jackson did a great job as well, and his task was to fight the fires. He kept me out of the business of worrying about which aircraft is doing what to who. He did all that, using the UAVs and mIRC Chat and all the other intel capabilities. And oh by the way, we lost six tanks and at least three or four Bradleys, and were shooting ungodly amounts of ammo. Going back to what I said earlier about the 1st CAV. Colonel Murray called me one time and said, “Do you want them with crews or without crews?” That’s all he said. The guy was in charge of the Green Zone in Baghdad – the one place they can’t fail in all of Iraq. He’s talking about sending us tanks, fully loaded tanks with ammo and crews if we’d asked for them. We’d get the helicopters flying us mortar ammo in conditions that nobody had any business flying in. All that was because of Major Jackson and the BN TF staff, they made that happen.

MM: Is there one overarching point that stands out from the battle of Fallujah that new battalion commanders should know?

JR: Something that is obvious, but needs to be said, is that I was struck and amazed and will forever be humbled by the selflessness and lethality of the American fighting man: Marine and soldier, tanker and infantryman. They are an absolutely unbelievable treasure that our country has. And it’s not about leading them in combat; it’s about watching them and serving with them. To watch these guys look at a building full of bad guys that they know are in there, to watch them look at their buddy and look at their team leader and go, “Hell yeah, we can do this.” They went building after building, block after block and won every single fight. This is Fallujah, the last stronghold, the last bastion of the insurgency, the most diehard guys – and these young fire teams, these squads and platoons just whipped their ass. We had the best company commanders that I’ve ever served with, not just

in 2-7 but across that whole formation. The stuff we ask company commanders to do on the modern battlefield exceeds what battalion and brigade commanders have done in history. That's my number one observation. From a tactical lessons learned standpoint, mechanized forces can fight in urban terrain and can be absolutely lethal and devastating. We have the best equipment in the world, period. When you talk about the commander's independent thermal viewer (CITV) systems on the Bradleys and the tanks, you basically have turned a section of tanks into a platoon of tanks and a section of Bradleys into platoon of Bradleys. You can put two tanks at an intersection and they can control all four of those roads. There are 11,000 rounds of coax on the tank, not to mention the main gun rounds and the 25 millimeter on the Bradleys. If you take a round from a building, you can respond. They had an asymmetric enemy running around shooting sniper rounds and whipping RPGs at us, and a section of Bradleys can suppress the face of a 10-story building and kill everybody in it with relative precision. They can hit a window the enemy is shooting from and do so without causing damage and casualties they don't intend to. As long as the infantrymen organic to that mech task force understand that their task and purpose is to protect the tanks and Bradleys, and that there's a supporting force that's larger than that mechanized formation. Don't get me wrong: if you're going to clear and secure urban terrain, you're always going to need to have dismounted light infantrymen – guys like the 3-1 and 3-5 Marines and all the other guys that fought. But if you're going to go in and destroy the enemy, gain a key piece of terrain and take something important away from the enemy in an urban environment, I believe that not only can you do that mounted with mechanized forces. You can also do it faster, with more effect on the enemy and way fewer casualties by going with that mounted tank and Bradley/dismounted infantry mix – as long as you have good fire support. I caveat all that by saying that that was Iraq and the battle of Fallujah. It worked for us in Najaf and Fallujah, although there's always going to be a caution against learning lessons and then applying them to a different enemy on a different piece of terrain. The enemy we faced was a dedicated, committed enemy; he was well trained by insurgent standards and definitely well equipped; he also had a good amount of time to prep his defense and had decent communications – but he was still nothing compared to U.S. forces. He was a pretty competent enemy, but he was absolutely devastated in every engagement we had with him. That would be the thing I learned over the course of a year as a mech battalion task force commander in Iraq, because I would not have thought that going in necessarily.

MM: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

JR: I've taken a lot of your time already, Matt, but I'm glad you're doing this.

MM: Thank you very much for your time.



## **Major (Dr.) Lisa DeWitt**

### **23 April 2006**

MM: This is Sunday, April 23, 2006. My name is Matt Matthews (MM) and I'm an historian with the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today I'm interviewing Major Lisa DeWitt (LD), who was the surgeon for 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment, or Task Force 2-2, during Operation Phantom Fury. To start off, could you please give me some background information on where you were born, where you grew up, where you went to school, how you were commissioned?

LD: I was born in Miami, Florida, but I grew up in north Georgia. I did most of my schooling, including college and some post-graduate in Florida. I graduated from Florida State University. I went to medical school at Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine, which was in North Miami Beach at the time. Now it's called Nova Southeastern. It's in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. So I did my internship in West Palm Beach, Florida, then I did a three-year emergency medicine residency training in Chicago. I graduated from that training program in 1993 and stayed up there for a couple more years. I then moved back to Florida and, in 1998, I was a residency program director for the emergency medicine residency training program. I was working real hard in emergency rooms, very busy ERs, and training and teaching. Then September 11th happened and I decided to serve my country. I felt, as an ER doctor, I'd be of good use so I joined the Florida Army National Guard. I actually was commissioned as a major on April 30, 2003, so next week is my third year anniversary in the military.

MM: That's incredible.

LD: So primarily, having a civilian life and being 41 years old when I was commissioned, I did three drill weekends, two soldier readiness processings (SRP) where we just did physicals and stuff, and then I went and did two weeks of Officer Basic Course for the reserve component of the Army Medical Department (AMEDD). Right after I graduated from the Officer Basic Course, two weeks later, I was deployed, which was my goal: I was itching to get downrange. However, I was quite sad that they were only going to send me to Kuwait. I even called up the state surgeon: "With all due respect, sir, I'm an emergency physician. Don't you want to put me with that infantry battalion that's in Iraq?" They were in Ramadi at the time. He said, "You know, honey, I know you're no powder puff, but we're going to put you in Kuwait." So I was the troop medical clinic doctor for Camp Victory in Kuwait. The volume of that camp was anywhere from 2,000 to 11,500. We did a lot of sick calls, took care of a lot of soldiers and Marines. But for the most part, it wasn't a lot of trauma. It was mainly urgency/emergency. As a reservist, you only have to do

90 days boots on the ground. I left here in the middle of October 2003 and then, by the time my 90 days was up, it was January; but my Florida Army National Guard medical unit, they only had 45 more days left until their 365 boots on the ground, so I volunteered for another 90 days. I stayed with them for another month and a half. Four and a half months in Kuwait, they're going home and I still have a little time left on my second 90 days. So I went over to another camp, started bumming around and found somebody that had a caduceus on their collar, which happened to be a Medical Service Corps (MSC) officer. I asked if I could bum with them and get attached to them. They went on north to Kirkuk; they were actually the 25th Infantry Division (ID). I, through a bunch of emails, got orders attached to them with their blessing and everything – and they wanted an extra doctor. Now, when my unit went home and my orders came through, all I had to do was get to them. So, I decided the best way to see the country would be to hitch a ride on a heavy equipment transporter (HET) convoy with a California Guard unit and I drove all through Iraq. It took about a week. They dropped me off in Tikrit, so now I was closer to Kirkuk. Then I was kind of squatting, living out of an abandoned building behind the Division Support Command (DISCOM) commander's surgeon's building. Then the division support commander found out I was an ER doctor and he changed my orders to send me down to Ba'qubah, because they were seeing more traumas than Kirkuk. So I hitched a ride on a convoy down to Ba'qubah. I was there about nine days when the support battalion I was working for said that 2-2 Infantry, which was a little bit farther out in the boonies, had to send their battalion surgeon home. Evidently he failed his boards or something like that.

MM: I think Lieutenant Colonel Pete Newell, the 2-2 commander, told me he could very well have been the worst doctor in the Army.

LD: Well, no, I tell you what, I'm going to stick up for this poor kid. He had done four years of medical school, a one-year psychiatric internship, and the Army throws him in the front fighting lines of a mechanized infantry battalion seeing trauma. So the Army really did this doctor a lot of disservice by doing that. But that being said, the guy really had very little time to study for part three of his boards during all of this, so he failed them, so now they have to send him home. Also, he doesn't know anything about trauma. I'm this seasoned, experienced, teaching ER doctor and I'm right at home with that kind of stuff – plus too, I like guys and guns and boys and mud and camping, so I was in my element. I went up there to Muqdadiyah, which was an hour east/northeast of Ba'qubah, and I felt at home the minute we drove in the gate. I really realized that this is the right place. I arrived there about three weeks after 2-2 had established that camp at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Normandy. I stayed with them the whole year. So, I spent four and half months in Kuwait and a year in Iraq – and that's my story and I'm sticking to it.



MM: Can you talk me through when you first found out that 2-2 might have to go on this operation with the Marines?

LD: We kind of knew that it was in the talking phase; there were a lot of different hot beds that were kicking off. If you remember, Samarra was kicking off. We were keeping abreast of all this and we kind of knew Fallujah was going to be an operation; we just didn't know when. We were getting ourselves prepared. Of course, Lieutenant (now Captain) Greg McCrum, my physician's assistant (PA) and I, when we would talk about it, we knew that if we were going to do anything major, I said, "You're not leaving me behind, we're going together." He said, "Oh yeah, we can probably get backfilled, just like we did in Najaf back in April when we did that operation." From the beginning, it was always thought that both Greg and I and a certain element of our medical platoon would go, and then we would get backfilled. And that's exactly what we did. We had a PA come up and stay with the platoon, some other medics came up and augmented the battalion in the rear, and then both Greg and I and 10 medics went forward. My platoon leader, Lieutenant Chris Carlson, he was actually on leave and didn't come back until after we were already out in the field and they brought him in.

MM: You mentioned Greg McCrum. Can you tell me something about him?

LD: [Laughter] Okay, let's see. Captain Greg McCrum: he's a maniac; he's a wild man. He is married, has two children, and his second child was born in the summer. He was able to go home and spend less than 48 hours with his daughter after she was born before he had to return and then see her again six months later when he went home. He used to be an 18D [Military Occupational Specialty 18D: Special Forces medical sergeant] with the 7th Special Forces Group, so he's a Special Forces medic and then he went to PA school. He's very aggressive as far as wanting to learn, wanting to do things right. He's extremely intelligent, so he and I could always talk intellectually, medically, didactically about cases, and he knew a lot of areas that I didn't. There are things they teach 18Ds, especially in more primary care. He knew dentistry a little bit more than I did. He definitely knew tactical stuff way more than I did. But I had more knowledge in anything that was emergency medicine. We communicated fairly well together and I always thought of him as a partner, not as subservient or a subordinate. We were a team, which was good.

MM: Could you tell me about your preparations to leave FOB Normandy to go down to Camp Fallujah?

LD: The biggest thing was we got our personnel situated, about which medics would come with us and which would stay in the rear. I wasn't really involved with who; it didn't matter to me which ones came. For Greg and me, we would do a lot of talking about what to anticipate. In terms of being out in the field, my only other

big operation was Najaf and we sat out in the field: we all had cots that you could pop and lay on. We knew this was going to be an operation where we were going to be in the field and fighting and you were going to sleep wherever you could. It was preparation of things you would need to just live and survive. And then as far as medically, our big thing was we were not going to rely on the normal chains of medical resupply. I think this is a good key thought: we brought a five-ton truck with us and that was our medical resupply truck. So the vehicles we took, we had a Humvee, which was our command and control; we had '113 tracked ambulances – the two front line ambulances (FLA) and two tracked ambulances; the five-ton and then the '577 which was our treatment track. We went down there in serials, staged at Camp Fallujah, and the time up until we went down to Fallujah was just a matter of making sure we had all our supplies. That was never really a big issue. We knew what we had to take and we already had it prepackaged.

MM: The commander of your particular serial that went down there, was that commanded by Captain Sean Sims?

LD: Yes, it was.

MM: Did you know him fairly well?

LD: Yes, I did. In my serial, my wing man was Staff Sergeant Esteban Alvarado and he was going to be the medic noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) for us when we were in this operation. He and I drove an FLA down there in the last serial and my serial convoy commander was Captain Sims. We went down to Warhorse and staged there momentarily until we went on to Fallujah. I have to say that Sean was very calm. He's a very mild-mannered guy and not the typical personality you would expect with somebody who's a very successful infantry company commander. He had such a genteel nature to him, and everybody loved him and respected him. Going down there, you would think he would be all stressed out, and he wasn't. He was keeping his mind on track, doing what needed to be done. I'll tell you, Matt, that I'm the type of person who can always find ways to acquire things and go about getting things for soldiers outside the normal channels. I did things the unconventional way. We were all staged, nobody's allowed to leave their vehicle but, of course, we always had that need to get ice for our cooler that kept one of our medications refrigerated. So I went over to the first sergeant and Captain Sims and I said, "Hey, I need to go over to the chow hall and get some ice for our cooler. Is it okay if we run over there and get that?" He said, "Yeah, just take your FLA and drive over there." I said, "Okay." So we left the convoy, Staff Sergeant Alvarado and I, and we're happy because we're on a little run. So we go to the chow hall, and not only do we get ice for our cooler, but we stopped off at the little ice cream bar and got a couple burger and grilled cheese sandwich trays to bring back. I got a bunch of orange sodas. When I came back, I went over to Sean

and said, “Hey, Sean, can I get you something? You want something to drink?” He says, “No, I’ve got water.” And I said, “Hey, Sean, I have an orange soda, you want one of those?” He looked at me, his eyes got wide, and he said, “Yeah, you have an orange soda?” And I said, “Sure, come on over here.” He was so polite and so sweet, and here I’m thinking, “This guy has all this heavy, heavy pressure on his shoulders. I mean, we’re about to enter a fight that hasn’t been done since before the war. He’s got to get this whole serial down there without getting hit and he’s got such pressure on him: he’s the company commander of our main fighting company.

MM: Which would be Alpha Company.

LD: Right. And yet he was just very thankful for the orange soda. He was a real good guy.

MM: Were there any eyebrows raised that there was a female in this infantry unit, and that you were actually going to be so close to the combat there? Did that ever present any problems or anything?

LD: No, not at all. We had actually three female medics with us, too. We had been doing operations all the time. I went out on missions with the civil affairs (CA) and the civil-military (S5) shop doing clinic evaluations and city council meetings – and we were routinely targeted or hit. That was not a big deal. Being female, the issue was never raised at all.

MM: Can you tell me a little bit about when you arrived at Camp Fallujah and when you met the Marines for the first time? Were there any issues with the Marines? Did they treat you guys okay?

LD: Camp Fallujah, which is a Marine camp, had prepared by setting up all these large tents on one side of the camp, where all the units that were coming in would be staged. For me, it looked just like back in Kuwait again: all this dusty desert stuff, and the sand was like talcum powder, especially with all the tanks driving through constantly. We staged all our vehicles and then we had to walk over this berm to our tents. They already had the cots set up in them. So, we were going to leave our duffle bags there; that was our resupply personal duffle bag, and we were only taking our rucksacks with us. Now, I actually didn’t have a rucksack, so I used a jump bag that somebody had given me, but that was all you were taking with you out to the field. We had no clue as to when we were going to be coming back to these tents. So, when we were staged at this tent, the only contact we really had with the Marines was when we went over to visit their Marine hospital. I went over to make face and meet the doctors and people. It’s the equivalent of a combat support hospital (CSH): there were Navy medical care providers for a surgical unit and an ER and a medical facility. They were in a hardened building. I just met

them briefly, but I did find out that their nurses over there had women's showers that were actually nice. Whereas, over where we were staged – remember, I've got three female medics with me and myself. There was another unit, I think, that had a female that was staying in the rear, but I think we were the only females out in the field. The tents and the shower trailers they had up, they had designated that one shower trailer would be for females for only one or two hours of the day. Well, it happened to be the shower trailer that had no electricity and had only cold water. So of course, like I said, I'll find ways to go around and get what I need and my soldiers need. We females drove across to the other side and snuck into the nurse's showers, which were really, really nice, comparatively speaking. They had a bench that you could lay your things out on. It was clean, they had warm water, and we were in seventh heaven over there. So, we were able to shower before we left for the field, and I think we stayed there two nights in the tent. The tent was where all the females and males stayed; and again, there are only four of us females. But we're all like family, we knew each other and you just laid down. So that's what we did, just preparing and waiting until we go out into the field. We were fixing vehicles, making sure we have everything. For Greg and me, we were going over to the tactical command post (TAC) for meetings about the assault before it happened.

MM: Were you given any particular guidance at those meetings by Lieutenant Colonel Newell at that time? Is there anything you recall?

LD: If the meeting was run by Lieutenant Colonel Newell, he was good in his guidance; he was good in his advice. I think he's strong leader. If the meeting was run by another person, then sometimes they were less beneficial. The thing we prepared for, initially, was a feint that we did. That was the first time we went out to do this all night long mission, and it was in blackout conditions. We went out there in the field all night long, came back, and I think it was about an 18-hour thing. Anyway, that turned out to be not a lot of fighting, but I think it helped a lot of people who were nervous. I personally wasn't nervous about the whole thing; I just wanted to know more about what was going on. I never was fearful or nervous or scared or anything like that. I knew God had me in the right place where I'm supposed to be, which is normal for me. I knew that some of the young men, though, had a fear or were scared or nervous; and I think that by doing the feint and getting out there and not really having a big fight and then coming in, it made them relax a little bit more. They knew there was going to be fighting, but at least they got the jitters down to a controllable level.

MM: Now, on this particular mission, were you guys also going out to look at where your logistics resupply point (LRP) might be located?

LD: No, the LRP was going to jump. When we went out with the forward aid station, we took out all our vehicles and set up the '577 track, which has all the treatment chests in it. So the minute we set up, we park the vehicles in a certain manner and then set the nine trauma trunks out, set up our cones and set up our four litter stands. So for us, it's a quick set up and a quick break down. We could do it in six minutes. That first feint, it was almost like a practice set up: it was all night long, didn't have any casualties, we just watched the fireworks.

MM: What happened 24 hours prior to the breach going on with the mine clearing land charge (MCLC)? What were you and your crew doing?

LD: We had this rock drill that was extremely long and was not done until right before the mission, so by the time we finished the rock drill, there wasn't a lot of time to go back and rest up. You just had to go and get a whole bunch of stuff done. I kind of geared my sleep. I knew that if we were getting up at 2:15 or 3:00 in the morning, we already had our vehicles staged where they was going to be, so the only thing we had to carry out was our individual backpack that we were going out in. I laid down to go to sleep just before 8:00 p.m.; and actually, during the whole time of Fallujah, I was reading a novel.

MM: May I ask what novel it was?

LD: It was a Ken Follett novel about a female spy, Jack Daws, and I read it the whole time I was out there. So I was lying in my cot, reading a novel, and just taking in and watching a lot of the things, divisions around me, the sights. It's like taking pictures in your mind, seeing how some soldiers would be nervous. I remember that night, it was very loud. All the guys that do the chow, this other support team, they were so loud. They were playing their music in the tent and everybody kept turning on lights. Finally, I got up, grabbed my sleeping bag and went right outside the tent where there was a cot set up outside – because that's what we'd sit on in the evenings when we'd eat and some people would be smoking out there. Nobody was outside, all this activity was going on inside the tent, and all I wanted to do was sleep. So I went outside, it was a little chilly, but I got in my sleeping bag and curled up and looked up. The stars were so beautiful; they were so bright and the constellation Orion was very, very bright right above me. I think I remember seeing that he was aiming his arrow right at the city of Fallujah! [Laughter] I thought that was a premonition. I just remember it being so chaotic, and so loud and light, and yet the minute I went outside it was total peace. I just rolled over and went to sleep. Well, we started getting mortared in the middle of the night. I remember whoever had guard duty was told to come and tell everybody they had to wear armor if they went outside the tent. Which I had to laugh at, because if the mortar hits you in the tent or outside the tent, it doesn't really matter; it's just that you can't get people to wear their individual body armor (IBA) inside the tent. This guy comes up, it's

2:00 in the morning, or an hour before we're supposed to wake up, and he says, "Ma'am?" I said, "Yeah?" And he said, "We just got a radio call and we have to tell people that they have to wear their IBA outside the tent." I said, "Okay, honey," He said, "Um, are you going to tell Lieutenant McCrum?" And I said, "Yeah, I'll take care of it." He said, "Um, should you tell him now?" And I said, "No, let's just let him sleep." So I rolled over and went back to sleep, then I got up and went inside. It was a big mortar raid – but I didn't care, I was getting some good shut eye time before the assault. But that was it: there was a little bit of nervousness; I don't think a whole lot. We went to the Marines, basically to go to their chow hall, and that was it. We didn't have a lot of contact with them, except in passing just here and there. Truthfully, we got along fine with them; they were fellow servicemen. It was very professional; it wasn't like an Army-Navy football game. We got along with them in the chow hall, asked them directions because they lived there – it was very normal. I did not see any inter-service antagonism whatsoever.

MM: Can you talk me through your movements up until the very moment they blow that breach and all those improvised explosive devices (IEDs) go off?

LD: We moved up to an area we had done the feint in, only now we're doing it in daylight – which was very odd to do the feint at dark and then you were doing the actual assault in daylight. Everybody's dressed out in full battle rattle and you're always looking around for anything. We took the service road that was to the east of the north/south road. It was a rough ride; it wasn't like a nice drive.

MM: That's where you could see that cloverleaf –

LD: Actually, yes. If you look at a map of Fallujah, go from Camp Fallujah, you go outside the southern gate and then you start heading north. I think when we left, we went out the north gate. Either way, you head west and you hit that north/south highway; but by the time you get to the cloverleaf, you go on a service road that was to the east of the main expressway. So from just south of the cloverleaf, through the cloverleaf heading north, you were to the east. The highway is an elevated berm and it's a protective against direct fire. So we went there; and as you go north past the cloverleaf, there's another east/west road or bridge and we went even north of there. Now we're to the northeast of the city out in the middle of nowhere. A big, old desert where we just picked a spot; it's like camping on a beach. We set up our LRP immediately and, at this time, my medical section platoon leader was not there. Greg, the PA, was acting both as a platoon leader as well as a PA, so he was doing a lot of the radio talking and stuff like that. We all were pretty relaxed for the most part. We got hit. We were mortared when we first got there and our first casualty was some little laceration of the finger. So we had it all set up, but we kept getting rocketed and mortared, so we picked up and drove a little bit further and went to another place. Again, I'm a passenger on this train. I don't

make decisions as to where we go and when. Greg gets a call across the radio that we're moving and we moved with the other support elements, but the rest of the battalion was with us too before the breach. We jumped to one place, then jumped further east/northeast, then we jumped near our first place again for the night. So those three jumps we made on that first day. On the third jump spot is where we were that first night and that's when there was the field artillery going off and the MCLC. Have you talked to Captain James Cobb?

MM: Yes, I have. I have not done a formal interview yet, but I've talked to him a few times on the telephone. We're actually going to interview him at some point.

LD: He was a key player in the artillery. He was a rock star; he was the man in charge of all that. That first night, I think, seriously: I look at Marine casualties and our casualties, and I really think the fact that we had less casualties per capita had to do with two main things. One, we had shorter evacuation times to me and Greg, and shorter evacuation times to surgical. And number two is we fired a hell of a lot of artillery and inflicted mechanical type injuries to the enemy before we sent in ground troops. I think that alone helped save us. The Marines, bless their hearts, they're so courageous and so strong and I'll fight with them side-by-side any day, but they charge right in and they keep going. All I know is that, then, they had to evacuate their personnel north and their forward aid station equivalents were further away from the fight than ours were, just by the nature of the set up, just the anatomy of Fallujah. That's why we didn't use air evacuation because we helped to reserve any air evacuation, which Marines don't really have a lot of air evacuation like the Army does. It was a Marine air evacuation unit, or Navy – I'm not sure who it was, but I know it was not the normal amount of Blackhawk medical evacuations (MEDEVAC) that we would normally have in an assault like this. We let them reserve for only the Marines, because we were so close by ground. In 15 minutes, I could get my guys in there by ground. Anyway, Captain Cobb had a lot to do with that whole artillery piece. He was the main guy. So we were sitting out there, we had four aid stations set up, and initially it was with binoculars. Then as it gets darker and darker, you can see the fireworks. In the beginning, I was asking Greg – who was sort of my tactical expert – I would say, "What was that? What was that?" Well, he was able to identify the types of rounds for the first five minutes, but then finally there were so many kabooms going off that he said, "Man, I don't know what any of this is." It was so much.

MM: In the interview I did with CNN's Jane Arraf, on this particular topic she said she thought the world was coming to an end.

LD: I thought it was just a really big fireworks show. I won't go to that extreme. It was a really, really big fireworks show. I remember thinking to myself, "I'll never go to a 4th of July fireworks show with the same thoughts ever again." It was loads

of artillery. And for me, I'm trying to get an education here with Greg telling me what's going on. There was also a Sergeant Wolf, an add-on from another platoon, and he was great too. Anyway, they were telling me what was going on, what was being shot off. But after awhile, even they couldn't keep up with it, it was so much.

MM: Major Erik Krivda gave me some DVDs and CDs with some film footage of that night. On one of those, you can hear your Lieutenant McCrum saying, "So far everything's going okay; we've only had two minor casualties and one was a self-inflicted gunshot wound by one of the Iraqis."

LD: Right. At our first jump site, we were rocketed and mortared and, like I said, one guy had a small finger laceration that I sewed up. At our second jump site, they brought in one of the Iraqi Army guys. He had shot himself in the foot to get out of the fight. The Iraqi Intervention Force (IIF) – which was a terrible name because it sounds like AIF, or anti-Iraqi forces – they were the elite of the best trained battalion of Iraqi forces at that time, and they really were very, very squared away. They had a physician and some medical personnel, but they didn't have anything but a civilian ambulance, and they didn't have a further medical system. So I talked with that doctor a lot; he was co-located with us at two of our jump spots but not at our fourth or fifth. When they got the Iraqi that was shot in the foot, I think we gave him to those guys to transport in their civilian ambulance and they would have security elements that accompanied them back to Camp Fallujah. But up until that point that you're talking about on Krivda's film, that's all we had until the first night hit.

MM: Talk me through that first 24 hours after they blow the breach, anything you recall there.

LD: What I should do right now is pull up my pictures. I've got my pictures in folders by day in my big folder of Fallujah. I'm trying to go by memory. The first 72 hours, it's all like a blur; it's like day ran into night ran into day ran into night. I look at some of these pictures and I can't remember if that was a sunset or a sunrise. There was no sleeping, except for whenever you could lean your head back and sleep for a second, so it runs together a little bit for me. I remember all the artillery and us sitting out on the hoods of the Humvees, taking non-flash pictures through our night observation devices (NODs) of some of the stuff that was going on. When the MCLC was getting ready to go off, they radioed and had everybody get inside their vehicles and close the doors for the big boom. I have to say that when that big boom occurred, there was a collective celebratory shouting and cheering, like somebody scored a touchdown.

MM: From my understanding, when it went off a whole bunch of IEDs went off with it.



LD: Correct. I was in there listening to the radio; and when the big boom hit, there were at least five daisy-chained IEDs that went off after that. That was basically how the city was: the city was rigged because they had plenty of warning; they knew we were coming. They just rigged up every place: every vehicle, IEDs all along the roads, a lot of daisy-chains. Of course, we were not in the breach, so the personal accounts of what occurred going through that breached hole, you'd have to talk to those elements. The sad part is that in the front of it were the tanks, then came the rest of the infantry, and then at the tail end was the IIF, which was being led by the liaison leader, Command Sergeant Major Steve Faulkenburg.

MM: Could you tell me what you know about him being killed? Was he taken back to your facility?

LD: Yes, he was. And again, days ran into nights ran into days, so my accounting of time and space is just off unless I'm looking at a document of our logged medical records or my pictures that I have the date and time on. It was in that first night after the breach through, the IIF had come in through at the tail end. As I understand it, Command Sergeant Major Faulkenburg had dismounted his vehicle because there was a lot of bottlenecks at the breach site and there was bottlenecks down these roads where maybe only one tank could pass through easily. There were very narrow alleyway roads. There was a firefight going on between our elements and somebody else. The IIF, led by Command Sergeant Major Faulkenburg, had come up to that point and he had dismounted to go find out what was going on, why they couldn't move. A stray bullet struck him in the forehead. We got the call on the radio that Ramrod 7 was coming in. We actually thought he was accompanying the casualty, but it turns out he was the casualty. I had a feeling that that's what it was, but there was some confusion when we heard about that. So of course, we all have our gloves on, everybody's ready. We had a '113 tracked vehicle, which was solely responsible for bringing casualties from sector in Fal-lujah directly out to us where we were. I'm trying to think of where we were. We were at the third jump site.

MM: I've got some documentation and some maps from Major John Reynolds, now Lieutenant Colonel Reynolds, on where individual units were at different times.

LD: When Command Sergeant Major Faulkenburg came in, Greg and I had a standard procedure in which he would greet the casualty coming out of the back of the '113. I stayed 10 or 20 feet away by the litter stand, ready at the head of the bed for airway and to intubate him. When he came out, immediately he was laid down on our litter stand and there was a dressing around his head. I think a medic from another unit that was attached to us had put this dressing on. I took the dressing off and knew this was a fatal shot. His brain and cranium were exposed. The med-

ics had actually dove into him, doing what they do best, which is cut off clothes, begin IVs and they had already started and I stopped them right away. He had one entrance wound about a centimeter above his right eyebrow and an exit wound at the top of his head.

MM: So that must have affected you personally; you probably knew the command sergeant major pretty well.

LD: Yes, we were all affected; however, I knew we had a mission to do. I think at my maturity level, I'm able to take those feelings and put them in a room and close the door for now. Remember, I'm with young soldiers. It hit one young female soldier pretty hard. We did Command Sergeant Major Faulkenburg and then we didn't have any further casualties right afterwards, so there was some time to prep his body. We were also responsible for any "angels," which is what we call deceased people. We were responsible for taking the "angels" and processing them initially. So that was the first night; that was our first bad hit. We had no idea how long this was going to take, how many more were going to die. You just live through it and endure it.

MM: Now shortly after Command Sergeant Major Faulkenburg was killed, I have here in my notes that there was a mass casualty: 17 IIF soldiers came in.

LD: Yeah. There were some explosions and fights, and the IIF soldiers were injured. The "mass casualty" being a large number of them – some of them were not severely injured, some of them were more injured. I don't think any of them died. When they started coming in, we had to triage and process them very quickly, to put the most immediate ones in one area and the next immediate ones in another and start taking care of them individually. Well, that would be easy: you get them, you triage them, you put them in your categories and you take care of them. You start taking care of the more serious ones right away. We split up our medics. Remember, I've got 10 medics, plus Greg and me. The problem was that at the exact same time, we were at the third jump site and the insurgents had pinpointed where this LRP was. They started shooting rockets at us, and we believe those rockets were coming from the southern part of the city, south of the industrial sector.

MM: All the way from down there?

LD: Yes, and they were aiming directly at us; they were rocketing us specifically. Every time you hear that initial "whiz," it sounds like an F-16 or an F-14 flying right over your head and you have to dive over your patient because they don't have their IBA on anymore; we've already taken that off. So you see four litter stands with four patients on them, five other patients that were on the ground that were minor injuries – I had one medic taking care of them. Then we had some other patients on ground litters that were in the medium category. All the medics were

taking care of them; and then you hear these rockets come in and all the medics will cover their patient. Or if you can, dive into a track if you're not with a patient or hit the ground. So we kept getting rocket attacks and, right in the middle of that, they said, "We've got 'angels' coming in." I forget exactly how many, but one was an American soldier. Of course, all of us are holding our breath. Is this somebody we know? Which one of our friends is this? It turns out it was Staff Sergeant Todd Cornell, who was a liaison person to the IIF, and so we didn't know him. But I was walking over there to the IIF soldiers, and I think there were two or three other dead IIF soldiers. You know what, now that I'm thinking of it, I don't know if that was in the same mass casualty event. In my mind, I thought they were two different ones but maybe they were in the same event, I'm not sure. But anyway, they came into us about the same time, after our live casualties came in. So we're taking care of a lot of casualties, getting them packaged, getting them treated, bandaging them up, splinting them, evaluating them, writing up their casualty theater card and putting them in categories of who's going to get transported when. When we received the "angels," I went over there to see the American soldier and it was Todd Cornell. That Iraqi Army physician, when I said, "It's not one of ours," he says, "No, it's Todd Cornell, I know him, I know him." Evidently, this Iraqi doctor had worked a lot with Todd and I did not know that. Right as we're packaging up those "angels" and we sent our FLAs loaded with the passengers – and it was Greg's decision to ship even the minor casualties on to Camp Fallujah. We didn't have enough time at that moment to fully evaluate whether they were going to need X-rays or not. Because if it was a minor casualty, yeah, we could have kept them in the field, but we didn't have time to fully evaluate them. So if they needed X-rays, they had to go to Camp Fallujah. Personally, I think it would have been nice if we'd had a situation where we could have kept some of them and not inundated Camp Fallujah with all of them. However, the situation in the field was that we were getting rocketed, we received our "angels," and now we have to jump. So the best thing is to put them on an FLA and send them to Camp Fallujah, so we sent all the combat casualties. At that time, it was chaotic to have all these things happening at once. We packed up and, like I said, in six minutes we could pack up, we're on that service road heading south to the cloverleaf, which was our fourth jump. When we were told to jump, the rest of the support stayed behind for about two hours. And I'm thinking, "We have no security element except for some Iraqi Army officers that were there."

MM: So you guys were hanging out there for a couple hours?

LD: Yeah, if not longer. We had no crew-served weapons; it was kind of crazy there. "This just doesn't seem quite right." But, you know, these things happen.

MM: You sent most of the critically injured to Bravo Medical?

LD: Bravo Surgical, which was the surgical element at Camp Fallujah. From the cloverleaf, they were about a 15-minute transport. I think our fastest time was 13 minutes, pedal to the floor the whole time.

MM: As the fight's progressing, Sergeant James Matteson, do you recall anything about him?

LD: Yes, he came in as an "angel." We did not resuscitate him. He was hit in the chest with a rocket- propelled grenade (RPG).

MM: How about Lieutenant Edward Iwan, the executive officer (XO) of Alpha Company?

LD: Lieutenant Iwan was standing up in the turret of a Bradley. Have you talked to Sergeant Major Darrin Bohn?

MM: Not yet, he's also on the list. So far, believe it or not, Jane Arraf gave me a pretty good description of what happened, but she wasn't really positive on anything.

LD: Sergeant Major Bohn was a witness to Lieutenant Iwan getting hit; and what he told me was that Lieutenant Iwan was standing up halfway in his turret and was talking on the radio through his helmet. Sergeant Major Bohn saw the RPG strike down and hit him, and it hit him in the right side of his abdomen, pelvis area. The RPG was on fire, you could see it. Lieutenant Iwan's last words were, "It's hot, it's hot!" and then he just slumps down into the Bradley. In the back of the Bradley, and you have to understand – the turret, to pull someone through and pull them into the back, you have to turn the turret to where the doors line up, the holes line up. In the back of the Bradley was actually one of my senior line medics, Sergeant Harris. So they turned and Sergeant Harris pulled him in, but he still has the tailfin piece of the RPG sticking out of his abdomen. The only thing they could do in the cramped quarters of the back of the Bradley is basically stabilize him. They took him to where he was transferred over to our '113 and then he was brought in. When they brought in Lieutenant Iwan, they put him on a litter and carried him to me. We immediately started to resuscitate him; and as I started to intubate him, lifting up his jaw with the laryngoscope, his airway opened and he took a gasp which meant he still had signs of life. He still had a femoral pulse – and this is a very, very short time from the point of injury to resuscitation. At the northeast corner of the cloverleaf, our casualties were basically hopped on Phase Line Fran and evacuated immediately to us: we're talking minutes, very few minutes. He still had signs of life, we get in IVs immediately, I drugged him down, and I know that a lot of sedation and medication is going to drop his blood pressure even more. However, with this kind of injury, my feeling was that if he has any feeling whatsoever, I want all his pain to not be there. So I gave him lots of medication and intubated him. Greg

looked up at me and said, “Did you see this?” I looked down and he’s eviscerated, his intestines are out and the RPG tailpiece is sticking out. I said, “Well, just bandage it however you can.” Greg thought quickly enough to know that the explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) guys were 30 feet away, so he called them over to give us a heads up on whether this is a live round or not. They looked and said, “No, this is not a live round; it’s just the tailpiece hanging out.” They did the best they could to bandage this extremely open wound. Meanwhile, I’m bagging him, we’ve got IVs in, we’ve given him medication, we’re packaging him and Chris Carlson, who’s with us at this time, says, “Lisa, are you going to go with him?” And I said, “Yeah, I’ll go with him on this transport.” So I hopped in the back of the FLA and then I realize that the two medics that are going with, one is a female medic – she’s going to work the radios – the other is the driver, and I’m going to be in the back by myself with Lieutenant Iwan. We start bagging and this service road – picture your worst Jeep trail ever. I’m in the back of this FLA, just banging around, my head’s hitting the bars. He didn’t have a chest strap hanging onto him so I’ve got my hand on his bare chest, just holding him in place while I’m bagging. That was probably the longest 13 minutes of my entire life. We get to Camp Fallujah, had to go in the south gate over a bunch of speed bumps, go around to their surgical unit. We called before we got in, and this is my first time personally transporting a patient there. I’m thinking the surgeon’s going to be right there, right? No. I’m starting to give reports to these guys who are just litter bearers. Then we go inside their trauma resuscitation bay and I ask, “Where’s your doctor?” I know how I am in an ER, I would be standing there. The first doctor that came in was a female pediatrician who was acting as the ER doctor at the time. I said, “He’s got to go to surgery now. This is a surgical case here.” Then the next minute, an ER doctor, an emergency medicine residency trained physician and the surgeon come in, and I give the full report. Now picture them in scrubs, me in full battle rattle, dirt and sweat trickling down my brow, and I’ve been out in the field for a couple days, weapon on and everything. I’ve given them the full report, they take off the dressing and the surgeon looks at me and says, “This is not a survivable injury. Do you mind if we call it?” And I couldn’t breathe, I couldn’t say anything, I was just stunned. I had done everything I could for this guy. He had a pulse, he had respiratory effort and, in my mind, all he needed was a surgeon and here’s the surgeon saying this is not a survivable injury. I guess he could see this blank look on my face because then he followed it up with, “You know, we’ve done so many surgeries this past month on things like this and they never survive; they don’t survive things like this. We haven’t had one with this kind of evisceration.” So then the only thing I could say was, “Well, does he have a pulse?” And I saw this nurse check his radial and say, “No, he doesn’t have a pulse.” Now, I knew he had a low blood pressure because of all the medications I had given him, but then the ER doctor took the SonoSite, which is an ultrasound, and quickly threw it on his chest. He says, “Well, he’s got

cardiac activity.” So the surgeon says, “Well, okay, I’ll guess we’ll continue to resuscitate him.” So they started hanging blood on him and resuscitating him. Then all of a sudden, my medic comes inside and she says, “Ma’am, ma’am, we have to go. We have more casualties coming in.” I answered, “Okay, have to go.” I said to all of them in the room, “Thank you very much for what you’re doing,” and I left my Lieutenant Iwan there. I came back a couple days later because my scout platoon leader wanted me to check in on some of the patients who were casualties and wanted to make sure his guys were getting good care. When I stopped by the hospital to get the X-rays, somebody recognized me and said, “Oh, you’re the one who came in with Lieutenant Iwan.” I said, “Yes.” They said he had survived 30 minutes into surgery before he died. They were just amazed that he had lived that long: he was a kid who did not want to die. The surgeon was still carrying around his casualty feeder card in his pocket. He said, “This is a reminder to me that sometimes they’re courageous to the very end. They want to live; they have that will to live.” Anyway, I did get the X-ray on digits; they had stamped an abdominal X-ray in the operating room and I burned a disk of it. Now that I was looking at it, you could see the RPG sticking out and his whole iliac crest was blown out, so it was a horrible X-ray. But anyway, that was Lieutenant Iwan. He was the only one who we had attempted resuscitation on. I thought maybe if anybody had a chance, he did.

MM: So you left to get back to the fight.

LD: And we were getting more casualties in.

MM: What is the nature of most of the wounded coming in?

LD: Penetrating shrapnel. Did Greg send you that paper?

MM: Yes.

LD: It has a breakdown of our casualties. It has how many penetrating, how many head, how many neck, how many thorax. We had one guy that was shot in the chest with an AK-47 round that just entered his small arms protective insert (SAPI) plate; it made a little red mark on his chest and we returned him to the fight. So there were things like that happening. But Greg’s paper dissected all of our casualties; there were 79 or 81 casualties.

MM: And the majority of those, you were able to return them to duty?

LD: Roughly half of them were returned to duty and half of them had to get evacuated back to Camp Fallujah. Out of that half, some of them recuperated and then were able to come back to the fight; some of them went back even further. His paper has the statistics on all of that. We took the log book and broke it all out. I’ve

got a copy of that and I have a copy of the raw data on my computer. Look through his paper and see which paper he gave you.

MM: Yes, I'm pretty sure it's in there, but I'll check.

LD: The ballpark is 78, 79 or 81, the number of casualties we received during that time period. We lost five American soldiers and I think three Iraqi soldiers. You have to look at the statistics; I'm going off the top of my head. Four of them were from our battalion and the fifth soldier was Todd Cornell.

MM: Within 24 hours after Lieutenant Iwan was killed, Captain Sean Sims was killed. Can you take me through that?

LD: They had brought in some casualties and I was treating this one sergeant's shoulder; he had a gunshot wound and he was more distraught than what his injury suggested. I can't remember exactly what he was saying but it was something about, "How's the commander? How's the commander?" I'm thinking, Lieutenant Colonel Newell? And so I answered, "Which commander are you talking about?" Evidently what had happened is that four guys went to clear a room and Captain Sims said to his sergeant, "You cover me right," and Captain Sims goes in the room. But to get your M-4 around the corner, if you're a right-handed person to shoot right, it's more of a delay than if you're going around a corner to shoot left. Well, Captain Sims enters the room and two insurgents with AK-47s just shot him. The other guys behind Captain Sims came into the room shooting, too, but two of them were hit. Now Captain Sims is down inside the room and these guys are taken out. They evacuated them to us and then they had to go in there afterwards. So I'm with the two casualties, both shot in the shoulders: one to the left shoulder and one to right shoulder. It's from them that I'm understanding that Captain Sims is still an unknown casualty. I'm looking at Greg saying, "What's going on?" Then I see First Sergeant Peter Smith and I yelled across to him, "First Sergeant, where's Captain Sims?" And he looks back at me and says, "I don't know." He had just received the radio call to go back. He had escorted these two casualties. So he's running back and then, as we're finishing up on these casualties, we're getting, now, the first sergeant's voice over the radio telling us there's a KIA, an "angel" will be coming in. Then he set out his battle roster, "Rank? Captain. Battle roster? Sierra, Sierra." And that's how we knew. I immediately turned to Greg, I'm in disbelief, and I asked, "What does that mean? Is that Sean? Is that Captain Sims?" It sinks in to Greg quicker than it sunk into me. "Are they saying he's a KIA?" And he said, "Yeah, he's dead." I looked at him and said, "How do they know he's dead? Why don't they bring him back here? How do they know he's dead?" My point was: here they brought Command Sergeant Major Faulkenburg back as a casualty when he was dead and I had to pronounce him and stop all the medics and say, "Wait, a minute, wait a minute, we're not resuscitating him." How did they know he was

dead? That was my first initial, emotional thought. I remember Greg almost yelled at me. Greg responds to things in a more mean way when he's upset. He said, "They know!" He was telling me to just back off, they know it. And then all of a sudden, he came in and they brought him as an "angel" in a body bag. They put him down where we put our "angels," which was just off from where we were. So he's in a body bag, on a litter stand, on the ground, away from our casualty area. Greg and Lieutenant Carlson and the other officers who had come by, I know they were all good friends, these young officers, so I gave them some time. Greg came back and I immediately hugged him and said, "I don't like this." And he said, "Who are you telling?" And that was it; that was as much grieving as we did out in the field. We carried on.

MM: Are there any other major advances as we go through to 20 November you'd like to talk about, after the death of Sean Sims?

LD: From there, we jumped to the abandoned gas station. We had a whole bunch of detainees come in. I don't know when that was. I remember we were at the cloverleaf. There were a bunch of detainees that were taken in, I forget the numbers. Perhaps Lieutenant Colonel Reynolds knows or you can find it in Greg's statistics. Anyway, the detainees that required medical care came in. The first grouping came in and they had been beaten and somewhat tortured. I say tortured because they had loop mark beatings from days old, when it turns black and blue. Greg and an interpreter had to interview each and every one of them, because we only had one interpreter. I didn't get involved to help do their medical screenings. We were doing a medical screening before they went to the detainee prison for further care. None of these had any injuries that required immediate or urgent surgical care. But according to them, they had been taken captive by these insurgents and were held captive in these houses, basements and rooms where they were beaten. They were not given food except for maybe some bread and water occasionally. Different ones had had different lengths of stay; they had been bound.

MM: Were these perhaps citizens of Fallujah?

LD: Well, interestingly enough, they were all males of fighting age. So when you listened to their stories, they would say, "Oh, I was just standing on a street corner, smoking, when they came up to me and told me they were going to make me fight with them." And then our interpreter would turn and say, "He's lying." From what the interpreters told me, from additional information they found out from the IIF, most of these men were originally with the fighters in Fallujah, but at some point and time they had decided they didn't want to be a part of that gang anymore. At whatever point that was, whether it was before the fight or during the fight, their fellow fighters were not letting them leave. So they then became essentially a hostage, a prisoner, until their prison keepers left in the midst of fighting. Our



American forces found them there, and the bottom line was they had been beaten. I remember one guy who was essentially black and blue from head to toe. Some of them only had a couple bruises; others had bruises of different ages. They all had described some sort of beating, torture or poor treatment by someone who held them against their will. It appears, from all the information I gathered, that they were original fighters themselves but were wanting to abandon their cause. The other interesting thing is we did get four other insurgent casualties who were still alive, with open femur fractures and abdominal injuries, who had been lying in a building for four days when they finally waved the white flag and gave up. They were brought to us for care and we bandaged their wounds, splinted their fractures, gave them IVs and then they were sent to Bravo Surgical or Abu Ghraib. I'm not sure which surgical unit they went to, but they went to higher hospital care.

MM: Did you have to treat any actual civilian casualties at all?

LD: Actually, there was not one civilian that was in our sector. There was not one old person, not one female, not one child in our entire sector, not one.

MM: Yes, that's my understanding. They pretty much denuded the entire population.

LD: I would talk with the IIF, who would talk with other people from the area. Evidently, the regular people of Fallujah left a long time ago. We had a big campaign of flyers; and some of our psychological operations (PSYOP) people still have the flyers. They're about the size of a dollar bill, a little bit bigger. They were just warning the people: give up your weapons, don't fight, just leave town. Evidently, these people locked up their homes and they left town.

MM: I know this is kind of a touchy subject over in the 2-2 area, but did you have any casualties that suffered anything from white phosphorous (WP) rounds?

LD: No. In fact, even with the Iraqi casualties, there were no WP casualties that came in whatsoever.

MM: In one of my conversations with Captain Cobb, he said he's been raked over the coals on the Internet about shooting some of that.

LD: You know how all that came to be, right?

MM: Somebody told me the Italian media got in there and did something –

LD: What happened was: it was such a successful artillery assault, Captain Cobb did a phenomenal job; he was highly praised. But when he came back, while the rest of us are recuperating and recovering, he wrote a paper on the –

MM: On the shake-and-bake missions?

LD: No, not on the shake-and-bake missions. He wrote a paper to document the artillery and that's online; you can get that and it was published on a field artillery thing. What he said in that paper was that the WP – we used it that first night; remember I said the fireworks? We used it for illumination during the fight. But what would happen is the illumination and the incendiary smoking would make the insurgents come out of the building, then the conventional weaponry was used. He said in one tiny little blurb that it was used to smoke out the enemy and then they were killed by conventional weapons. I have seen thousands of pictures. I have my pictures of the LRP casualties and all my soldier friends who took pictures inside. I've seen numerous pictures of corpses from Fallujah and medically I didn't see any evidence of severe burn injuries. Now, there are corpses that have decayed, but decay was happening because they weren't going into these areas until two and three days after the bombing and assault. And it was warm during the day, so there's a lot of evidence of decay. When all of this came up about the WP, I got on the Internet, onto some of these Al Jazeera-loving blogs and websites of that nature. I saw the pictures they were using as propaganda, saying these bodies were burned. Well, actually they were decayed bodies. They were blackened, decayed bodies.

MM: Just like information warfare, basically.

LD: It was propaganda that was never, ever based on any truth whatsoever, and which stirred up the Arab community with Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya and some other blogging kinds of emails. It became an Internet fireball, but none of the stuff based on the Arab view was ever based on fact; it was all made up and it was funny how it was so delusional. That basically brought it to the national news level and Wolf Blitzer from CNN wanted to interview Captain Cobb. There is no issue here.

MM: Interview him actually when the fighting was going on?

LD: No, this is just recently, in December of '05. Now it's brought up as an international issue of what happened 13 months previously, only because these very pro-insurgent websites and blogs got a hold of Captain Cobb's paper that was on the Internet and said, "Hey look, this is proof that they used napalm." So I can tell you that, because I was there –

MM: Yeah, you'd be the one to know.

LD: Exactly. There were no casualties whatsoever from any WP in our sector, and we're the ones who used it.

MM: Going back briefly to the reporters, how did the embedded reporters work out? Any comments on that at all?

LD: Yeah, they did their thing; they rode in the back of Bradleys. This is out and out warfare, so they were made to sit in the back of the Bradley; and the only time they could get out and do an outside story was just in certain safer areas. We want to keep them safe, too. We want them to get the story; we want them to report from the front line. I can tell you that, at the LRP, we had no information of what was happening just five kilometers away. We'd hear the booms, we'd hear this stuff, we'd listen to the radio, but what actually was happening, we had no visual on. Greg had brought this satellite radio and we could pick up CNN. We knew Jane Arraf was embedded with us, with 2-2. Every hour on the hour, whatever it was, when Jane would do her spiel, you'd see 12 or 13 people all on little stools and up-turned boxes all crowded around this little satellite radio. It was just like the 1920s around the radio. There was another embedded CNN reporter with the Marines and it seemed like that reporter – and I can't remember who it was or what he was doing – but he was picking and choosing certain little stories that would make a big to-do. He wasn't really giving a good overview of what was really happening on the east side. When I say east side, I mean east of us. It was very sensationalist journalism. We would hear him and then we'd hear Jane Arraf. She'd give pretty true-to-life stories and just tried to give an overview of what was happening. I think her job is kind of hard. I would hate to have to do that, work for somebody else and try to paint an unbiased picture. It's very hard for national news people to do that and they don't do it well most of the time. The anchorman at the desk, he was the media go-between between Jane Arraf and this guy on the east side. He'd hear the guy on the east side and then he'd go to Jane and say, "Now, let's hear from Jane. Jane, can you hear me?" Then he would say, "Jane, have they found very many civilians; how are the civilians doing?" Because the guy on the east side was really focusing in on some woman who ran out because her mother was killed, or something like that. Focusing in on one small, little incident. And Jane says, "No, we haven't even seen any civilians. There are absolutely no civilians, not a one that we've found. But what we have found are weapons caches," and she's going into all the other stuff that they found. Well, then they would go back to the anchorman and he would reply, "Well, there you have it. We don't know what's going on down there." [Laughter] Greg and I would look at each other and we'd say, "Didn't Jane just say what's going on? It's like they don't want to believe it." She did a decent job; that's my personal opinion. I think it's a hard job to do and I think she did us well. Lieutenant Colonel Newell is very open to having reporters, and not only having them but making sure they were treated well. That was a very important thing to him: that they are our guests and that we treat them well.

MM: Well, as we wrap this up, is there anything else you'd like to tell us that stands out, that young soldiers or young doctors might have an interest in knowing about what you learned on the battlefield?

LD: I know your initial writing project is just going to be a 50-page brief, right?

MM: Yeah, basically just discussing the joint-ness of the operation. But we hope to do a full-blown book at some time.

LD: Well, the basic brief of this is that, jointly, we got along very well with the Marines. At my level and at the individual soldier level, we did not deal with the Marines; it wasn't a joint site. I think at Lieutenant Colonel Newell's level is where he had to be working with a joint force operation. At our level, it was just a matter of doing MEDEVACs and we're used to doing joint stuff there. We're used to doing joint Air Force evacuations in other situations. To us, medicine is medicine, we all bleed red, and it doesn't mean very much. As far as the whole mission itself, there were a lot of unknowns. We didn't know if we were going to be there two weeks or two months. I think the success of the mission was very few casualties in 2-2, although it was our very important people. We were well prepared medically; we had a good MEDEVAC. However, Greg was more in touch with the medical setup in the overall theater of the operation. I wish I had become more involved at the whole operation-level medical, so I would know, if these guys are driving right by me, where their forward aid stations were at. As far as preparation, this was one of those operations that you don't bring any amenities with you. You just deal with shared food, water and do your mission. It's not something where you're going to bring a cot to sleep in. You bring a sleeping bag, and most of the guys in the fight didn't even bring that; they brought their poncho liner and that was it. I don't think I have any other words of wisdom, except for that. I was fortunate to be with a good unit, and I was fortunate to even be a part of it.

MM: Okay, let me thank you for doing this interview. I've got some other things I'd like to talk to you about but I'll turn the tape off. Thank you for your time.

LD: You're welcome.

## **Major Andy Dietz**

### **21 February 2006**

JM: My name is John McCool (JM) and I'm with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I'm interviewing Major Andy Dietz (AD), U.S. Marine Corps, on his experiences during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). Also present is Matt Matthews (MM), also with the Combat Studies Institute, and he will be asking questions as well. Today's date is 21 February 2006 and this is an unclassified interview. Before we begin, sir, if you feel at any time we're entering classified territory, please couch your response in terms that avoid revealing any classified information. And if classification requirements prevent you from responding, simply say you're not able to answer. Could you please start off by giving us a brief sketch of your military career and then we'll focus in on your OIF deployment?

AD: After going through the Basic School for the Marine Corps, I went to the Field Artillery Basic Course at Fort Sill. Following that, I went to serve with 1st Marine Division (MARDIV), 1st Battalion, 11th Marines. I was a battery forward observer, platoon commander and fire direction officer. From there, I went to Marine Security Force Company, Kings Bay, Georgia, and spent two years there as a guard and platoon commander and guard officer. From there, I went to Amphibious Warfare School in Quantico and to the 2d MARDIV where I was a battery commander, a fire direction officer and a battalion logistics officer for the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines. After leaving there, I went to inspector/instructor, which I think is similar to an active component/reserve component (ACRC) billet, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with a Reserve artillery battery and spent three years there. When they were activated for OIF II, I was a draft pick, going over as an individual augmentee to Regimental Combat Team 1 (RCT-1). Now I'm here at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC).

JM: What was the time period of your deployment to OIF, what position did you hold, and where were you located?

AD: My deployment went from July 2004 through March 2005. I was the information operations (IO) officer for RCT-1. During Operation Al Fajr – also known as Operation Phantom Fury – I was the fire support coordinator (FSC) for RCT-1, which I think is the same as a fire support officer (FSO) in the Army.

JM: As we discussed earlier, we'd like to focus mainly on your role with RCT-1 in Operation Phantom Fury/Al Fajr so, to begin, could you give us an overview of your unit's mission in the months preceding? A description of your area of operations (AO) and what your particular duties were?

AD: Our AO for RCT-1 prior to Operation Al Fajr was basically from Abu Ghraib all the way to just about Habbaniyah as far as east to west. North to south, we went from just south of the Euphrates River all the way up to Lake Tharthar in the north. A lot of it was treated as a security zone. In the months in between Fallujah I and Fallujah II, it was containing Fallujah because Fallujah itself did not belong to us; that battlespace was actually Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) battlespace. We were that entire area, Fallujah exclusive, so we were charged with containing Fallujah and keeping the main supply routes (MSRs) open. Two major MSRs went through our area.

MM: Now, was Highway 10 going through your area?

AD: Yes, and I have to apologize up front: I'm more familiar with the MSR names we gave to them. I think 10 was MSR Mobile. There were two very large MSRs that went through, Mobile and MSR Michigan. We were charged with keeping those open. We had rather large cities outside of Fallujah that we were responsible for – Karmah and Saqlawiyah – and then also the area around the Abu Ghraib Prison, Nasser wa Salam and Kandari. We also had areas south of Fallujah and north of the Euphrates, called the Zaydon region. This is a very rural area, there were very few population centers, but it was the prime spot for hiding weapons caches, for various insurgent cells to operate, so we had that mission as well. Then, of course, the overriding theme throughout was setting the conditions for Fallujah II.

JM: What was involved in that process of setting the conditions and how did you prepare and plan during those early phases?

AD: I probably shouldn't say shaping but that's what it was: focusing the insurgents inside the city on where they thought we were going to come from. And so a lot of time was spent operating, whether it was demonstrations, limited objective attacks, feints along the southeast and eastern approaches to the city. We also maintained a very heavy presence on the east side of the city – there's a cloverleaf – the main approach to the city. I think both sides knew it was inevitable and we wanted them to prepare their defenses appropriately to where they thought we were going to come from, so it was more of a deception.

MM: How did you handle getting the civilians out? It's my understanding that, over a length of time, you guys attempted to do that.

JM: Was that part of the IO piece?

AD: Yes, that was part of the IO piece. The other half of it was getting the city prepared for combat operations. There has been, of course, a lot of argument about us letting everybody leave and we let some of the big fish leave. But our way of looking at it was: we did not want to go into a built-up city that size with poten-

tially 250,000 non-combatants, so we wanted to get the people out. The problem was that if we tell people to leave, then by international law we're responsible for taking care of them. We also knew that most of those people could leave and they'd be just fine with family support structures from Baghdad all the way to Saqlawiyah, and even further to Habbaniyah. We always had a campaign to try to drive a wedge between the civilians and the insurgents. We saw a lot of them as being fence-sitters, and with their culture the ascendant power is the one they're going to lean towards. So that was something we were working on even before we started getting people out of the city. Since we couldn't go into the city proper, we utilized a lot of leaflet drops over the city. We did things such as tell them how much money had been allocated for Fallujah for reconstruction and why that money wasn't coming – and we'd do it sequentially. First week, "We would have already been spending X-million number of dollars to repair your city with these projects and now we can't." The next drop would up the ante on what projects weren't getting done, the money, so we kept doing that. Other methods we used were radio messages, some of which were generic to the Al Anbar Province, but a lot of them were targeted to the people in Fallujah. We would do loudspeaker broadcasts from the periphery of the city, especially on Fridays doing counter-mosque messages. And then the last thing, we would pass out handbills in places we knew people were transiting into the city. We couldn't go into the city itself, but we knew if we gave these handbills in certain spots they were going to wind up in the city, and that's what we wanted to happen as well. So that was trying to get the fence-sitters and basically make it as difficult as possible for the insurgents to operate in the city. Toward the latter phase before Al Fajr, we focused on getting people out of the city, and we did that with a variety of methods. First we changed the tone of the radio broadcasts. We started spreading our messages, both through the radio and through leaflet drops, that said things like, "In the event of combat operations, please do the following things: stay inside your home; don't get involved; if you have to come outside, don't come out with a weapon." Basically messages that were gearing people towards the fact that something was going to happen. We started changing the tone of those, kind of ratcheted them up a little bit as we got closer; and we also started sending messages to the insurgents. They're the target audience now: "Defeat is inevitable. There's no way you're going to win." So we're getting a trickle of people coming in and out, and they would know when we were going to come because they'd have to see the troop buildup. Well, they obviously saw that wasn't happening yet so we started another deception operation, which I don't think I can talk about. The target audience and the effect were not the general population, but they were supposed to start word of mouth. We basically culminated our IO efforts by firing illumination missions over the city, usually around two to three o'clock in the morning. Lighting it up, which had unintended consequences which were actually of great benefit to us. We did that for several nights in a row, and then we

culminated with illumination rounds and Marine F-18 sonic passes over the city. After that, everyone knew the game was on; people left in droves and they quite literally emptied the city. We encountered very few civilians in the city. Most of them were males that stayed behind to watch their houses. We would transport them out of the city, usually up to Saqlawiyah where we had a civil-military operations center (CMOC) set up that would take people, give them some food, and get them on their way to their families.

JM: You mentioned loud speakers, radio messages, handbills and leaflet drops, and you mainly targeted the civilians with those. Did you have a sense of which ones were the most effective?

AD: Well, I guess it would depend on what we were trying to accomplish. As far as getting them out of the city, I think the leaflet drops were rather effective. In terms of measures of effectiveness, I don't think we can argue with the illumination rounds and the sonic booms; those things would be what tipped the scales. It's something we always wrestled with: getting measures of effectiveness from radio broadcasts was very difficult. You just can't simply talk to people. There were rumors that nobody during the day would be caught listening to one of our radio stations in public. So we would usually run most of our public service announcements as well as our radio messages at night when people would be inside their houses and had the freedom to listen to the radio. But very difficult to get. We did find a lot of our leaflets in houses, sometimes in vehicles, so we knew people were picking them up. Our IO campaign in Fallujah was always much different than it would be in the cities we had that were outside of Fallujah. So it was very unique and often very difficult because you were working basically two campaigns at the same time.

MM: When this mass exodus of civilians started, was anyone able to search the vehicles and check people as they left?

AD: No, when the floodgates opened – I really don't think we had expectations that we would be able to do that, and some criticism came of that. There was an issue with our troop-to-task and also, quite frankly, we have a line of cars stopped that close to the city which is an easy target for a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), so we let them go. We had a pretty good picture within the city on what we felt we needed to have a picture of. There would be indicators that would cause us to take action, if we felt it was necessary, and we weren't really concerned with the exodus.

JM: Were you able to get a sense of what impact this IO campaign had on the insurgents themselves? Did it just harden them?

AD: The fact that we were mostly fighting foreign fighters in the city when it actually came to combat operations was an indicator that wedges had been made.



Whether you call them anti-Iraqi elements, anti-Iraqi forces, or whatever you wanted to call them, the fact was there weren't nearly as many Iraqi insurgents in the city as there should have been. So I can attest to the fact that there was some success in targeting the insurgents.

JM: Once it became clear that you guys were going to go in, how did RCT-1 fit into this overall plan and what were your responsibilities?

AD: I'm an artillery officer by trade, so once it was going to go kinetic, I went from being the IO officer to being strictly the FSC. Several things happened. First, we gave up the rest of this entire AO [referring to map]; it was parsed throughout the various units. The unit that took the biggest chunk was 2d Brigade Combat Team (BCT) from the 1st Cavalry Division. Then we shrank it down – our zone changed to be basically like that.

MM: Is this map pretty much correct, with 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment (2-7) on your left?

AD: As far as starting positions, it was. We had a radical shift in our zone and were able to focus all of our forces on Fallujah. We also did have this peninsula right here; that was 3d Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Battalion, which was attached to RCT-1.

MM: They participated in taking the hospital?

AD: Yes, they drove down to the peninsula, isolated the hospital, and the Iraqi forces themselves went into the hospital. We made it clear to everybody that it was Iraqi forces that went in. Once they cleared the hospital, then we occupied positions around the hospital, this bridge right here. We had a small craft company, basically a riverine company, and they were patrolling the waterways right here as well. From Fallujah I, we knew there were rat lines that were coming into the city using the river and so we used our small craft company, which was normally a division asset, but it was attached us. They closed down the river as well and that was all done before anyone went into the city.

MM: That was November 7th, I think.

AD: Correct. It was the first day which was, of course, followed shortly after by – actually, these numbers on your map are incorrect. This is 3d Battalion, 5th Marines (3/5) over here; this is 3d Battalion, 1st Marines (3/1). Then we were basically in all of our starting positions.

JM: So we can try to get some of this on the tape, 3/5 is the northwest corner of the city and then 3/1 was right next to them?

AD: Correct. 3/1 was right next to 2-7. I don't know if you want me to get into it right now, but I can tell you why everybody was where they were.

MM: That would be great.

AD: There's a peninsula across the Euphrates from Fallujah, we just called it the Fallujah Peninsula. That was part of our AO and 3d LAR attacked north up the peninsula and isolated the Fallujah hospital, which is right at the tip. That's where the Iraqi security forces went in and actually cleared that themselves. Then 3d LAR isolated Fallujah from the peninsula by taking the west end of both bridges and shutting them down. The southern part of the city as well as the eastern part were also isolated; that wasn't our mission; that belonged to 2d BCT, with a second reconnaissance battalion who had been working with us, to seal the southern part of the city. There's a large apartment complex that slopes up – and the city is actually pretty low. This is all much higher than the city. 3/5 secured an apartment complex in the northwest part of the city. Right here is a large train station.

MM: That train track sits kind of on a berm?

AD: It's on a very high berm, about 30 meters high. To get into the city from the north, there are really only two places to come in. There's a road right here and then there's a much larger road right here called the Saqlawiyah Road; it leaves Fallujah and goes northwest off to Saqlawiyah. The only way to come in is either through this road or through this road, which has a trestle bridge so it's a natural chokepoint. 3/5 takes the apartment complex and then 3/1 came down and took the train station. Once they took the train station using engineer assets, they basically cut the tracks and made lanes through.

MM: I've been reading about 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment (2-2) over here on the left. They used a mine clearing land charge (MCLC) to breach and they claim there were secondary explosions with that.

AD: There probably were. I know there was a minefield up here; we encountered it much later on as well after we cleared the city. But no, we didn't. The berm was very low at the station for obvious reasons and the engineers just cut lanes through there. Almost simultaneous with that, 3/5 attacked to secure a foothold in the city. This was accomplished by avoiding this chokepoint altogether. 3d Marine Air Wing (MAW) drop eight 2,000-pound bombs simultaneously, basically causing a huge breach, cut a lane through the 30-meter train track berm. Engineers were right behind them, plowed over it, made it trafficable, and then the entire battalion came through. Avoided this all together, came in from the west, and secured a foothold in the city. RCT-1's objective was the Jolan District where all the heavy hitters lived; that was the area the insurgents probably deemed un-takeable.

MM: And at this time, RCT-1 was in fact the main effort?

AD: Yes. So they secure a foothold, then 2-7 CAV basically did a penetration attack straight down, almost one single MSR coming down here. Following them,

almost in trace, was 3/1 who were clearing on foot – tank/infantry teams clearing it. So the penetration attack goes down and ultimately we were trying to isolate this area of the city. They shot down fast enough to cut off any insurgents coming from the south going back to the north, because they originally thought we were coming this way. 3/1 clears, 2-7 CAV comes down and isolates this part of the city and strongpoints it, then 3/1 moves all the way down to the south, makes a right hand turn, cuts over to the rigger, and 3/5 then moves through the Jolan and clears it out. Later on, because of the dynamics of the city and the progress the other RCT was making – initially we were just supposed to do that, but we wound up actually pushing down all the way to the edge of the city.

MM: Did RCT-7 at some point become the main attack, or is that just somebody blowing smoke?

AD: Not to my knowledge. They were designed to be a supporting attack the entire way. They're actually supposed to come down and clear this half of the city. We had such success here, going so quickly, that it only made sense to have us continue coming south. Rather than them hooking, they just continued south as well. Both our RCTs pretty much came down on line because the city is sealed here, they can't get out, so ultimately it turned into a hammer and anvil operation.

MM: Speaking of tanks, you guys basically had a platoon of tanks with each battalion. Is that correct?

AD: We had two tank companies, so it was pretty much a tank company with each.

MM: They supported your Marines in the house-to-house fight while 2-7 took off down the road?

AD: Right.

MM: Now later on, did any elements of 2-7 have to come back and help or support anybody?

AD: Occasionally someone would call, especially the Bradleys – but their primary mission was to do the penetration attack to isolate that part of the city, strongpoint it, and keep that MSR open so we could move rapidly up and down the road as far as resupplying, medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) or whatever the case may be.

MM: I was reading Bing West's book, No True Glory, and there's a part in here where General John Sattler requests 2-2 and 2-7. Is there any truth to this, that they had worked with them before?

AD: I don't know if he had or not. I know they were not the original unit that was going to do the operation with us. Originally, it was going to be the 2d BCT

from Korea – not from 1st CAV. They used to work the peninsula more towards Habbaniyah. But I think the reason they didn't come to us was that they were even lighter than us. I believe that higher levels wanted an armored punch, which is why CAV units were requested.

MM: Was that based on the April attack on the city?

AD: I believe they realized that we didn't need more light forces; we needed heavy forces. In other words: an armored force that can protect itself. I think had the original plan or force allocation gone down, we would have been stripping out some of our armored assets to reinforce them. Of course, once we'd uncovered the whole city, we did an extensive back clearing to include the area RCT-7 had. They weren't able to stay long enough to do the back clearing. They left and we, RCT-1, back cleared the entire city, literally every building and every house.

MM: The Iraqi forces working with you, did they work out okay? Were there problems; what went right or wrong?

AD: For their mission, they worked well. Of course, the ones on the peninsula did a great job. We also had some Iraqi security forces with 3/1 and they actually started back clearing; they were following right behind 3/1. I don't know that there were enough Iraqi security forces that we could've employed them in any other way. But it was good because when an Iraqi soldier goes into an Iraqi house, he generally knows where to look for anything of importance and that was a big benefit up front. Then later on, as we got more of them into the city – we always integrated them into a Marine unit so they're working side by side.

MM: And you had your own Marine advisors?

AD: Yes. These units came with Marine advisors and, as each unit would come in, they would get integrated into a Marine battalion. It would go all the way down to the platoon level; there may be a Marine platoon with an Iraqi squad. Towards the latter stages, as you get closer to the election, there may be an Iraqi platoon with a Marine squad attached to it; that was the thought process anyway. We did back clear the entire city and that's when I wound up taking my FSC hat off and putting my IO hat back on. At this point, we sent out messages, mostly over the radio and then handbills to the surrounding communities, saying we're going to reopen the city for civilians to come back once we determine it's safe, we've neutralized the insurgent threat, we've found all the weapons caches and unexploded ordnance, and we've restored some semblance of basic essential services to the city. So we were putting that message out. Then also, the three of us that made up our IO section went out with our psychological operations (PSYOP) detachment and literally went through everywhere they were clearing. We were putting in packets of PSYOP products, information sheets about the rules of the city, how the city was going to open, where they could find help, what unexploded ordnance

looks like, what they could do if they had information, that type of stuff. It was a packet of about 10 handbills that we were literally putting in every house, every business. Posters, of course, all over the place. As the Iraqi soldiers established forward operating bases (FOBs) throughout the city and got their own little real estate, we were giving them those as well. The plan was that once someone came into the city and went to their house, there was already a packet waiting for them – and that was in addition to what we would hand out to them as they came into the city. We had five entry control points into the city and we opened it by district so we could control the population as it came in. They received further information packets as they were coming into the city, once again a mix of PSYOP products as well as just strictly information products. Ultimately, we wound up opening up the whole city and letting everyone back in. From an IO perspective, we were focused on telling people how they could get to the CMOC, if they had any problems how they could take care of them, things of that nature.

MM: Could you talk about your calls for close air support (CAS) and indirect fire? How did that go and were all these CAS missions provided by the Marines or was the Air Force involved?

AD: Anybody who had an aircraft wound up in one of our stacks. We knew we would have a lot of air. We established what we called Keyhole CAS; I think they're trying to make it doctrine. We established four CAS stacks based on cardinal directions around the city, and that's how we were able to deconflict our aircraft. The FOB is down in this direction and this is where our artillery was located, so naturally we already deconflicted our gun target lines with aircraft. We put the aircraft in stacks, usually what ordnance they had and how much fuel would determine what altitude they would enter the stack and wait, and they'd just sit there and wait until someone on the ground requested some CAS. Then we would pull the appropriate aircraft from the stack and push them to the forward air controller on the ground. We would ultimately have to clear it ourselves back at the Regimental Fire Support Coordination Center before they dropped their bomb. Usually, they never had to enter the airspace over the city because they could drop them from outside. We also deconflicted unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), depending on what type of UAV and where they operated at. From the air perspective, completely deconflicted. The only time we would violate this was on purpose at night. We would bring AC-130s in over the city, but since we had positive control over the artillery and the aircraft, we could deconflict that ourselves.

MM: Were you handling any indirect fire missions, say if you took some mortar rounds or some rockets? I don't know if you guys had any Q-36s and Q-37s.

AD: We did. RCT-1 served as the target processing center for the division and we responded. Normally we had three Q-36s and a lightweight counter mortar

radar. We were also tied into the network, both at Habbaniyah and at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). In fact, we actually fired a lot of missions into the 1st CAV zone for them because we could deconflict our air a lot faster than they could. When the fight went down for Al Fajr, we actually had full Q-36 radars; we had 360-degree coverage. We also had two lightweight counter mortar radars all tied in together; and when you factored in the 36s and 37s that were outside our zone, we had absolute 100 percent coverage over our area. Before Al Fajr, the Marine artillery battery at Camp Fallujah was the primary counter battery shooter.

MM: And these are 155 millimeter towed?

AD: Yes, they are. When our RCT-7 came down, they brought a battery with them as well, so that gave us two batteries. Then, in order for us to provide this battery as direct support for RCT-1, an Army battery came in and assumed the counterfire mission.

MM: Those were the Paladins?

AD: Correct, but they were still tied into RCT-1; we still controlled them from a counter battery fight. So if we took incoming fire, whether it was towards the city – which they actually did sometimes – or more likely towards us at the FOB, we would clear the point of origin, confirm the point of impact, make sure the air was clear, and we'd fire. In fact, there's an article in the Army's field artillery journal written by our executive officer (XO). The Army battery came in and took over that mission for us, but this was the fun part. If I wasn't working the counter battery fight, which was actually pretty slow at this point, I'd pull them into missions so I could mass artillery in the city. They fired a lot of rounds into the city; and sometimes, if it was a big enough target, we would run air and artillery and mass it on the same target.

MM: So at times you did use air to come in and get a mortar or a rocket round that might have been fired at you guys?

AD: Not in the city. However, outside the city – and this was before and after the fight – we would. If a rocket or mortar had been fired and we had an aircraft in the air – and usually we do this with Harriers – we'd immediately vector him onto the spot with his targeting pods, he calls: "I see a pickup truck, I see two heat signatures, one from the engine block and another one in the bed." Well, that's the mortar, so we'd say go ahead and he'd drop on it. We did that several times.

MM: Just a rough estimate, but how many times do you think the insurgents fired indirect fire weapons during the course of this operation?

AD: I don't know. At Camp Fallujah, I think we went 71 days in a row taking indirect fire, and usually they fired them in volleys of two or three.

MM: Were these mostly mortars or rockets?

AD: Usually rockets, usually 120s. Usually they couldn't get close enough to us for mortars. Typically, they would fire mortars at our outposts that were guarding the MSR or into platoon and company size locations we had in other cities. They'd fire them at that.

MM: What went well and what went wrong with working with the Army? The only thing I could find historically was perhaps the Army working for the Marines on Guadalcanal. This is the first battalion working side-by-side for a long time.

AD: It went great; it was very complementary. 2-7 CAV had their mission to blow straight down the city and then the 3/1 was basically protecting their flank as they went. We didn't have nearly as many tanks but we had a lot more infantry, so they blew down the MSR and the Marines cleared the buildings and cleared their flank.

MM: And Marines were responsible for clearing each and every house, so they were going to take a while –

AD: At this point, we weren't clearing every house. If we didn't encounter anybody they just continued to move. They didn't do detailed clearing very often unless they actually got into an engagement. Using UAVs as well, we could also follow the progress, see if there was anybody moving behind them or in front of them. On several occasions we did initiate artillery calls for fire and CAS from our Fire Support Coordination Center. The air officer and I were actually the controllers for that, and typically we would do that off of UAVs.

MM: Speaking of UAVs, I got an email from somebody in 2-2 that said, I think it was November 8th, that they threw up one of their Ravens. Apparently, he said there was a frequency problem with the Marines and the thing crashed.

AD: I never heard about that. Sometimes we had problems with some of our UAVs over the course of the deployment. If there was a frequency issue, it could have been with our Dragon Eyes, which are a similar platform. They could have had some kind of problem but, to be honest, I don't know.

MM: I had to look the Raven up because I hadn't heard of that one. I guess it was a hand-tossed UAV.

AD: Right, and that's about the same size as our Dragon Eye. The Dragon Eye is pack-portable. You just take it out, fold the wings out and let it go. I never heard of any UAVs crashing during this stage, at least not by accident.

MM: I guess there's a controversy swirling around this entire fight on the use of white phosphorous (WP), and I don't know if you can comment on that.

AD: I know we used it once, we being RCT-1. We used an MA25 felt wedge, and that was as a smokescreen we put up as the units were coming through the

lanes. That was it; we didn't use it anywhere else. I believe RCT-7 and I think 2-2 did use it for another purpose, but I don't know what that was. We never really saw the need for it.

MM: Apparently they had some sort of "shake-and-bake" mission, as they were calling it.

AD: Right. Once we got into the city, we almost fired exclusively high explosive (HE) or else concrete piercing; that was about all we used. Fired a lot of it, but that was it. The only time we used WP was for a screen, and I know there was nobody underneath that one.

MM: Do you consider this to be the biggest fight of the war? Is there anything else that stands out about the fight for Fallujah?

AD: For OIF II, it was certainly the biggest one in my opinion. People have made comparisons as far as urban combat, that it's the biggest battle since whenever. I would say it was probably bigger and more intricate than Hue City, so then you're pushing all the way back to Seoul as far as being the biggest urban fight. We had a basically four-by-two kilometer battlespace with 7,000 Marines and Iraqi soldiers. But yet we still ran – depending on who you ask – 340 CAS missions, fired about 4,000 rounds of artillery into it, and didn't have a single case of fratricide, so I think a lot of lessons for years to come are going to be drawn from this.

MM: A lot of your fire missions here, could these be considered danger close?

AD: Of the artillery missions, I would say at least 50, if not 60 or 70 percent, were danger close. I believe the closest we fired to an observer was 60 meters with artillery and 100 meters for dropping ordnance. It had to be danger close almost always. On the flip side of that, I've never seen artillery fired that accurately either.

JM: How do you account for that; is that just good training?

AD: One part was that the battery hadn't moved for a while; they're literally on a fire base. We knew our positions, we had a pretty good handle on the shooting strength, the characteristics of the ammunition and propellants we're firing and all that kind of stuff. Meteorologically speaking, we were flying MET balloons about every other hour, so they had easily satisfied four of the five requirements before they'd even fired. Of course, the last one was target location; and when everybody has their global positioning system (GPS) coordinates locked in on the target location and you're looking at something that's only 100 to 200 meters away, it's hard to miss. We got to the point where we were actually using artillery as a counter-sniper weapon. If all other means failed, we would usually fire two HE concrete-piercing rounds in the building the sniper was in. It proved to be extremely effective.

JM: How closely did the planning you did track with the actual execution?



AD: Initially it was going great. Actually, I would say we had to go off on a branch plan because of how successful it was going. We were able to penetrate the city much quicker than we initially thought. On the flip side, I don't think we anticipated how much back clearing and how many insurgents there would be. It was almost like finding Japanese on an island 20 years later. For weeks afterwards, we were finding some of these guys coming literally out of holes in the ground who looked like they hadn't eaten in days. They were very disheveled but still had as much fight in them as they did before. Then of course, the one thing we really couldn't plan for was looking for and finding everything that was in the city. I think at last count we found somewhere in the neighborhood of 500,000 pieces of ordnance in the city: anything from 7.62 rounds up to anti-aircraft guns, mines, IED making material, artillery rounds, you name it. You couldn't go anywhere in that city without finding some. Even when the people came back in we were finding it, because they were coming in and saying, "Hey, I found this in my shop; you need to come here." You'd find huge weapons caches still. So what went well was that the insurgents bought our deception and made the initial penetration in the city easy. Where it became difficult was how we were victims of success.

JM: Were you part of the IO campaign that was trying to accomplish this initial deception or was that being conducted by others?

AD: That was us, but it was more of a kinetic deception: doing the feints, limited objective attacks, that kind of stuff was a huge chunk of it. There were other things that I can't really talk about that I was involved in that were non-kinetic, but I think the biggest piece was the kinetic deception.

JM: Is there anything, looking back, that you would have done differently, either from a fire support perspective or IO?

AD: Not really from a fire perspective. As far as IO, I don't know because I don't know what worked and what didn't.

JM: Are there ways IO could have been better employed or is that too difficult to quantify?

AD: I think it could have been better employed when we had a captive audience of people coming back into the city. Unfortunately, we knew what we wanted to tell them; but I don't think we necessarily knew what they wanted to hear. I think we got better at that as we went along because we started finding out what it was they wanted hear. But we just didn't have that up front, and I think we may have wasted some resources that had little effect.

JM: What did they want hear?

AD: They wanted to hear specific things like when the essential services were going to be up, how were they going to get their house rebuilt, what the Iraqi gov-

ernment is going to do to help. Some of those things we had answers to and some of them we didn't, and we would make assumptions. Part of the city is actually lower than the river so when a lot of the pump stations were out – which many of them were out when we went in – a lot of water collects in the streets. They were flooded. So we'd get the pump stations fixed at great cost and effort and risk to peoples' lives and pump the water out, and we assumed people realized that that means progress. Well, it doesn't necessarily mean progress because they don't really understand how the whole pump system works, and we don't bother telling them about it. "Why should I tell them this has been fixed? They can see it themselves." Well, maybe not necessarily – and guys that live in unaffected areas certainly don't know that. We made it easier for them to report possible insurgents trying to infiltrate back into the city and report unexploded ordnance and weapons caches. They didn't know what to do if they found them, even though we handed out these things telling them what to do. Well, we started putting English on the back of these things that said, "If an Iraqi gives this to you, they have information about the following." Because a lot of times, they'd hand these things to a Marine or a soldier and, "Great, what does this mean?" Well, now they can flip it over and show you. Once these things started to work, more and more people started giving us actionable tips. There was another thing that worked really well that we didn't even think about for a while. Even though we have one of the hospitals running a couple clinics and one or two ambulances, people don't really know that's available, so we put out a handbill that said, "If you need emergency medical attention, find the nearest Iraqi security force or multinational force to get help." We put on the back side in English that if someone hands you this, they need emergency medical help. Lo and behold, a couple days after we started handing those out, we actually had a father who ran out and stopped a Marine convoy going through the center of the city in the middle of the night, well past curfew. They stopped and he hands them the thing. His daughter had gotten burned with cooking oil on both hands really bad. They take her and the father, bring them back to our FOB, she gets immediate medical attention, and it paid huge dividends because that person is now going to go back in the city and say, "Hey, this a great thing." We were slow on the uptake on a lot of that stuff because we just didn't know what they wanted to hear. We had put up water tanks that were erected all over the city, and we assumed they would realize they could go and get their water there. We didn't know we had to tell them. Of course, on the flip side, we didn't think we would have to tell them, "Hey, stop taking the pipes and spickets from these things because the water doesn't work then." I don't know how we could've gotten information like that, but we could've been more effective had we known that.

JM: Do you know if there were any major lessons learned that either the Marine Corps or the Army took from this IO-wise that were applied to better effects later on?

AD: I don't know the effect of it, but we were able to leverage radios a lot. We also did send a lot of radios into the city for people to use with instructions, and that's not something that's inherently in the Marine Corps. I think we realized that and we really leveraged that. I think there's a difference between Afghanistan and Iraq. In Iraq, people are more likely to have and use radios. In a situation like that, I think it paid dividends being able to hit a large audience at one time. We also started making good use of large signs and billboards and that's not something we were really thinking about up front – which are also a pain in the butt to produce. Two other things I know I learned – and hopefully the people on our staff learned – was, one, that IO at the tactical level in the Marine Corps is not properly staffed. There are not enough people doing it, it's paid lip service, and it's extremely important. We didn't have the resources, such as copiers, to be able to mass produce handbills and things like that. The other thing is that the commanders place a great importance on IO, and I think they're starting to learn exactly what that means. You want to have an IO campaign, what does that really mean? What kind of people do you need? What do they need to know? Who are they going to be working with? What kind of resources do they need? More importantly, how are you going to employ them? Are you going to have them do what you think is right, or are you going to have them tie what they're doing to the scheme of maneuver, complementing lethal fires, making the synergistic effect? We spent a lot of time reacting to what the insurgents were putting out rather than being proactive and better supporting the scheme of maneuver because we had limited resources.

JM: How much of the IO campaign was counter propaganda?

AD: Quite a bit of it. Counter propaganda and, say, counter events. If something happened, us coming out and explaining why that happened – and here's another thing we didn't know. A lot of times, we didn't need to do that. If you're an American and a car is driving through a checkpoint and the police shoot it up and kill the driver, that's a huge thing; to us, that's a significant emotional event. Not necessarily true with the Iraqis. If we were to walk up and give them a condolence payment: if the lawyer goes out and gives them \$2,500 for their family member that was killed and another \$1,000 for their car, that guy is more than likely happy and he's not going to raise a stink. We assume, however, that he's going to. So, in an event like that, we go overboard explaining what happened, why it happened, how we can avoid it happening in the future.

JM: Broadcasting it all over the place –

AD: Well, people knew it happened but, quite honestly, they didn't really care. I mean, they cared, but you know what I'm saying. You're not going to elicit the same response from them that you would from an American, and I think we wasted a lot of time on things like that.

MM: I just checked one of my emails I got this morning from Brigadier General Dana Pittard; he was a colonel at the time. I think he was the BCT commander that was doing the blocking position in the south. He was saying something in the email about taking all the reporters. At least for your RCT, did you guys have reporters with you?

AD: Yes.

MM: So they weren't just handed off to the Army?

AD: No. Unfortunately, one of my collateral duties was public affairs officer (PAO) for the regiment. We determined our threshold was usually five media teams per battalion and we were more than maxed out when we went into the city. Everybody had multiple reporters. Shortly after Fox News did a big two-hour report on the thing in Fallujah – Greg Palkot was one of the embeds – we had embeds everywhere and we did everything we could to facilitate them getting the story out. I don't want to say they helped us, but they helped report the steps we were taking to mitigate certain types of collateral damage. They would report on how we would approach a mosque we were taking fire from. They knew we wouldn't blow it up. They would help us explain to the world: "Hey, look, we're returning fire in kind, trying to limit the collateral damage. We've gone through every possible step we can and we have no choice left now but to do X." We can't task them and we can't tell them what to report, but if they sit there and see everything we're doing and they report it, then that's a good thing and that happened. We had more press than we probably could have handled, but we did; and with the exception of one case, they were completely cooperative and played by the rules. In that one case they didn't, they were asked to leave and were replaced by a different reporter team.

MM: Who was it that wasn't playing by the rules?

AD: It was a large TV news outlet; let's just put it that way. But they acknowledged that their reporter had done something wrong and we let them bring someone else in to replace that reporter. Unfortunately, after the fighting was over and Fallujah became one of the safest places in all of Iraq and there were really great things going on, none of them wanted to come because there was no story then.

JM: There was no bad news.

AD: Exactly. On Election Day in Fallujah, where half of all the votes from Al Anbar were cast – the entire province, half of them, 8,000 of them, were cast in Fallujah, which we figured was 30 to 40 percent of the eligible voting population

for the city. On that day, there were two reporters in the city, and one was a local radio reporter from Chattanooga. Nobody wanted to come and cover the story. They didn't want to cover the hundreds and thousands of people that were in line. They didn't want to report on the fact that we ran out of voting material and had to run some of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) workers back to our FOB to get more. They didn't want to report any that, and that's why I think the media gets a bad wrap from people like me that were down there involved in things like this. They only want to report the ugly stuff. That's my soapbox on the media but, yes, we did have them and they helped show the truth of what was going on, to dispel any kinds of rumors. Before we went into the city, there would still be news stories that would come out of the city, and usually they would hit Al-Jazeera because they'd placed stringers in the city. They didn't necessarily have to be credentialed; they could be anybody who writes a story. Even though we know they're not telling the truth, it was very difficult for us to counter that in the Arab world because we don't have anybody on the ground. So once we got reporters in the city, that was huge because now these are agencies that have a better reputation, perhaps less biased, less of an agenda than someone reporting for Al-Jazeera. We actually took one embed team from Al-Arabiya. We put them in the city with one of our civil affairs (CA) teams, ran them around for a while. We had been telling them, "Hey, you guys can come," and one of them finally said, "Yeah, we'll do it." The Marines weren't exactly thrilled when they found out who it was going to be at first, but they worked great. I don't want to say the media was part of our IO campaign, because it wasn't, but I think it complemented it quite a bit.

JM: How did you educate yourself or how did you get smart on what constituted effective IO prior to conducting them? What was part of your training?

AD: I had very little training when I got over there. I had a two-week course before I showed up. At first I thought that IO stood for investigating officer or incidental operator. I didn't know it meant information operations. So I did a two-week course, got there and sat down with the guy I was replacing. Sat down with the PSYOP, the detachment officer in charge (OIC) captain. We figured out what effect we wanted to have on the population and then we'd work back and see what kind of product we could do. What was the best delivery means? It was really hard to see measures of effectiveness. If we were running a campaign to help educate people about vehicle control points and procedures they should do when they approach them, the fewer people that got shot up told us that our campaign was having some kind of effect. When we started seeing anti-insurgent or neutral graffiti messages starting to come out, those were measures of effectiveness for some of our IO campaigns. When the mosque would stop printing the jihad and hate messages on Fridays, that was a measure of effectiveness. Then, of course, the biggest thing, when we knew our IO campaign worked – at least on one occasion – is when

we wanted to get people out of the city: we got them out, we didn't ask and they left. We would literally just look at the effect we wanted to have and try to find the best way. Who we were going to target, how were we going to get the message to them, and what's the message going to be? Sometimes it got creative. One city, Karmah, it's kind of a hot bed and people wouldn't take the handbills we were trying to pass out. So what we started doing was handing out little packets with coloring books and markers and soccer balls and soccer jerseys to the kids. After we'd done that a few times in the city, we'd hand out that plus a couple handbills to the kids because we knew they were going to take them home. And it got to the point where the kids just liked the handbills. We'd hand them the handbills and they'd run them home. Now, maybe the adult would read it, because we figured out that the adult wasn't going to walk up to us and take something because they'd just marked themselves. But if it gets into their house, maybe they'll read it. So we figured out some techniques like that. The target audience was the adults, but the means of delivery was the kids.

JM: Are there any other things you'd like to touch on or other things you think deserve special attention about Fallujah or anything else?

AD: I will say one thing: Fallujah was a unique city. It's traditionally been along smuggling routes. It recently had a big criminal element and also a big former Ba'athist element down there, which also made it kind of a unique city. Something we really had to focus on was that most of the rest of Iraq didn't really care what happened in Fallujah. An Iraqi I knew and worked with from time to time – who was not from Fallujah; he was from Baghdad – he said, “Iraqi population: 25 million. Big bomb” – meaning Fallujah – “Iraqi population: 24 million. Nobody really cares.” That was kind of the perspective most people outside the city really had, which I think helped us to realize that, while we want to avoid collateral damage as much as possible, we may have a slight window here where we can go a little heavier. Also, when we started talking to people afterwards – and we leveled, Lord knows, probably half the city and damaged the other half – and people are walking up and don't have a house anymore, we're thinking they're going to be really upset with us. Actually, they said, “You know, I don't have a house, but I also don't have to worry about my kids anymore.” We were shocked that people in this city are talking like that. Election Day turned into a mob in that city. We couldn't stop our vehicle because if we stopped, we probably wouldn't be able to start them again because people would be coming all around us. Shock. We had no idea that the people in the city were that anti-insurgent and were probably wanting us to come in. We had no idea, and that would've been a really nice thing to know. The uniqueness of the city gave us more of a free hand in being heavy handed when we needed to be.

MM: You're going to be over here for a few more months, right, in case we have any other questions?

AD: Yes, until June.

MM: Great. Well, I have your email address and am certain to have many more questions.

JM: Thanks so much for you time.





## **Major Pete Fedak**

### **15 February 2006**

JM: My name is John McCool [JM] and I'm with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I'm interviewing Major Pete Fedak [PF] on his experiences during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM [OIF]. Also present is Mr. Matt Matthews [MM], also of the Combat Studies Institute, who will be asking questions as well. Today's date is 15 February 2006 and this is an unclassified interview. Before we begin, Pete, if at any time you feel we're entering classified territory, please couch your response in terms that avoid revealing any classified information. And if classification requirements prevent you from responding, simply say you're not able to answer. Could you please start off by giving us a brief thumbnail sketch of your military career and then we'll focus on your deployment to OIF?

PF: I came in to the Army in 1993. I attended IOBC [Infantry Officer Basic Course], Ranger School, commissioned in the infantry. My first assignment was in Korea. I went over and was a platoon leader and executive officer of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry up at Camp Giant along the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone]. After that, I came back to Fort Benning, spent my time there from 1995 through 1997 at 1-19 Infantry, basic training on Sand Hill as the company executive officer for Bravo Company. Then I attended the Infantry Officer Advanced Course. After that, I went to Fort Hood from 1997 through 2001. I spent time there as an S3 Air, Bravo Company commander, battalion S3 and HHC commander for 2d Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, part of 2d Brigade, 4th ID [Infantry Division]. At that time, I went overseas to Hohenfels, Germany as an OC [Observer Controller] in the summer of 2001 and stayed in Germany through summer 2005 when I came here for CGSC [Command and General Staff College]. In Hohenfels, I was a scout platoon OC, rifle company OC, S3 Air OC, and the Training, Analysis and Feedback Facility advisor to the senior task force OC. While I was in Hohenfels, a tasking came down for two 10-man teams to deploy to Iraq to train Iraqi Army soldiers. The tasking was supposed to be from March of 2004 for a period of approximately six months, and I was selected to be the lead for one of those two teams that were sent down. So myself and nine men went down to train the Iraqi Army.

JM: Now, how did you prepare yourself for this assignment? Did your OC experience help you get this position?

PF: As far as getting the position, the taskings went to Hohenfels and they were assigned to two of the OC teams to fill. Part of the intent was to keep the teams together for unit integrity so as not to, if you will, pull guys from all across Hohenfels, so it was guys who had already worked together and had some level

of cohesion. As far as being selected, it was something that I had asked to do, volunteered for, and I was lucky enough to be chosen as the lead for one of those teams.

JM: Can you describe the team training you went through prior to going, and also, then, the regimen that you put these Iraqi soldiers through?

PF: It's kind of interesting. When the tasking came down, it was pretty early in the formation of advisor teams. At the time, they were calling us ASTs, Advisor Support Teams. The message I saw that tasked us to go to Iraq to do this was pretty vague. It instructed that the 10-man team would consist of a major, two captains and seven NCOs. One of those NCOs would be the team sergeant – preferably a master sergeant – but instead I took a very senior E-7 who he did a great job. There were six additional E-7 sergeants first class. As far as the guidance, though, there was very minimal as far as what exactly we would be doing down range, except for that we'd be training Iraqi Army from formation through preparations to going into an operational status. Our understanding at the time, to put it in layman's terms, would be to conduct basic training with Iraqis from the time they showed up – similar to Sand Hill –through graduation. And then additionally, which is different than Sand Hill, instead of just doing individual soldier training, we would take them through squad-level, platoon-level collective tasks – time permitting – up through company and battalion staff functions. These are obviously pretty complex tasks to accomplish in a six-month period. So that was our understanding. Like I said, it was pretty vague at the time. There was really no explanation of, "These are the sort of the things that you'll do by this method of instruction." Our 10-man team generically prepared for movement to Iraq just doing individual soldier skills: first aid, shooting, those types of things. As far as any thoughts about operational-type missions, we kind of thought that that would be beyond our purview. The tasking was a basic training-type tasking. So, that said, we had been informed of the tasking, I want to say it was the end of 2003, maybe December. After that preparation, our final orders were to deploy the beginning of March; and if I remember correctly, we flew out on 15 March 2004 from Ramstein Air Base and we went down to Kuwait. We were the lead team of those two teams. The other team that eventually wound up being advisors to the 7th Battalion left approximately a week or two after us. Is this on track?

JM: Yeah, this is great.

MM: This is actually perfect stuff because we're also getting ready to write something on the training of indigenous forces.

PF: I just wanted to make sure I wasn't going down too far down the road here with the details. So then we arrived in Kuwait. And once again, the training mission was not really a set mission at this time. So when we showed up, there was a

lot of confusion as far as, “Who are you guys with? Who are you assigned to?” At the time, we were working with the unit called CMATT.

JM: The Coalition Military Assistance Training Team.

PF: Right, out of Baghdad. So we were contacting them on the phone from Kuwait. They had figured out, “Well, okay, you need to get a flight up to Baghdad with your team. Once you land there at BIAP [Baghdad International Airport], we’ll get in contact with you and we’ll get you squared away and figure out where you’re going from there.” So I caught a C-130 from Kuwait up to BIAP. We landed and some of the CMATT fellows linked up with us. One of the captains and I went to the palace, as it’s called, in the Green Zone. The CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] headquarters there. I talked to CMATT and tried to understand a little bit about what they expected that we would be doing in country. The next day, my 10-man team was moved from BIAP to Taji, Iraq. Taji was really the first time that we started to see the training teams – or people that were associated with the training teams. There was a base structure there, the senior guy being a lieutenant colonel, and he had a sergeant major and then the requisite fellows underneath him, and that was sort of a CMATT forward. So CMATT proper was back at the palace; CMATT forward was out at Taji. I think what wound up happening later was that they really became sort of the RSOI [Reception, Staging, Onward-movement and Integration] for advising teams. They would come in and get their ground rules on, “Here’s what’s going on as an advisor.” And then they would get farmed out to whatever unit they were going to go be advisors for. When we showed up, it was pretty much the early stages. There was one battalion that was at Taji, if I remember correctly, that was there and operational. I want to say it was the 2d Battalion, Iraqi Army, and they had an advisory team that was operating out of Taji with us. When I say Taji, it was adjacent to 1st Armored Division, which I think was at Camp Victory. Outside of that wire, there was a separate area for the 2d Battalion Iraqis and the CMATT fellows, which is where we fell under. So we went out there, stayed with them. I think now there’s something called the Phoenix Academy of Taji. I don’t know if you’ve heard of this, but I believe it’s supposed to be like a little training program for new advisors coming into country. Well, when we showed up, there really wasn’t a Phoenix program per se. The sergeant major that I spoke of, he kind of said, “Here’s where we are at.” And there were about three days worth of classes – and I use the word “classes” loosely – to try to get us spun up on what was happening with the advisor teams, to give us a little bit of flavor for Iraqi culture, a little bit of language. Understand that this was the only thing available or set up at the time; the sergeant major was doing his best for us. And then we were in a holding pattern, basically, until they could figure out which battalion we were to link up with and work with. Because at this time, they were still forming them. There was a lot of flux as far as which posts would form the bases for the differ-

ent training locations. So we were at Taji for two weeks, because we went up to Kirkush on 1 April, which is my anniversary, so I remember that. While we were there, the other advisor team out of Germany came and met up with us at Taji also, and we also met up with the 5th Battalion advisory guys – which is that fellow I referenced in the Bing West book, Major Mike Zacchea, who turned out to be the lead advisor for 5th Battalion. What finally ended up hashing out was that these three teams – the Marine team, led by Major Mike Zacchea; the one Army team, led by myself; and then the other Army team, led by Major Jim Lechner – would form the nucleus of the 3d Brigade teams, and we would fill, respectively, the 5th, 6th and 7th Iraqi Army Battalions that all fell under the 3d Brigade. There was additionally a lieutenant colonel, then promoted to colonel – Toby Hale – who was located at Taji also. He would be the advisor to the 3d Brigade. Once we all met up at Taji, formed up, then we moved to Kirkush. There was some controversy about whether we would train at Taji or Kirkush. The final decision was made for us to move to Kirkush and conduct training out there. On 1 April, we moved basically the whole brigade's worth of advisors from Taji up to Kirkush. When we got up there, Kirkush was a pretty good-sized base – probably five kilometers by about 15 kilometers in size – a small portion of that having an American unit contingent on it, which was the 30th Enhanced Separate Brigade out of, I want to say, North Carolina. But 30th ESB fell under 1st ID. They were one of the brigades operating in 1st ID's footprint. They had a small portion of the camp. The rest of the camp fell under a Marine major who worked for CMATT and who was the base commander, Major Mike Manning. He was responsible for getting us in, getting us settled, and he was the one who played musical units and shuffling the different units around as they arrived. Space was limited and there was only so much room on the camp as facilities were being upgraded, so they couldn't use all the facilities at a given time. He had to sort of shuffle people around. On the camp, a battalion of Iraqi Army was there. It already had an advisor team and had already finished basic training. They were operational. It was 1st Battalion or 4th Battalion, I can't remember right now off the top of my head. Additionally, the ITB, the Iraqi Training Battalion, was located on Kirkush – basic training for Iraqi soldier replacements. They weren't actually doing full units; they would train these guys and then they would fill shortages in the battalions that existed at the time, which was 1st, 2d, 3d and 4th Battalions. At the time, they were called IAF, Iraqi Armed Forces, but then later transitioned to the IIF, Iraqi Intervention Forces. So you've got ITB, you've got the one operational battalion, and then we show up. It's 1 April. The plan was to bring in the leadership, initially, for the battalions, and they were staged sequentially. So the training was staggered, with the first battalion formed being the 5th, the last battalion being the 7th, and we were kind of in the middle. If I remember right, it was around the end of April when we received our leadership, which consisted of all the officers that were assigned to the battalion, and I think

the NCOs starting coming about two weeks later. The intent was to try and get the officers together, figure out the training plan – and we got a very generic schedule from CMATT as far as what tasks needed to be accomplished. It was sort of an example calendar of what this basic training would consist of. We kind of took that and modified it based on range availability, moving things around. It was kind of a structure of what needed to occur, for the most part. The intent was the get the Iraqi leadership together and get them spun up so they could run the basic training. I'll speak to our battalion, 6th Battalion, because I know our battalion the best. 6th Battalion was at its peak at about 1,000 guys. So for 10 advisors we couldn't really run the basic training. We had to advise a core leadership to run it and then use them accordingly.

MM: What was the background of these Iraqi officers that showed up? Where did they come from? Were they former army officers or were they selected? Were they Sunni or Shi'ites?

PF: I can't definitively say that all of them were former army, but I want to say that the majority had some military experience as officers. As far as the recruitment, the recruitment for officer, NCO and enlisted guys was handled at CMATT or at another unit, which wasn't part of my purview. My understanding was they sort of interviewed, vetted and tried to figure out who was going to fill which position based on experience. I know that a lot of the officers who showed up had been assigned at a rank probably one below their formal pay grade: so if they were a lieutenant colonel, they came to us filling a major's position. For example, the battalion commander was a full colonel and he showed up as a lieutenant colonel, and he was a full colonel in the Iraqi Army in the old days. As far as the ethnic breakdown, it was a mix. The demographics tried to mirror Iraq, so we had a proportion of Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds that were approximately comparable to the population. So the bulk of our guys were Shi'a; the minority were Kurd and Sunni. I can't remember what the exact percentages were, but it pretty much mirrored the demographics. The intent was to keep it diverse and not just Shi'a or just Sunni. And a lot of our Kurdish officers had been officers that had served with the peshmerga up in what they consider the Kurdistan region in the north of Iraq. It was a diversity.

MM: Was there any concern on your part that there might have been some anti-Iraqi forces that maybe slipped in and were able to get into the army? Was there ever any concern that you might be working with somebody that had finagled his way in?

PF: Absolutely. That was something that you had to keep in mind. And understand, that was the very early stages; the vetting process can only be so thorough initially, especially when you're trying to form entire battalions. So, yeah, you had to treat things as suspect. One of the big issues that the battalion commander and

I would struggle with was operational security. In other words: How much can we release to what level of the men as far as what missions we're going on? When is the level too low and when do we assume too much risk telling too many people? There was always a concern that either anti-Iraqi forces were in there, or people that just have ulterior motives. Some of our Kurdish officers had left, and this was across the board. We had attrition across the board. For example, the Kurdish officers, the discussion was that if they left, they were leaving to go back to the peshmerga and bring some of those lessons learned and some of the information about our training system. But not to single out the Kurds, because, across the board, we had Kurdish, Shi'a and Sunni all go AWOL [Absent without Leave] at various point throughout the training, all the way right up through operations in Fallujah in November 2004.

JM: Talking about possible infiltration, did you have any actual incidents of that?

PF: No, we never had anything concrete, where something occurred and we were like, "Yes, this guy had infiltrated and caused this to occur." Once again, we had guys slip away in the middle of the night, don't know where they went off to, what sector of society they turned to. But as far as anything happening per se against 6th Battalion that really stood out as being tied to infiltration, no, I didn't have any experiences of that, but it was something you had to keep in your mind and think about.

MM: How'd you work paydays over there if there really weren't any banks? Did you have to give them a couple days off to take their money home?

PF: Yes. Payday and leave are major emotional events with the Iraqi Army, and we laugh about it as Americans, because for an American soldier you have direct deposit. Your wife has access to your funds. As you said, there are no banks over there so we think, "What's the big deal?" Payday activities in the Army have dropped away. There are no payday activities. Your direct deposit goes in, life goes on, come to work and shut up. In Iraq, it is a major emotional event. What happened is leave would have to be cycled over a four-week period. So when the soldiers signed up to be in the Iraqi Army, they signed up for three weeks of work and then one week of leave, and that was the cycle they were supposed to be on. The problem with that – you can kind of guess this – is we can't say the whole battalion gets to go home. And ultimately this is part of the conflict that occurs. I'm kind of jumping ahead now, but remember when the ministries got turned over to Iraqi control in 2004. It was either June or July.

JM: It was in late June, I believe.

PF: Yeah, June. It was a surprise that we did it early, that Paul Bremer turned it over a couple days early. But anyway, payday was basically "X" day towards

the end of the month, give or take a few days on each end. So the money would have to come from Baghdad, it would come to Kirkush on a convoy, and when it would show up that was the time when everybody in 3d Brigade would get paid. The problem was, that's when everybody wanted to go home. "I got money, so I want to go home for a week to pay my family." Well, 6th Battalion consisted of six companies. You had a headquarters company, four line companies – 1st Company, 2d Company, 3d and 4th – and then we had a transportation company. So six companies, and the intent was to cycle it so every week one of the four line companies would be on leave and a quarter of headquarters and a quarter of the transportation company would be on leave. The problem was that, right after payday, you had some guys that would say, "I'm not waiting for my leave," because it would rotate a little bit. If you can imagine, 52 weeks in a year and eventually it would rotate where you'd be the guy that would get paid and get to go right on leave. But if you happened to be the guy that got paid and then had perhaps three weeks to wait until you got to go home, you might say, "Forget this, I've got to run." We had that, and sometimes a guy would go home and then come back, and it was a hard decision whether to take him back. Is this a good soldier or do we need to say, "Hey, you went AWOL; you're out of the army." So those are things you had to take into consideration. So pay was huge. And also trust. I know the Army is going to put money into my account on the last day of the month. That's going to go in there. There's no mystery about it. For the Iraqis, though, if the convoy was running late, which often occurred, they're working on good faith now. "Where's my money for my work?" "Well, you're going to get paid." Well, if you don't have that trust from the past, and if the Iraqi government in the past used to not pay their soldiers, there's that level of, "Well, I'm going to stay around here and you're not going to pay me, and then you're going to tell me to go home and I'm going to get screwed out of a month's worth of pay." So that was a huge issue.

JM: How did you go about building rapport with these guys and establishing trust, of you by them and vice versa?

PF: That's a long process, and it takes a lot longer in the Middle Eastern culture to establish that rapport than in America, where you're forced to work in teams for better or worse. You run into the same problems, but there it's a much slower process. We tried to do habitual advisor relationships. I had myself, two captains, a senior NCO and then six sergeants first class. Those six sergeants first class acted as habitual advisors to the six companies. So they were the guys who always stayed and always worked for that company and was their mentor, if you will. And initially, when the leadership showed up, they'd work with that leadership, then bring the NCOs in, and then when the privates came, hopefully they had a little bit of that rapport built. The NCO piece was hard because the Iraqi officers don't look at NCOs the same way American officers look at NCOs. So there

wasn't that level of trust and there wasn't that level of confidence as far as what could be delegated to an NCO. The two captains basically split duties within the staff functions of S1 through S4. So one captain worked the S1 and the S3 jobs, and the other captain worked strictly the S4 job. That may seem a little backwards but, at the time, conditions were very austere being one of the first units that stood up, so supply and logistics was a major emotional event. Just to get these guys a bed to sleep in, shaving kits, the bare necessities of life, and then additionally get uniforms and equipment. So that was a full-time job for one of the captains. The other captain worked S1 so, obviously, pay was a huge issue, accountability with AWOLs, and additionally he was the operations guy and would do a lot of the operational planning. Those two captains could also float and kind of be mentors. We split up the companies. I want to say the S1/S3 captain, Captain Chris Clay, had Transportation Company and then 1st and 3d Companies. And then Captain Mike Sullivan, who was the S4 captain, he had 2d, 4th and Headquarters. The short version is that they split over three companies to hopefully give that Iraqi captain/major, that company commander, give him an American captain mentor that he could talk to about officer stuff. He had that embedded sergeant first class advisor, but someone else who could give him another perspective. And then myself and my senior sergeant, Sergeant First Class Richard W. Smith, we worked battalion integration, battalion commander, battalion sergeant major, and then basically through the whole spectrum of staff functions down to talking to company commanders and trying to get companies up and running. Anyway, does that help with rapport? I think over time we grew closer. Fast forward from forming up in April to actually rolling out to Fallujah in November 2004, which was approximately seven months later, that core group was pretty tight. There was a high level of respect both ways. My respect grew quite a bit for the Iraqi troops and what they've gone through and understanding their cultural aspects, which is something that I can talk about for a while. Understanding their aspects and how to look at it from their point of view, versus always imposing an American point of view.

JM: You talked about this proportional representation – you had Shi'ites and Sunnis and Kurds – were they able to get along well, especially the Kurds with the Iraqis, considering their history. Were they able to be a unified fighting force?

PF: Surprisingly, yes. We had thought prior to deploying and getting there that there would be a lot of infighting issues amongst the soldiers. If you think about America, back when there was segregation and such, there was probably more resistance at higher levels. But at the user level, where the people are interacting, it sort of melds together more. And we mirrored it through the companies. We wouldn't make a Sunni company or a Shi'a company, and CMATT had pretty much said that: "Keep diversity down to the platoon levels. Don't try to keep guys segregated." We didn't see a lot of that problem. You would see cliques, if you will,



of guys who would habitually hang out together in the evenings. People would generally group up with their cultural structures, which is really not that out of the ordinary. There were some unique problems that arose, specifically due to culture. The one I can think of precisely was that there was a group of Kurds called the Yazidi Kurds, and the issue was that they were adverse to water. In other words – and I don't know how to say this without coming off a little strange – but their religious beliefs were that dirt was okay and that water was actually bad, to cleanse yourself with water. So there were some hygiene issues in the barracks with this group of soldiers. But it really wasn't so much based off the fact that they were Kurdish, more the fact that they're not washing up properly and are making a mess in the latrines, and this is a problem for everyone. Within the officer staff, I felt like we had a pretty good relationship between the different the various groups, between the officers. A good working relationship.

JM: Can you talk a little bit about the context that surrounded your battalion getting sent to the Fallujah fight? What was the timeline of events and everything?

PF: Okay, so we have the leadership training. We got those guys spun up and then we basically started filling the battalion with new recruits. So what happened was that they showed up at the front gate at Kirkush from across the country, which is different than the ING [Iraqi National Guard] units at this time which had been taken from a local area. So the battalion could consist of guys from Basra in the south all the way up to Mosul in the north, and everywhere in between. So they show up. We get them integrated. We conduct our basic training, which takes approximately two months, so we're looking at May/June. And then once we finished the individual training, we had the graduation ceremony, similar to Sand Hill at Fort Benning, Georgia. They graduated and then we began working collective tasks. We started a rotational schedule where guys could go on leave and then three weeks of work, and during those three weeks we started off with squad-level training and we really got up to platoon-level training coherently. Company-level operations weren't really what we'd consider company-level operations in the U.S. sense. We'd go out as a company and set up a company checkpoint, but really the platoons work in concert at one location. We conducted that training basically inside the wire in Kirkush: safe and benign, just training inside the wire. Getting outside into sector was a little bit of a struggle initially because the 1st ID controlled the area we were in. It was their sector; 30th ESB worked for 1st ID; they owned the sandbox outside of Kirkush proper. You can't just wander outside the gate and start doing stuff; everything has to be coordinated. We needed to coordinate with 1st ID, basically, to start doing joint missions with the U.S. forces there at Kirkush, to sort of get our feet wet and start getting the guys out on live missions. We need to get out and start doing operational missions close to base, just to get guys in the

field for locking and loading – real missions, real rounds. With Bremer leaving and the CPA being stood down, MNSTC-I [Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq] is standing up, so it takes over. And at this time, General [David] Petraeus is also taking over as the trainer for Iraqi security forces. Specifically under him, our CMATT point of contact was Brigadier General [James] Schwitters. He was the guy that sort of did the Army portion of that. They basically talked to 1st ID, got the arrangements set together, and then we started doing partnership missions where we would go out with a platoon of guys from the 30th ESB – from the different infantry units that were there. That platoon would go out and we would take company-sized Iraqi units at a time. So basically, your cycle was a red, amber, green, leave. You'd go on leave, you'd come back from leave; you'd have a red week where you just kind of got back, got some individual tasks down and sort of got set; in the amber week, you do some collective training to get ready; and then in the green week, you'd go outside the wire and actually start doing some, I'll call them "baby missions." Relatively speaking, Kirkush was a somewhat quiet environment relative to Baghdad, or something to that effect. So it was a good chance to get the guys out with these platoons from 30th ESB and let them start doing real-world missions. The bulk of our missions at that time – probably at the end of July – were traffic control points up in that area, obviously looking for contraband, weapons, large sums of cash, and cordon and searches. Well, I shouldn't say cordon and searches. I guess I should say combat patrols. I don't want to use the term "presence patrol" because that's out of vogue. It's never a presence patrol; you're there for a reason. But basically we would try to get the Army into the villages around Kirkush and let them start meeting the local people. And really what we were trying to do was gather intelligence, with the intent that, hopefully, when some Iraqi faces started going into these villages, there'd start to become some more crosstalk versus when the Americans were there by themselves. "Hey, here's an Iraqi. I can trust him a little more. Let me tell you what's going on."

JM: Is that what happened? Were you able to quantify that?

PF: In the time we went operational – which we're looking at the end of July. We moved to Fallujah in late October, beginning of November, so it was really about three months. While I was present, we never really got any large payoff tips from that piece. In those three months, I can't give you anything concrete of, "Here was a high payoff; we got some feedback that turned into something." I know later, after I had left and the unit came back to Kirkush after Fallujah, there was a large training camp that was identified south of the camp about 20 kilometers, in an area that we had been working prior. I don't know if some of that led into it or not. I can't say either way. So that was really a three-month operational period from the end of July through November. During that period, all the battalions had graduated, so now you had 5th Battalion, 6th Battalion and 7th Battalion that were in an

“operational status.” Ready to go outside the wire and do stuff, but not trained to the level of 1st through 4th Battalion IIF guys. So 5th Battalion had got the word, “You’re going to move back to Taji, near Baghdad, and provide base protection, basically for Taji.” They were going to take over the perimeter. More training was going to be done at Taji so they wanted to relieve the units that were there from the security mission. And 5th Battalion was going to do that: manning posts and also doing active patrolling outside the wire. And us, along with 7th Battalion, we were to remain in Kirkush and do those local patrols with the 1st ID. I think it was in October, but 7th Battalion got activated to go up to the fight in Samarra, so they cleared out of Kirkush and went up to that location. 6th Battalion remained at Kirkush. We took over the base security and still conducted local patrols right outside the wire, the traffic control points, the combat patrols in the villages. About this time, we were starting to get some good experience. Guys were getting their feet wet. During that period we had one good combat engagement. We had some guys that were doing a combat patrol in the area, stopped them, they actually got out and started firing and seized the vehicle. They killed one of the members and there were several items in the vehicle: a PKM machinegun, a couple RPGs [Rocket Propelled Grenades], stuff like that. So the guys were starting get some experience, not to the Fallujah level but starting to get some. So about that time, the word came down that Fallujah was going to be happening and that 6th Battalion and 5th Battalion out at Taji would both disengage from Kirkush and Taji, respectively, move down there and be involved in that fight.

MM: Now, who’d you get the orders from initially to send your people into this operation? Were you dealing with the Marines?

PF: All of my transactions went through the brigade advisor team, which at the time had transitioned to Lieutenant Colonel Rodney Symons. He was the 3d Brigade advisor and the one who obviously was talking to the division advisor team. And really, at that point, the division was still in its infancy. I mean, really, the operational unit was the 3d Brigade, so he was really dealing a lot directly with the palace, General Schwitters and CMATT. He’s the one that specifically told me: “6th Battalion and 5th Battalion are going to go down to Fallujah.” And then we worked with the 30th ESB and 1st ID to coordinate the convoy security to get us down there. The Iraqis can convoy in and of themselves but, in order to get the combat multipliers – air cover, artillery, anything like that – we need to be tied in with a lifeline to an American unit that understands we’re there and we’re out operating. So, we coordinated with 1st ID, 30th ESB, and got the convoys down and moved the battalion-minus down. I want to say it was around November 1st.

MM: Did anybody ask, “Hey, do you think these boys are ready to fight?” Were you asked any input on this or were you just ordered to –?

PF: You guys are familiar with the Army USR [Unit Status Report] where we say how ready our units are. Right about the time we graduated basic training, we had started doing like an Iraqi version of the USR, a readiness assessment. Initially, as I said, S4 was a big issue. Getting the equipment that we needed was a huge issue, so when we first graduated, most of our readiness assessments were red, basically for lacking equipment: machine guns, trucks; not having any of that equipment. I was the one responsible for sending in the 6th Battalion readiness reports, and we were in a ready status before we rolled out to do the operational stuff right around Kirkush. Were we as ready as when we went to Fallujah? No, but we were ready. Absolutely. When we went to Fallujah, I felt like the battalion had the equipment. We'd been filled up and the men were trained properly to go and conduct company-minus-level operations. We couldn't really go in and conduct a battalion-coordinated operational attack, but as companies we'd performed at that level of operations.

MM: Could you just now explain the entire operation to us, the Fallujah piece?

PF: Sure. We had showed up at Camp Fallujah, just to the east side of Fallujah, and there was actually a staging area set up outside of the Marine camp. As an advisor, I got the impression that there was an "us" and a "them." In other words, there was the American camp and, then, outside there was a bermed area for the Iraqis, of which we were part. But they were starting to set up some very hasty living conditions for the Iraqis that were coming in. There was 5th Battalion, 6th Battalion – which was my battalion – and there was also the 1st Brigade IIF that was also showing up, so they were trying to get tentage and living spaces for all those guys. This was right around the 1st of November and we had over a week to try and basically get guys together, start doing some training there at the camp, start getting all the PCCs [Pre-Combat Checks], PCIs [Pre-Combat Inspections] done. The 5th Battalion actually worked with the Marines. I believe it was 1-3 Marines. They actually got cut and started doing rehearsals with them as far as how they were going to ride in on the LAVs [Light Armored Vehicles] coming into the city. And then the IIF was conducting its own separate rehearsals. They were over in the Jolan District, and I don't exactly understand their relationship with the Marines specifically. Well, what I was told through Colonel Symons was that 6th Battalion would be put under 2d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, which was the Black Jack Brigade and Colonel [Michael] Formica. I'd have to look at the orders to remember exactly whether we were attached, OPCON'd or TACON'd [i.e., placed under the operational or tactical control of].

MM: Right, I've spoken with Colonel Formica and we're setting up an interview with him, too.

PF: So we were put directly under him. We basically got our marching orders directly from the 2d Brigade, so our tasks were given down from the brigade. I started initially plugging into the 2d Brigade as far as getting my missions, as far as what we would start conducting. I started bringing my colonel, my Iraqi colonel, Colonel Jawad with me, so we were sort of doing the group liaison thing, getting him plugged in. Initially, prior to the assault going into the city, 6th Battalion was responsible for checkpoints along the routes. Do you have a blowup of Fallujah?

MM: We've got this one, which has the outline of the city –

PF: Yeah, those aren't going to – I didn't have time to pull it out. Once again, we were sort of off to the east.

MM: Now, I think on this map here, they do actually identify – can you see if that's Camp Fallujah or not?

PF: I'm thinking Camp Fallujah is over there. I'm thinking that's the north-east corner of the city here. Well, this isn't a showstopper. If you look at this, here we've got Fallujah proper and then to the east we have this main highway that came out –

MM: Highway 10/PL Fran, the one with the spiraling traffic loops –

PF: Yes, that one right there, which headed back. Then there was another highway that kind of came off up here, north of the city, came out and then they intersected.

MM: You can see these traffic circles right here.

PF: Right, that was the main entrance there. I can't remember what that Phase Line was –

MM: Phase Line Fran.

PF: But these streets here, and there was another one that came out here, and they kind of came out, looped and they crossed. Abu Ghraib Prison was over here at that one intersection, and then you sort of went off to Baghdad. Initially, our area of responsibility was between the east side of the city and Abu Ghraib and on those two main routes. I can't remember the MSR names.

MM: On this other map, they've got you located – I don't know if they've got you as the right unit here, but –

PF: That's kind of correct in relationship, but just so you don't get the misperception, 6th Battalion wasn't fighting through the eastern edge of the city. The 6th was actually out on the perimeters with the roads conducting traffic control points and also doing route security – and that was from this entire expanse from here along the western edge of the city all the way down along this road to Abu Ghraib, and then coming back up on the northern route. So really that was sort of our sec-

tor, if you will. We did the TCPs in order to interdict people that were coming into and out of the city, and additionally we did route security: making sure that once these roads had gotten closed down for the operations, that they stayed closed. The only traffic you had on those was military at the time.

MM: So Black Jack Brigade's pretty much given the mission that they're going to go into a blocking position. As the attack goes in, they're supposed to be catching any insurgents that might try to break out to the south or something. Were you guys given a totally different mission then? Were you instructed to do this blocking mission or were you to do some other sort of mission?

PF: Initially, our battalion was not given its own mission. It wasn't, "6th Battalion, Iraqi Army, you're going to go set up these checkpoints." What was happening was that 6th Battalion was working in concert with U.S. units at these checkpoints, and this was a common thing I saw as an advisor in Iraq. Understand that most of the American units at that time had been with ING, which did not have the same level of training as the Iraqi Army at that time. So there was a little bit of a reluctance to say, "Okay, Iraqi unit, you're going to go take this area of the sandbox."

JM: They weren't confident that they could carry it out.

PF: Right. So basically, we were working in concert with U.S. units. We were probably providing, at different checkpoints, maybe 50 percent, maybe greater, of the strength that was at the checkpoints with American units there. And that necessarily wasn't a bad thing. We had our advisors spread out so, if we had to, we had links to the Black Jack Brigade, air, indirect, or more importantly MEDEVAC [Medical Evacuation] if required.

MM: Did your battalion have use of radios?

PF: Yes and no. The Iraqis actually received a Motorola vehicle radio. It kind of looked like a CB. It was about the size of one with a little hand mike on it that they mounted in the pickup trucks that you see – the white Nissans. They weren't secure, obviously, and the range was kind of limited. Off the top of my head, our battalion had about 30 or 40 of those for our vehicles, and then additionally they had the handheld Motorolas.

MM: Did you at least have a decent radio so you could get in touch?

PF: Later, much later. But before we went operational, we had gotten two up-armored Humvees along with dual radio, a VRC-92 comm suite, one .50 caliber machinegun with spring mount, and one M-60 machine gun. The 10-man team had those two trucks. And, honestly, that was plenty, because to try and man them with three guys each, that's six guys out of a 10-man team. By that time, I had lost – not lost due to injury or anything; there were some different issues that had come up

– but I was down to a seven-man team at that point, so we were pretty full just to man the Humvees and get out there. So yes, the Iraqis were initially pretty austere on communication assets, and I don't know what the situation is over there now.

JM: By the time Fallujah kicked off, what kind of vehicles were the Iraqis in? Were they all still in the pickup trucks?

PF: Yes.

JM: So they didn't have military vehicles?

PF: No, they did not. A commander would be in a pickup truck. Additionally, we had the PKM machineguns, which required some fabrication, and for this, 30th ESB – which was on Kirkush with us – was a huge help. At the time, there was no formalized machinegun mount on those trucks. So if a guy in the truck bed took a PKM machinegun and laid it over the cab, it would slide around while you were driving. So the 30th welders, out of the goodness of their hearts and through some scrounging, they built us some post mounts in the back of the trucks, so what we had were, in essence, gun trucks, technicals, that we built. But there was no armor protection at all, so that Iraqi standing up in the back of that truck on the machinegun was fully exposed. The guys that actually came to Fallujah, they were some great soldiers – the Iraqis, I'm speaking of. Some of the things they did, we would never expect our soldiers to do. It really showed a lot of intestinal fortitude, I thought. But yeah, they were still using those trucks and, in addition, they were using what we called the “bongo trucks,” which are kind of like five-tons but a civilian version. They were tan Hyundai trucks with a tarp covering the back. We tried to give them a little more protection, so we made them make sandbag walls along the two edges of the trucks. Basically, if you crouched down in the truck, you could put your rifle over the sandbag. There was a tarp on the side and it would give you some protection and a firing port to shoot out as you drove. So getting back to it, yes, most of the missions initially were joint missions with U.S. forces. All those TCP missions along the route were joint, and it was usually based on what unit was close by. For example, at Abu Ghraib, we had a checkpoint right outside and that was manned by an MP unit, I believe, that was inside the prison there. But then the Iraqi forces were linked in, along with their advisors. One thing that helped in one way but complicated things in another way was, at this time, we were in country for about nine months and they were trying to switch out advisor teams. So there was a new advisor team that had showed up just prior to deploying to Fallujah. So we were able to use them as an extra set of hands for getting out with the Iraqis and manning the Humvees. But the flip side was that they were new in country, so we were reluctant to say, “Go out there; you're alone in the wilderness by yourself.” We wanted to get them spun up and make sure they were ready before we disengaged from them. So it was kind of a blessing that we had

extra hands, but then additionally it was probably not a great time to do a handover – being actually involved in major operations. During those TCP routes, I felt that Black Jack started to get more confidence in the abilities. They hadn't seen a lot of the problems that they'd seen with the Iraqi National Guard fellows assigned to 1st CAV. At this point now, the operations in the city are going on. The Marines are actually fighting through and 5th Battalion is located with the Marines going down through the center. I don't want to speak for Mike Zacchea, but I want to say that they were kind of a follow mission, given specific objectives, i.e. mosques or things that were really culturally sensitive.

MM: Is he up at the school right now?

PF: No, he's a Marine.

MM: Oh, okay.

PF: He's a Marine and I don't know if he stayed on. I know he was a Reserve Marine. I don't know if he's back in the civilian sector or not. But anyway, back to Fallujah. Once we started to get some confidence and some rapport built with Black Jack, that was when they started to give 6th Battalion some cordon and search missions, as battalion-level proper missions. So in other words, "6th Battalion, go and conduct a cordon and search of this village." I can't remember the name, but it was basically up in the north, northeast of the city. We went on a few cordon and search missions looking for any Iraqi foreign fighters that had fled the city. A major find that sticks out in my mind was a police station that had basically been abandoned by the police. The Iraqis came in and made contact with some people that were living in the police station. Talked to them and, come to find out, the police had left and the people living there had secured the police station. Well, they would up finding the guy who knew the guy who had the friend who had the key to the storage room. They opened it up and there were several hundred Iraqi police vests with the plates in them and 50-plus AK-47s. The vests were one of the big things, because if those had gotten into the hands of the insurgents, they could've really helped their fight. There were also some pistols and some other equipment in the storage room, so that was probably one of the biggest seizures, but it wasn't a seizure under contact per se. Once again, it was the Iraqis working with the locals. They told them about it and said, "Hey, we want to get this stuff turned in, we're tired of watching it, we're scared some bad guys are going to get a hold of it." That was a small example of the success with the Iraqis working with the Iraqi population. It's one of those things that we, as Americans, don't get the connection if we go in there. So Black Jack started trusting us to do those missions. We did the cordon and searches up there north and northeast of the city. About that time is when I was transitioning out also. One of the units we did that in concert with, too, was the 1-5 CAV out of Black Jack Brigade. I think it was Lieutenant



Colonel Myles Miyamasu. Once that rapport was built, we actually wound up going into the town itself and doing the search. 1-5 CAV actually acted as our outer cordon, so they were in essence a shaping operation for us, the decisive operation inside the city. There was sort of this transition from, initially, “What are we capable of handling?” to when we were doing the actual mission with the American battalion who was shaping operations. I felt like we really built a great rapport with those guys, with the 2d Brigade, Black Jack. I felt like that was a good use towards the end. My preference would have probably been to be tied in with the Marines, with the actual city portion of it, but I understand the logic. And the logic was: we wanted to get the Iraqis tied in with every aspect of the operation. Black Jack Brigade, which was a shaping aspect of the operation – while not as glamorous as the Marine piece – was an important part of the overall operation. It did get Iraqis spread out, with that shaping operation with Black Jack, plus Iraqis actually doing the missions in the city itself. I understand why we did that. And also, the natural fallout was 6th Battalion had Army advisors and 5th Battalion had Marine advisors. Let’s put Marines with Marines and Army with Army.

MM: Did they pull your battalion out about the 20th of November? Were you there for two weeks?

PF: I actually left Fallujah – I want to say it was around the 20th, somewhere around there.

MM: Because that’s when all the Army units retrograde out of there.

PF: Breaking contact out of there, I had to get all these different flights and everything, so I lose track of time at that point. Around the 20th when I pulled out, I handed to keys over to Major John Curwin. He took over as the senior advisor for 6th Battalion and that was about the time we were doing the cordon and searches of the villages northeast of Fallujah proper. My understanding was that the battalions hung around for a little while. From talking to John, I don’t think they came back up to Kirkush until sometime in December. Don’t take this as gospel, but I believe they stayed in the city as a police force until MNSTC-I could get the forces together to put in an Iraqi police force proper and then get the Army units disengaged. And then once 6th Battalion got disengaged, John told me they went back to Kirkush and stayed up there as their center of operations. They got renamed 2d Battalion at some point; and they also got re-designated from Iraq Army Force to Iraqi Intervention Force at some point during that Fallujah operation. I’m a little vague as to what happened after that period.

MM: No, that’s fine. I can tell you right now, a lot of the stuff that you’ve given us, I’m certain they’re going to use in the On Point II book that they’re working on right now. I was just discussing this with some of them the other day, so I’m sure they’d love to see this.

PF: I feel like it was kind of nebulous, some of the stuff I told you. I don't know if it was concrete enough.

MM: It was; it was great. Plus, what you have pertains a lot more to John's project, but now this is an extra added piece for me with the Black Jack Brigade, the shaping operation and who was out there.

PF: And it will be interesting. You said you were going to be talking to Colonel Formica?

MM: Right.

PF: It'll be interesting to hear his views. Once again, the brigade was very receptive to us coming in. Understanding that, coming in as an Iraqi Army battalion, we bring a good cultural aspect. But as far as firepower and combat power, it's pretty limited. Keeping that in mind and understanding he's responsible for the overall operation. Although initially we were doing those joint operations, I feel that once we sort of proved ourselves and they got a gauge on where we were at, they literally put us into some good missions. Those cordon and searches were good battalion-level missions, and they were actually pretty complex. It was really sitting down with the Iraqi battalion commander and making sure that he was wired on what was going to occur. You know, when I initially went over there, when I would talk to the battalion commander about something the battalion was doing, my thought was: this is the way, my way, that we should fix the problem. It was the American way and, thus, it had to be the right way and this is the way we should approach the problem. Well, after having our 10 guys living right in the middle of several hundred Iraqis for a while, you start to realize that, because of cultural differences, something that they do, which might seem silly to an American, is actually pretty effective. And by the end of my tour, I would very often default to Colonel Jawad: "Sir, how do you think we should solve this problem?" He would tell me something and, regardless of my personal American-skewed view on it, a lot of times, if we let his advice play out, it would work a lot better than trying to put the American answer on top of it. So the cultural aspect can't be understated. It can't be overemphasized as an advisor going in to work with a foreign army. You have to take into account that they understand their people better than we can. It's the same as if an Iraqi came here to New York City and you asked him to figure out who the criminals are. We could just look and say, "Well, that guy looks a little shady." It's the same thing, so the cultural aspect is huge.

JM: Could you give us any specific examples, instances when the American way may not have been the best way?

PF: That's a good question. I've tried to think of some of these, but it's been a while. We've talked about the importance of leave and pay, and I think that's probably one of the key examples that I finally came around to. Once again, the Ameri-

can perspective is: “I don’t see what the complaint is. You’re going to get paid. We’re not going to cheat you out of your money. You’ll get your leave when you get your leave, end of story.” Well, the Iraqi colonel approached it like, “Who really has to get back to see their family and give them money?” And why do they get what, in America, we would call special privilege. I would want to say: “This is the standard and we’re not going to deviate from that. No one’s going to get a special exemption for that. Why are you above this guy?” But I think he understood better people’s personal situation and he could take into account things in the family that I couldn’t: the size of the village they were from, whether there was someone else. The Iraqis had a fantastic network – and I don’t know how they could do this. But if a relative died or was sick hundreds of miles away, the soldier would know that by the friend of a friend who brought a note to a friend and it would end up at the front gate. I don’t know how they did it, but it was extremely effective. There was this sub-network of information and culture, and he understood that better than me. He could say, “This guy needs to go home. He will come back. He’s not a bad soldier. He just needs to do this, he’ll return, and then he’ll be better for doing this than if we force him to stay here for another two weeks.” That’s probably a good example of that.

JM: You were doing a lot of coaching, mentoring and advising. Is there anything that you learned? Maybe not in a tactical sense, but is there anything you learned that maybe contributed to your professional development in a positive way?

PF: The number one aspect that I learned was that cultural awareness piece. The American attitude is sometimes very arrogant and we are very quick to assume that we, as Americans, have the only right answer. Perception is reality a lot of the times to someone from a different culture or a different country. Even if I say two plus two is four, if he doesn’t believe that, that may never be the right answer to him. So I think that’s the number one lesson that I learned. Other things that stood out – in CGSC we use the term FID [Foreign Internal Defense] missions: training foreign armies. This goes back to the cultural understanding but, in my mind, I imagine what a battalion would look like if Pete Fedak was the battalion commander or a company if Pete Fedak was the company commander: what I’d expect, how things are laid out, how it should be arranged, etc. Well, due to cultural differences, in the Iraqi Army – to use a single battalion as an example – that unit could never look exactly like I imagined it. Trying to get it to that level, to that fit – once again, when I first got there, that was my vision. “This is what an American battalion looks like, so this is what an Iraqi battalion has to look like.” And it’s never going to quite get there. It’s never going to look identical. And I guess what I learned here is that that’s okay. It’s okay for it not to look identical to an American battalion. You can still be effective without fitting the mental model of what I

think is an effective unit, what I think is the only way right can work. Things that we wouldn't think are important might be very important to an Iraqi unit. The unit patches. Okay, what does it matter if you have a patch? Does that really make a difference? You can still go out to fight. It's not going to be a showstopper. But for the Iraqis, that was a huge cohesion issue. And when they got to put on those patches, when we got our 6th Battalion patches, that was tremendous. Little things that I might think are silly, and it kind of goes back to the cultural understanding. "I think it's silly so it's got to be silly." Well, it's not silly if they don't think it's silly.

JM: Do you have anything more, Matt?

MM: No, I'm good.

JM: Just one more from me, then, if you don't mind. You mentioned you kind of had this hasty advisor course – if you want to call it that – or some kind of shotgun approach to how you're going to advise. If you were design maybe a program of instruction or give advice to someone tasked with a similar mission, what would you include in that? How would that be structured? What are some of the main points you'd want to get across?

PF: That's a great question, too. When I say "course," it's a very strong word to use based on what we had happen at Taji – and I can understand, it was the early stages. When I showed up, literally people did not know what an advisor meant, what an AST meant. This wasn't even a term in vogue, per se. I guess now it's gotten quite a bit more popular, but when we went over, no one knew what that was. So I think it's hard to just come off right now with a laundry list of things that need to occur for an advisory training program. But I do think there needs to be some sort of a program prior to leaving the States, Germany, wherever you're stationed, just to get you spun up initially, mentally, what you're going to be doing there. I want to say some of that's occurring now. A friend of mine, a sergeant first class that was stationed with me at Hohenfels, he's going over as an advisor and he told me he had just gone to Fort Hood for some sort of a predeployment program. Now, I don't know if that's just a basic program on qualifying with your rifle, getting some medical training, or if they focus on the advisor aspects. I also understand now from the speech that General Petraeus gave us a few months ago, that there's what they call the Phoenix Academy in Taji, which is kind of a no-bullshit, "Here's what's going on as an advisor in Iraq." So I think prior to leaving home station or your duty station, you need to get a dose of that; and then when you get in country, you need to get the, "No shit, here's the way things are occurring," dose of it. Going back to what I said originally, it would be great if they could have some of the guys who've done this give some words of wisdom. Not so much for the war stories, but to emphasize things like the cultural piece, understanding that the American way isn't the only way, and don't expect things to look exactly like you

imagine it. And maybe you don't quite buy it until you get there and live it, but if someone had shook me and said that earlier, maybe it wouldn't have taken me so long to hit the switch and say, "You know, it's okay if it's not an American model unit. It's okay to live with some imperfections if it gets the job done." This is getting off on a tangent a little bit, but General Petraeus made the comment about the readiness status of the Iraqi forces. There was something in the news about the categories and that they wanted to get this category unit to operate at 100 percent independent, by themselves. I don't want to put words in his mouth, but he mentioned that it was kind of a reality check to say that category one should actually be a unit requiring minimal help to get combat multipliers that they're not capable of themselves, such as close air support or MEDEVAC, and I totally agree. If I can put 10 guys with a 1,000-man battalion and give them a SINCGARS [Single Channel Ground to Air Radio System] link to close air support, artillery, MEDEVAC and American combat multipliers, that gives me 1,000 rifles on the ground and only costing me 10 U.S. soldiers. That's a lot of bang for the buck and I think that's a good thing. If we realize this expectation and say, "Hey, look, it's unrealistic to think I can have 1,000 guys out there and an Iraqi is going to talk to a pilot on the radio and call in a CAS strike." I mean, that's hard for a U.S. soldier to do, let alone in a second language. So, the realistic expectations. I don't know if they're actually doing basic training like we did. I think that might be a thing of the past since the units are already operational. But if guys are still going over and standing up units from scratch, I think in these prep courses – either stateside or Phoenix Academy – they should give them a very detailed, "Here's what we expect you'll accomplish" with a program of instruction. And even if they just reference what the task and mission standards are – I mean, that's all we did. We basically went through how you qualify on a range. We were given some loose guidance as far as how many hits with an AK on a standard-sized target at 25 meters. That, I think, was occurring while I left, actually, because I knew there was a basic training method of instruction that came out to emphasize that. Those aren't really great answers right now. I think that'll require some thought, to really think what items we need to put in our program before a guy gets over there. But I think we definitely need something. I think it's the wrong answer to just say, "Go over and figure it out on the fly." Let's give him some grounding, and the main focus should be cultural: not the American looking glass but the Iraqi looking glass.

JM: Okay, great. Well, thanks very much for your time, Pete.

PF: I feel like I didn't spend enough – I know you were really interested in Fallujah.

MM: I got what I needed, but I'll tell you, there's a bigger picture here. Before you leave, I'll introduce you to the guy who's writing the history of everything that you just talked about: the training of indigenous forces.

PF: Okay, like I said, our story is not too glamorous regarding Fallujah.

MM: It's another piece. It's important.

PF: Does that give you a feel for what we did in Fallujah?

MM: Oh, absolutely. But I must confess, I tried to put all of this together while we were waiting for you to come over here, and I said, "Wait a minute. This says 6th Battalion and this says 2d Battalion. Somebody's wrong here."

PF: I hadn't looked at that book, the Bing West book. I've been wanting to read it and I pulled it the other day at the library. For some reason, I was thumbing through, saw that, and I was like, "I wish I had seen that before he came. I would have stopped in and just –" He had a lot of information. I'm not dinging him on it, but just to set it straight so, if he does a reprint or something, he can modify it. Yeah, 2-2 was definitely tied in with the Marines.

MM: Even the Marine general in this article I have here, he even gets 2-2 wrong. He has 2-2 as part of 4th Infantry Division.

JM: We'll just stop the tape here. Thanks again.

## **Major Tim Karcher**

### **14 March 2006**

MM: My name is Matt Matthews [MM]. I'm with the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today is Tuesday, March 14th and I'm interviewing Major Tim Karcher [TK] who was the S3 [operations officer] for 2-7 CAV [2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment] during Operation Phantom Fury. If you could just give me a little background on how you got commissioned and your military service up until Operation Phantom Fury.

TK: Okay. I was a 1989 graduate of the University of Missouri, Columbia, with a degree in political science. I got my commission through the ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] program, had to do all the typical infantry things at Fort Benning, and my first duty station was Fort Irwin, California. I was at the OPFOR [Opposing Force] there at the NTC [National Training Center], and then I went to the Armor Officer Advanced Course to expand my horizons as a mechanized guy. Went to command in Germany, did a rifle company and an HHC [Headquarters and Headquarters Company] there. Came back and taught tactics at the Infantry School, the Advanced Course, and then went to CGSC [Command and General Staff College] and SAMS [School of Advanced Military Studies]. After SAMS, I went to the III Corps Headquarters at Fort Hood and did the first six months of my deployment to Iraq there, with III Corps, making slides, hating life. I then went down to be the S3 of 2-7 CAV in July of '04 and stayed there with them until redeployment in March of '05.

MM: Super. Can you just walk me through the planning for Operation Phantom Fury? When was your unit alerted that you might have to go on this mission? Just tell me the story there.

TK: Sure. It kind of started with operations in Najaf in August. We were down in support of 11th MEU [Marine Expeditionary Unit]. We were basically an economy of force position for Task Force Baghdad and we were in the northern area of Baghdad out in the rural area around Taji. That was our normal area of operations. Therefore, everybody saw us as an element that could easily be pulled away – and so we were. We got pulled away in August to go support 11th MEU down in Najaf, and we worked pretty well with the Marines. I think the fact that we did some pretty robust destruction for them, if you will, and killed a lot of enemy for them, we got a reputation with the 11th MEU – and thereby the 1st MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] – as a unit that could go in and mix it up with whatever the enemy had to offer and come away pretty coherent. We started getting rumblings that we would be asked to come back to fight with the Marines around about early October. The brigade we were attached to – the 39th Enhanced Brigade out of the

Arkansas National Guard – we couldn't get anything great out of them as far as when we were going, if we were going, so we made comms with division planners because both the XO [Executive Officer] of 2-7 and I had just both left corps and division jobs, respectively, so we knew these guys. We called up and said, "Hey, what's the latest and greatest?" When we finally got the DIRLAUTH [Direct Liaison Authorized] with the Marines, I went there for a planning conference with them sometime in the middle of October. I met the 1st RCT [Regimental Combat Team] command group and staff and started laying the groundwork. That was probably one of the biggest weakness we noted in Najaf. We got there with an ADVON [Advanced Party] of about 20 people on a Sunday night, about 2300 hours, and we were fighting the city the following Friday. And oh by the way, we still had to move all of our personnel and equipment 200-plus kilometers, so really our forces got in on Tuesday and were fighting Friday morning. So one of the things we learned was backing that timeline off – that worked very well for Fallujah. We got in at the grassroots of their planning, were able to work with them and let them know what we were able to do for them. Then we were able to shape their course of action a little bit, their concept, to something that was more in line with our capabilities. So I thought there was a lot of give and take on both sides and it worked out pretty darn well.

MM: Now you personally – or your unit – pushed that to happen, is that correct? Did the Marines try to get you on board early or did you guys really push that so you could start planning earlier this time?

TK: I think the Marines understood it was a weakness in Najaf also. It was a mutual thing. There was no one party that was pushing harder than the other. They wanted us to come there, lock, stock and barrel, and soon as we could. They also knew we weren't going to come into the city until we got some serious high-level commitment criteria.

MM: As part of your planning, how did you work your fire support? Did you actually have some Army artillery or were you going to be calling in Marine artillery?

TK: We had some Army artillery but it was supporting the whole 1st MARDIV [Marine Division] so it wasn't like we just called back the Army guns. We could call back fire missions through our fire support element at the battalion level into the 1st RCT – and whoever fired the guns, I don't know. A lot of times it was our Paladins that were attached from 3-82 [3d Battalion, 82d Field Artillery Regiment]. The 2d Brigade was around the city, but I couldn't be sure of that. It was one of the DS [Direct Support] battalions there in 1st CAV [1st Cavalry Division].



MM: Can you discuss how your task organization came about for Task Force 2-7? How did you end up with Charlie Company, 3-8 and Alpha and Charlie of 2-7?

TK: That was based on our relatively permanent task organization for OIF II [Operation IRAQI FREEDOM]. 2-7 had had Charlie 3-8 since the beginning and that had just been a cross-attached tank company. We had cross-attached Bravo Company to 3-8 CAV to make a combined arms unit. So that was no big deal. If you look at the slides I sent you, if you look at the task org under HHC 2-7, under battalion control, we had 2d Platoon, Bravo, 2-162 [2d Battalion, 162d Infantry Regiment]. That was a motorized infantry platoon from a cross-attached unit that was also with us up in Taji. We left the rest of that battalion, plus one of our platoons of mech from Alpha Company, back to control our normal AO [Area of Operations] while we left out of there.

MM: I believe that B/2-162 is an Oregon National Guard unit?

TK: Yes, it is.

MM: What was it specifically that the Marines wanted Task Force 2-7 to do? What was the mission?

TK: They wanted us to make a penetration through the enemy's defenses to allow the Marines to get into a more decisive piece of terrain around the Jolan District, which is right along the west side of the city, along the Euphrates River – and get in there relatively unscathed. The problem is that penetration sounds much better in a more linear battlefield, but when there's a bunch of insurgent cells running around, it doesn't work as well. We actually told them, from experiences in Najaf, that they weren't going to bust a hole in his defenses because he's more mobile than you are and he doesn't have a command structure. He can just run to where the sounds of the guns are. So we went back and forth on that and we essentially attacked on a broader front than they wanted to initially. Initially, they wanted us to make a couple block-wide penetration, but that made less sense than attacking across a broad front and killing as much as we could to make it easier for the Marines to walk down to that decisive terrain, because that's how they got there.

MM: Speaking of that, what did the Marine infantry battalions basically have? Did they have any tanks attached or any armored vehicles whatsoever?

TK: I don't know how familiar you are with the Marines, but they have a piece of equipment called an AAV – Amphibious Assault Vehicle – and it's got the armor plating of most good desks. It's a very lightly armored vehicle. Having said that, they were reluctant to bring those into the city, and rightfully so. What they did was they'd bring them to the edge of the city and dismount there. They did have a couple tanks, usually with each company, but it was catch as catch can and they'd

use those – as the tanks were originally designed – as a direct fire support weapon for the infantry. And they did that with a very positive effect when they were able to use them. Unfortunately, they’ve got so few of them that they couldn’t spread them around as much as we could.

MM: Can you talk me through November 8th – on the very opening of the attack on Fallujah and what exactly happened and who went through first? Was it 2-7 that blew through the breach?

TK: We started out really on the evening of November 8th. We moved down into attack positions, pretty much about a kilometer, kilometer and a half, outside the edge of the city. The Marines then breached a railroad track complex, and if you’re looking at the graphics I sent you – the one marked “Fighting in Fallujah, 8 through 10 November.” Look between Charlie, 2-7 CAV and 3-1 Marines [3d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment] – just to the north of them. If you made a triangle out of that, you’d see a weird- looking complex that’s kind of cross-hatched. That’s the train station. They breached the tracks just to the west of the train station and we came down through. They fired a Mine Clearing Line Charge – a MCLC – to detonate any possible minefields between the railroad tracks and the city, which intel had said was likely to be there. But luckily, to my knowledge, it wasn’t there. We then led with our tanks, because the minute we popped the MCLC, that will clear a line, but you still have to proof it with our tanks. So we put tanks with rollers in the lead to detonate any leftover mines.

MM: Were those from Charlie Company, 3-8?

TK: They were. A Cougar element. Charlie, 3-8 was the lead in the order of march. They gained that outer ring probably about 1:30. It was raining and it was a really miserable evening, and we sat there for a good six or seven hours waiting to go, watching this rain of fire down on the city.

MM: And is this 0130 on the 8th of November?

TK: 9 November. So we watched this death and destruction rain down on the city, from AC-130s to any kind of fast-moving aircraft, 155 [millimeter] howitzers, you name it – everybody was getting in on the mix. We then went in and secured a road that was essentially the route that Charlie, 3-8 went on in my graphics. That was called Route Henry and it was a north/south running road that divided the Jolan District from the remainder of the city. So our task there was to initially destroy enemy forces in the eastern portion of the Jolan District. You can see how our forces were arrayed with Alpha to the flank of Charlie, 3-8, so we essentially attempted to clear that area. Again, it’s all depending on the enemy popping up his ugly head, because you can’t just shoot every building. Having said that, many of the buildings were obviously prepared for this. I mean, I’ve walked 40 years on this Earth and never had sandbags in the windows of my house – and there

were plenty of houses with sandbags in their windows, so those were obviously prepared positions. And nine times out of 10, the enemy engaged us from those positions and we were able to return fire.

MM: When they were engaging you at this time, was this small arms fire, RPGs [Rocket-Propelled Grenades], just the whole kit and caboodle?

TK: Anything they could put on us, they did. There were some heated firefights and there were also some that were just one round fired by one of our tanks, then end of mission. It just depended on what the position held.

MM: Your forces all stayed mounted at this time? Did you have to dismount any infantry to go in and clear anything?

TK: We didn't. The goal was not to dismount at that time, because we had a whole battalion of infantry behind us in the form of 3-1 Marines and we thought it was best not to mingle our forces. So the goal within 1st RCT was, "Stay mounted." If we got into something really nasty, we'd call up [inaudible] and dismount, but the fact of the matter was: we were trying to stay mounted and keep the momentum.

MM: So go ahead and talk me through what happened with the rest of the fight, if you will.

TK: If you look on the graphic, pretty much in the center of the graphic there's a rectangle that Alpha 2-7's line goes to. That is what's called the Jolan Park. It was an amusement park and that was our primary objective. We had reason to believe that the enemy was using that as a key rallying location to conduct their mobile defense from. Their rationale for that was, I believe, from the April fights – that's what they had done. They had rallied their forces there and interspersed them throughout the city. Everybody believed that the Jolan District was going to be the final bastion, if you will, of the enemy's defense. He was going to go into that area, which was very, very restrictive terrain in the form of very narrow streets, tight buildings, just kind of a maze. They thought the enemy would go in there to take away our advantage of moving armored vehicles in. But they thought that the enemy would fall back to those locations, so if we were able isolate the park and clear what was there right away – "we" being 1st RCT at that time. Because 2-7 wasn't much in the way of clearing; we were in the mode of destroying. So the Marines actually went in and did the dirty work of clearing, and I've got to give them credit for that. They were awesome, but they took a lot of casualties in the process. We were supposed to get to Jolan Park by 24 hours into the fight. We were actually there in 12 hours and we had secured that, thereby allowing 3-1 Marines to follow us down and essentially take a right turn, turn west at the Jolan Park, and attack into the Jolan while 3-5 Marines came down from the north. And that was the movement initially. We were then supposed to penetrate the Jolan District, which we did by

sending the 3-8 down to the objective just south of there, which was an industrial complex. Went there and seized that at about 2300 – and that was supposed to be the next day’s objective, so we were 24 hours into it and we were on the objective we were supposed to be on in 48 hours. Then the following morning, we withdrew Alpha Company from Jolan Park, moved Iraqi security forces in to assist Charlie Company, which was basically keeping the LOC [Line of Communication] open, which was Route Henry. If you draw a line between Charlie, 2-7 and Charlie, 3-8, that’s Route Henry. So they were keeping the LOC open and further isolating the battlefield. Then Alpha Company came back, refitted, rearmed and refueled, and attacked down into the bridge-crossing sites across the Euphrates River, and they seized those. The northern bridge crossing site, which was the last objective there that you see an arrow going to, that was the actual bridge where they’d hung the contractors up in April and started the whole April uprising.

MM: As you’re coming down and going towards the area, you’re on this Highway 10 – Phase Line Fran – as you come down there and then turn back west to go towards those bridges?

TK: Correct.

MM: So what happened after you secured the bridges?

TK: Once we did that, we were 36 hours into it and our objectives were 72. So everything happened a lot quicker than we thought it would, and I couldn’t even begin to tell you how many enemy forces were killed in that process. We had to engage them pretty frequently and pretty constantly, really. One of the nice things we found in Najaf was that if we found one of these points of dominance – where we could actually dominate the terrain – the enemy would try to push us off them. Well, they wouldn’t attack with platoon or company strength, rather they would attack in cell strength, very decentralized. So the fact of the matter was: we’d grab a chunk of terrain and we’d get 10 men assaulting from here, 10 men assaulting from there and 10 from there – and at that point, it’s really a very unfair fight. We just fought a hell of a lot better than they did. So we were able to really destroy a lot of the enemy’s force there and, like I said, the Marines with 3-5 and 3-1 were going in there and clearing the Jolan District, so the enemy had pressure all over the place in Jolan. Honestly, I think his best laid plans of doing a mobile defense were really thwarted by 1st RCT’s plan of hitting him at multiple points. We were able to isolate that area and prevent enemy from getting out and getting in. I think that was one of the successes of this plan: 3-1 and 3-5 got to fight the forces that were there for the fight, as opposed to anything that could mass on that area. Now, they still had a lot of hard fights and I don’t want to take anything away from them. Everybody talks about the Marine Corps having some of the best PAOs [Planning and Analysis Officers] in the world, and I couldn’t agree more. But the fact of the mat-

ter is: there's a lot of brave troops there and they took it in the face a lot of times, because they were doing it the old-fashioned way as infantrymen, and that's a hard business. I've got nothing but respect for those fellows. Once they had started to clear the Jolan District the first time – and they did it two or three times just to really get at it – that was when we got the change of mission, if you will, to go south. And that was never really in the plan, because I don't think anybody understood how quick this was going to break open. So the morning of 11 November, we got told to get everybody ready to go south – and for a mech unit, that requires refueling, rearming, some decent maintenance. So all day on the 11th we essentially held what we had and got the troops ready for the next push. That night about 2200, we attacked south along Route Henry, using that as our left guide, and then attacked into the southern area. Our goal there was to destroy enemy forces in anticipation of the Marines moving south again. We had no real intention of staying there – nor did 1st RCT have any intention of us staying there – but once we got in there, 1st RCT got orders from 1st MARDIV not to give up terrain that we'd already fought through. Now, mind you, we hadn't cleared or seized anything along those lines; we just destroyed enemy strong points in that area. So we ended up staying there, which was not to our liking, quite honestly, because the enemy is relatively “solar powered” and we have a great advantage over him during the night. I mean, if we saw it once we saw it 100 times there: guys trying to sneak up on us. A guy going down the side of the street will light up to the thermals at 500 meters. They just know there's tank noises down there. And honestly, it didn't work out well most of the time for them, because we could see them – and once we identified weapons in their hands, we were able to kill them at 400 to 500 meters before they could even see us through their RPG sites. Once we stayed there, though, during the day the enemy was able to come out and meet us on a little more even terms, kind of maneuver on us and send a bunch of different little cells against platoons. We had some pretty hard fights the morning of the 12th there. Each day – the 12th, 13th and even the 14th – we had some relatively stiff fights. We started encountering more and more professional insurgents. There were reports of guys maneuvering wearing body armor and Kevlar helmets, which they likely stole from the Iraqi National Guard.

MM: Do you think these may have been foreign fighter elements?

TK: I don't know. That's not my expertise. Rumors abounded, of course. If we were sitting around drinking a beer and I was telling you a war story, I'd probably tell you something different, but I can't confirm that for what I'd call historical accuracy.

MM: You were talking about the 12th, during the heavy contact. Was that the time that Captain [Edward] Twaddell's vehicle was hit? Was that the same fight there?

TK: It was. He took an RPG through the back rack, killing one individual in the back, traumatically amputating the arm of another individual, and the RPG actually lodged in the back of his turret. So Alpha Company had some pretty stout contact that day and it took them almost in total to secure their casualties and to back out of that fight, or that series of fights, and secure the retrograded, damaged equipment and wounded personnel. So we expanded Charlie Company, 3-8 back up and Charlie, 2-7 down to keep complete control Route Henry. The day of the 12th, we had pretty constant contact. We had a slight gap between the two Charlie companies, so we brought Alpha Company in there to reestablish their positions after they had gotten their vehicles fixed up as much as they could. It was an exciting fight and the bottom line was that we continued that isolation. By this time, the Marines had started to work in from north to south in the form of 3-1 attacking south, and we pretty much had the clearing going on again in the form of 3-1 while we isolated. For a couple days, it was like that. We were just maintaining Route Henry, isolating the area and letting the Marines do the fighting – and the Marines were taking far greater casualties than we thought were necessary or required. So, in conjunction with their commander and their S3, my commander and I talked to those folks and said, “Hey look, we can do some stuff for you. If you’ll tell us what your ops are for tomorrow, before the sun comes up we can just drive through there, attempt to draw out any fire, and destroy some of those strong points before you have to send men in first.” We had created a great effect for them, to the point that on the 14th of November of last year [2005], I got emails from both the commander and the S3 of 3-1 Marines saying, “Remember where we were a year ago? Thanks.”

MM: So that was something that you had to go over and maybe prod them and say, “Hey we can help you out here.”

TK: Exactly. Not because they were dumb, but because they were using the assets they had. We were like, “Hey, we’re not doing enough. Instead of you taking it in the face on the way in the door, we can leave nothing but a charred room.” And that was exactly what they told me that evening. Their S3 called me up on my net said, “Hey, where you at?” and I said, “I’m just coming back for some fuel and more ammunition.” He said, “Hey, can you swing by the train station?” and I said, “Yeah, I’m almost there.” And so the moment we dismounted our Bradleys and the commander and I swung in there, their commander walked up to him and the S3 walked up to me and gave us a big hug and said, “That was awesome, man! We went into the buildings and there was nothing but freaking dead insurgents in there.” It was a good feeling, and we continued that process for about three or four days. We found out where they were going, went in there and tried to draw fire, and shot anybody that shot at us.

MM: And you basically did that for them all the way up to the 20th of November?

TK: Pretty much. It was one of those things where we were working in close coordination with them and anything they wanted us to do, we'd do.

MM: What would you say worked the best during this operation? What was the good, the bad, and the ugly, in your view? What went right, what went wrong as far as joint operations are concerned?

TK: The good, in comparative terms, is the massive firepower the Army brings to the fight. We were able to dominate any enemy that chose to pop its head up. That doesn't mean that the enemy couldn't get some shots in, but he didn't have the staying power to capitalize. He get a casualty here, a casualty there against one of our vehicles, but he really didn't have anything he could use to stop us. The strength that the Marines bring to the fight is just a veritable boatload of infantrymen. They can go in and actually clear and hold terrain – and we were not able to do that, quite honestly. A full-strength Bradley rifle company should have 81 soldiers that it can put on the ground. We could probably put, at best, about 50 on the ground from a company – and if the company is task organized and it's only Bradley platoons, really we could probably put 35 or 40 at best. That's really not enough soldiers to clear an area. We relied on the Marines to clear and they relied on us to make clearing easier – and clearing is never easy. I really hated watching them do that. That was one of the most painful events of my life, watching those brave guys go in there and do that. So it was a very symbiotic relationship. We had something they needed and they had something we needed. From another joint perspective: joint fires are absolutely essential. Having said that, sometimes they delay the process. One of the things we used to a great effect was the 120-millimeter mortars. Our mortars were a digital system that literally could hit exactly what you told them to hit. The adjustments we were making were to hit a different corner of the building, versus the building, so we were able to work that kind of accuracy from those systems. It was just absolutely amazing, because all our tanks and Bradleys have GPS [Global Positioning System] on them. They also have laser range finders, which will tell you on your display exactly where your laser hits. So if you lase the building, you get the exact 10-digit grid to that building. Then you call it up to the mortars and those rounds are going to hit that building. The first time I called a mortar mission, I lased the building, called the grid up and the round hit essentially at the seam where the wall of the building came down and intersected with the ground. I didn't realize that to actually hit the top of the building, you've got to add a few meters to get them actually on the building; otherwise, they're actually just hitting the face of the building. They were just that accurate.

MM: What was your biggest problem working with the Marines, having said what you just said? Were there any major problems or did it all go well?

TK: I imagine it's like this when you work with any new force: you've got to get used to each other and the way each other operates. Their big thing is they would essentially plan the night before what they would do the following day and that, quite honestly, was a little inside of our planning timeline. We would be planning two or three days out and executing tomorrow off of orders we gave the day before. So we had to shrink our planning timeline to fit better with theirs, because they'd call up and tell me where they were going the following morning. Whereas, in a perfect world, I'd already have given those orders a day or two before, they'd be acting on them, and I'd be giving them orders today for missions two days from now. That resulted in hasty planning. One of the things we were very careful about was not having our forces fighting in close conjunction, because when you're doing that hasty of planning, you've got a greater likelihood of fratricide if you're working in the same box, if you will. So when we did our clearing and destruction operations prior to, we'd make sure we were out of the area before they came in for just that reason.

MM: When I spoke to you a couple weeks ago, you really didn't have anything good to say about the book, *No True Glory*, by Bing West. Do you have any comments to add?

TK: I bought the book and I read the book. I'd told my Marine friends that I was going to get the book and read it as an honor to them, because it truly honors their unit and I would never take anything away from that. The thing I didn't like was that it didn't show the whole picture. It showed only the Marine picture, and that's okay. That's who he interviewed.

MM: We're going to try and rectify that.

TK: I think everybody did a great job. We had some Air Force members attached to us to be an air liaison element and they were great, so there wasn't a service left out – perhaps with the exception of the Coast Guard. I don't know if they were participating. But the fact of the matter was that everybody threw their hat in the ring and performed very well. We had a lot of SOF [Special Operations Forces] guys with us in the form of SEALs, Army Special Forces and Marine Force Recon guys, and they did great. It was a very well put together operation. I can't take anything away from 1st MEF or 1st MARDIV – their planning and control of the operation. The only thing I had against West's book was that, after reading it, I wasn't sure I was really there.

MM: I heard somebody in 2-2 Infantry say that, at some point, they thought they'd become the main attack. Is there any truth to that, as far as you know?



TK: I would say, based on what I know of it, the main effort never shifted from 1st RCT. But then again, I would be lying if I told you that for sure. We were, at times, the main effort for them, and once we were done doing our initial destruction of enemy forces in both the north and the south, by all means the main effort was those Marine elements that were clearing. So I don't claim by any stretch of the imagination that we were the main effort throughout. We were the main effort going into the city initially: 1st RCT was and we were their main effort – 2-7 was. But the fact is that there are plenty of accolades to go around. And the one thing I will agree with Mr. West on is that there's never glory when you're killing people or when your soldiers are dying. That's not one of those things that, once you've done, that you really relish. I'm very proud of having been there. I'm very proud of the contribution that our unit made. I thought we did some great work and I thought we probably saved a bunch of American lives in the process. But it's still killing, and if you can ever put a pretty face on that, then you're a better (or worse) man than I am.

MM: Well, this has been a super interview and you're still going to be stateside for a while, won't you?

TK: Yes, on and off.

MM: So if I have any other particular questions, I can pick up the phone maybe and give you a call?

TK: That's fine. I'm going to be changing phones and, when I do, I'll shoot you a message with my new number.



## Major Erik Krivda

### 6 February 2006

JM: My name is John McCool [JM] and I'm with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I'm interviewing Major Erik Krivda [EK] on his experiences during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM [OIF]. Also present is Mr. Matt Matthews [MM], research historian at the Combat Studies Institute, who will also be asking questions. Today's date is 6 February 2006 and this is an unclassified interview. Before we begin, sir, if you feel at any time we're entering classified territory, please couch your response in terms that avoid revealing any classified information. And if classification requirements prevent you from responding, simply say you're not able to answer. Major Krivda, could you please start by telling me a little bit about your background, about your military career up to your OIF deployment, and then we'll focus a little more closely on that.

EK: I enlisted back in 1990 as an 11B [Military Occupational Specialty 11B: infantryman]. I spent time in the Maryland National Guard while I went to college. I was commissioned in 1994 as an infantry officer, was a rifle platoon leader and a support platoon leader in the 10th Mountain Division, 1st Brigade. I PCS'd [Permanent Change of Station] from there to Korea. I was a rifle company XO [executive officer] and later the S4 [logistics officer] for 1st Battalion, 506th [Infantry Regiment] in 2d ID [Infantry Division]. From there, I went to the Advanced Course and then went to USAREUR [U.S. Army Europe]. I was at USAREUR Headquarters for just under two years and from there went to 2-2 Infantry [2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment] – that was back in 2000 – and I had been in the battalion from 2000 up until coming here in 2005, leaving OIF and coming to CGSC [Command and General Staff College].

JM: You had two deployments to OIF, is that correct?

EK: Yes.

JM: And could you tell me what the time periods were for those and what duty positions you held?

EK: I was the Charlie Company commander for 2-2 Infantry in KFOR [Kosovo Forces] B, which is where 3d Brigade was initially when OIF kicked off. I left there in August of 2003 and changed command and took over HHC [Headquarters and Headquarters Company] 1-63 Armor, which at the time was currently deployed in northern Iraq with the 173d [Airborne Brigade]. After about a month or so of inventories, I deployed down there in the September/October timeframe, came back in December/January. The rest of the battalion came back almost simultaneously as the rest of 3d Brigade that had come back from Kosovo deployed

for OIF II. So basically we were flip-flopping the battalion with the brigade. So I changed command in August of 2004 and went back down to OIF II and was the assistant S3 [operations officer] in 2-2 Infantry.

JM: With respect to your service in OIF II, could you give an overview of your unit's mission and what your area of operations was. Also, what were your particular responsibilities preceding your unit being sent to Fallujah?

EK: Okay. August 2004 was when I came back to 2-2. I was the AS3. Basically there are a lot of captains in the '3 shop, different missions between battle captains to coordinate Iraqi security forces. What I did specifically was trying to get the Iraqi police stood up in some type of functioning area. Eventually, within a couple of weeks of my getting there, we did get three U.S. police officers who were contracted through DynCorp to start up a police training academy, so that's where a majority of my work prior to Fallujah was. Getting a basic training for police set up, coordinating with the Iraqi National Guard – because we were also running that – training for those personnel and trying to also coordinate security in our sector. The sector we had, which was east of Ba'qubah, was called Muqdadiyah, which was the main area. The FOB [Forward Operating Base] was just specifically for 2-2, which was FOB Normandy.

JM: And what were the circumstances or maybe the context of your unit's being sent to Fallujah?

EK: We had rumors floating around back and forth probably about since September on whether or not we were going to deploy to Fallujah. We had heard some warning orders that we might actually go. We kind of kicked into an initial planning – or at least attempted to come up with a possible course of action. We really didn't know much about it. There was some email traffic sent back and forth in September or October, and it was very vague. We weren't even sure if we were going to go or not, but it was kind of a be-prepared-to mission, which we started to lean forward on. October timeframe, we were literally told by the 1st Infantry Division that we were not going, to stop planning for all possibilities, until the last two weeks in October, in which rumblings kept coming back down from 1st Marine Division. It was contacting us pretty much direct saying: "We put in a request for you; we think you guys are going to come to us." So in the last week of October, we officially got the word that we were going, and that's when we started planning a lot more detailed operations.

MM: I've read that the Marines specifically requested you guys. Could you give us any background on that? You obviously had worked with them before.

EK: We did actually – and some of this I picked up just from talking and the other stuff I picked up from reading the book on Fallujah. Apparently, the Marines had observed and had worked with us before in Najaf. It was a little bit before I

had gotten back to the battalion. They had deployed down to Najaf, and that was initially with the [Moqtada al-] Sadr uprising back in the beginning of August timeframe. 2-2, with elements of 3d Brigade, deployed down to put on the initial cordon of Najaf. Now, I don't know where the Marines were in reference to that area, but at that point in time, they had worked a couple of times with 2-2 Infantry and that's where I think the initial working relationship was developed.

MM: Another article I was able to pull off the Internet has you quoted as saying, "Usually we keep the gloves on, but in this operation, we took the gloves off."

EK: [Laughter] Yeah, there are a lot of British or leftist Web pages that have me listed as a war criminal. It's one of those things where you probably want to keep your mouth shut around reporters. That actually happened around the 8th or the 9th of November – the first 24, 48 hours. We were about to stage out and the initial forces were staging into their attack positions, basically, and the Washington Post reporter was sitting behind me when I was discussing it with some other guys and I had made that comment. I didn't think it would be taken so out of context.

MM: Well, this particular article, I don't think they take –

EK: Oh no, and the article that was in the Washington Post – when I read it after the fact – it was not taken out of context. I've seen it on other people's Web pages, though, as just specifically that quote.

MM: As a matter of fact, one of the other quotes I was going to use, unless I get shot down by the bosses here, I was thinking of using your quote, "It was a hornet's nest," for the actual paper.

EK: That description actually came after – down south, we pushed south. I think it's right in this area here, or it was somewhere in this area here – there was kind of an open area. This was where Alpha Company had set up a defensive area. When we were coming down south here –

JM: Could you describe where you are so we can get it on tape?

EK: Sure. This was basically this road here – Phase Line Fran, south of Phase Line Fran – I forget how many days it was into this; the days, in all honesty, kind of blend together. But we came in where there was literally one road coming north to south and one from the north but kind of heading towards the southwest, and they converged almost simultaneously. It was Alpha Company on one side – the eastern side – Alpha Mechanized – I mean, Alpha Tank – basically come in and converging into an area, and it was an open area and, I believe, it was right into here. If not, it was just south in this area here. But it was a larger square and it was like a hail of RPG [Rocket-Propelled Grenade] fire and the whole battalion was heading right into one gigantic chokepoint. The insurgents that were down there in

the southern part of the city were primarily al-Qaeda, foreign fighters, very good at RPG fire, very accurate. After the battle, when we realized this and we cleared out the area a couple of days after this battle took place, that was when Command Sergeant Major Darrin Bond – he was the ops sergeant major and became the command sergeant major later on – had gone down and went through some of these buildings and found strategic bricks removed from walls and from compounds so they could actually angle the shots. So they actually had a prepared ambush set into that area. When we first got into that area, Lieutenant Colonel [Pete] Newell had realized everyone was converging on top of each other. There was a lot of fire coming on, so he actually withdrew both companies simultaneously. That's where, I think, Lieutenant [Edward] Iwan got hit initially, because that was the initial blast and then they started to push some up, I think.

MM: And I had that question on there – let's come back to that one. Could you just briefly explain the scheme of maneuver for 2-2 and give us a good picture of the order of battle and maybe the task organization for the companies.

EK: We had one tank company, one mechanized infantry company and then the Brigade Reconnaissance Troop, and that was really just a wheeled infantry. They did have one mechanized infantry Bradley platoon added in to the BRT, so you ended up having three platoons. What we did was we took two of those Bradleys and some of the dismounted infantry and moved that over and swapped it in the armor battalion. So they gave them two Bradleys and some dismounted squads and we took the two tanks out of that and moved it over into the BRT. So you had kind of a mixed platoon: you had an armor/infantry platoon in either and then, within Alpha company itself – a mechanized infantry unit – we had two infantry platoons, one engineer platoon and one tank platoon, and the tank platoon actually came from Bravo Company, 1-63 Armor. That company didn't deploy to Fallujah; they were back in the rear. They cross-attached one tank company, and the main effort for pretty much the entire fight was Alpha Company, 2-2, the infantry company, because that had the most array of forces. We breached approximately in this area here. The key was the gigantic railroad berm here to the north of the city. That had been probed for about a month or so prior by the Marines consistently at night. What they found was the whole berm itself was IEDs [Improvised Explosive Device] that were dug inside this berm. So how we breached was basically a standard mechanized breach with a tank forward and a MCLC [Mine Clearing Line Charge] would be fired in. Once we shot the MCLC in, there were 20 or 30 secondary explosions up and down the sides, so the intelligence we got that that was actually linked with IEDs was true. 1-8 Marines were to our right flank – to the west here – actually, 1-3 and then 1-8. 1-8 did the same thing we did. They breached with a MCLC. 1-3 tried to do a stealth breach, where they put a platoon out there and tried to probe. They took heavy casualties in their location, which I

think was about right in here. Because when these two breaches blew simultaneously – not sure if all of these were wired together so all the IEDs blew on that berm. There were the first two rows of building here – what we suspected was the remnants of the Fallujah Brigade. These are Iraqi guys who were defending that. If they just went and blew their explosives, because we figured it was all wired in. So they basically had six that were urgent within the first hour or so of the breach, and they ended up never breaching and actually getting into the city. What they did was split their forces and they came through 1-8 and they came through our breach location and breach lanes, and they literally fought sideways to get on line and then come back down.

MM: So the Marines did not follow behind 2-2 Infantry, per se –

EK: They used our breach location to get through, but that was not their initial plan.

MM: I've got the Marine commander, Lieutenant General [John] Sattler saying – and he's got you guys as part of the 4th Infantry Division, which is obviously wrong. He says that you guys fought in zone. Is that correct?

EK: Pretty much. You can see here – this is our zone right here – with 1-3 to our right flank as we came down south. The intel read we had was basically – we weren't really sure specifically. We had ideas of where we thought concentration of forces were, just based on intel reports. It was more of a terrain-based attack. But we had goose eggs of where we thought we were going to be within 12 hours and then 24 hours. We figured we'd be down along Highway 10.

MM: And Highway 10 was, in fact, Phase Line Fran?

EK: Right. But we came through – Alpha Company was the lead in to the attack. They established the battle position, maybe not even 1,000 meters into the breach basically to provide a blocking position. And then an Alpha Company tank, which was just to the right of Alpha Company providing suppressive fire off to the side, they came through the breach and then pushed as a blocking position to the west to form more or less an “L” and gave time for Alpha Company to start pushing south. Alpha Company was the main effort and the Alpha Company tank was more or less a blocking effort that just maintained kind of a right flank. The tanks really had problems holding ground, other than they had a small amount of infantry forces they could dismount – but there really wasn't much they could do to clear buildings or anything like that. The BRT, initially within the first couple days, did not even go into the city. They stayed on the outside to the east of the city on top. This highway here was an elevated berm – maybe about 20 feet high – so they spread out from the cloverleaf here north in observation teams so they could watch from east to west any lateral movement. They could both observe fires and

also inform Alpha Company and the infantry company of where the enemy was moving, if they're moving between the buildings or anything like that.

MM: Was there anything further off here to the east at all? On this overlay here, it kind of –

EK: These buildings here really were more or less [inaudible] our sector. Eventually our scout platoon moved into these building down through here to help observe targets, but these building here, we more or less bypassed – and a lot of the enemy that was through here we bypassed – because again, we were looking more terrain-based versus some of the other battalions were literally clearing buildings straight down the whole way down. We pushed forward with speed. So we hit Fran and the Marines were still only a couple blocks up north here, which made it a lot harder, and we had to do a lot more search and attack up north. We almost felt we were being held at the reigns because the Marines were taking a long time to come through.

MM: So unlike, perhaps, 2-7, which, to my understanding, the Marines came in behind them. They swept through and the Marines came behind to go house to house. You guys didn't really have an element that was going to go –

EK: Well, we did when we had the Iraqi Interdiction Forces [IIF]. We had basically a battalion of them.

MM: And that's 6th Battalion, 3d Brigade.

EK: Yes. And what those guys did when they came through – and that was really the plan. As we pushed south, they were going to set up vehicle checkpoints and just start manning this area. The problem was that the further south we went, the more stretched out those guys get, so really they didn't hold the city here. They kind of were a floating buffer behind us as rear security.

JM: This wasn't a unit that you guys had trained, was it?

EK: No, we picked these guys up literally two days before we LD'd. When we were doing rehearsals was when we actually met these guys. They brought the battalion commanders out and each of the company commanders and we met and talked with these guys and got kind of a one-on-one – at least to talk to their commanders.

MM: How did you rate their performance?

EK: I think they did okay. The problem they had was they didn't really have up-armored vehicles; they had these large bongo trucks, large five-ton type trucks that are not armored. They didn't have NVGs [Night Vision Goggles] either, so when they came through the breach, they really couldn't see. Everything was marked with IR [Infrared] and stuff. We could just shoot straight through, but these



guys couldn't see, so literally they had to be guided up through, which is where Sergeant Major [Steve] Faulkenberg went back three times to guide each of the companies through.

MM: That was one of my other major questions. Was he killed the first night then, trying to direct the battalion?

EK: He was guiding in the Iraqi Interdiction Forces and he was on his third attempt when that happened.

MM: Did that cause any major disruption of leadership when the battalion sergeant major was killed?

EK: It was a shock to a lot of the soldiers and I think it kind of threw them. Unofficially, we didn't really talk about it much – and it was kind of a conscious decision on my part and with some of the senior NCOs when I would meet them. We had a logistical resupply point back here. Every time I talked to them, there was a few that knew about it, but with the confusion that night not many people got word of it. So the few that I had known, senior NCOs that were on the net and were talking, we said, "Let's just keep it quiet for now until these guys get through the first couple of days and we get the confidence in them and hopefully they're not completely shocked by it." Some kids knew; some didn't. The kids that worked in the TOC [Tactical Operations Center] knew, but the individual rifle squads and the crews didn't hear that.

MM: You didn't really work as much as 2-7 did with the Marines, I guess.

EK: I don't know if they were ever attached before or had more of a working relationship. I'm guessing. We did not. This was the first time ever we really worked with the Marines.

MM: Did you feel that that worked well? Were there any major problems that 2-2 had, or anything that worked well?

EK: For flexibility and everything, the Marines were great for supporting us. Logistically, we had some issues because we were pulling from our forward support battalion that was still in our old sector, so every night we'd get a couple Chinook runs of ammunition and equipment that we needed.

MM: And how many kilometers away was that again? That was quite a ways.

EK: That was up in Ba'qubah, which is where they were at. That's a good –

MM: 100 kilometers.

EK: At least. At some point, there were some ground convoys that did come through and Ba'qubah here, you had to come through Baghdad and over to Fal-lujah, so this was basically the road route that we had to take, so it was kind of a long haul –

JM: Southeast to here and then west over to Fallujah.

EK: Exactly. So the easiest way, and we did it nightly – almost every night – was we did Chinooks. They would sling load and load the Chinooks up and we could get the most responsive stuff that way.

MM: Holy cow, I was not aware of that.

EK: Just because of the fact that we had the Bradley ammunition, the tank ammunition that the Marines couldn't give us, but they didn't have enough in the supply line. So when we came, we came under the agreement that the majority of our logistics would still come from our brigade.

MM: So did your headquarters company or something set up field trains or –?

EK: We sent our field trains initially up here because our attack mission basically was up here on this side of the berm, where everyone staged 24 hours prior. So the early morning of the 7th, we rolled out of Camp Fallujah and everyone set up here in an attack position with the HHC, which we had our field trains – our equivalent. We called it the Forward Logistical Assault Team. Basically we had the BMO [Battalion Maintenance Officer] with the some recovery assets and some maintenance assets. We had pretty much a full battalion aid station with our doc and PA [Physician's Assistant] out there, and then we had some emergency resupply out there. Instead of the S4 going out and leading that – our S4 was a junior lieutenant who had just made captain – we put the HHC commander and the first sergeant. He had been an S4 before, he knew what was going on, and he was more in tune with everything going on, so it was better to put him out there on the ground leading that. He had a little bit more sway and just intuition of what these guys may need with respect to daily operations. Eventually, within the time the battalion went down to Fran – really within 24 to 48 hours – they had actually jumped down to this location, right here at the cloverleaf basically. That's where they stayed for eight to 10 days. Their final location was a gas station to the south.

MM: So you were able to use Highway 10 to –?

EK: Exactly. Once we secured Fran, the Marines took it over and operated a checkpoint here. And along the side, there was one Marine – at least a company or a couple platoons within that area – and once we pushed south, they maintained that open and that became the large MSR for all units. So we could use that back and forth and it was basically a service station back here where platoons would pull up one at a time and they could come back here for an hour to two hours at a time. They would go through, dump any trash, get uploaded on ammunition, refuel, and then get hot chow. We did that every 24 hours and then they could also rack out for a couple hours and then go back into the city. It kind of gave them a

mental break. Outside of this area you could walk around. We had this huge berm here that protected them from any small arms fire. They were close enough to the city that they could roll right back in, but it was still on the outskirts of that city so they were outside of that 24-hour security, the 360-degree security that they needed. The mechanics, some of the medics and some of the other personnel that were out here, they actually pulled security for them so they didn't have to worry about pulling security.

MM: How did 2-2 get fuel and ammo prior to arriving at Highway 10?

EK: By dawn of the next day, we were about here. So we fought through the city without really anything and we held up. Alpha Company was about here, just on the outskirts of this open area here. They initially rolled out in this direction and then came back in. We ended up pushing a little bit on the far side and we secured that far side so they could just keep coming up through there. So that really became the main area – I think within maybe the 15th or so. Five or six days before we ended operations, we moved down to this location here, which was a gas station, and that was a little easier. We took a dozer – it's not really a D-7 dozer, but the Marines had attached two of the combat dozers they had, the bulletproof ones, the really huge ones. They cleared a lane through here to make sure there were no mines so that we could then move, almost sideways, outside the city and then move back in.

MM: Could you just explain to us about the loss of the Alpha Company XO and CO [commanding officer] and what the ramifications of that were and actually the story of what happened?

EK: I forget exactly the location. It was up in this area right here, before we went south. They were killed within a 24-hour period, literally. It was actually a very quiet time; there was down time going on and there was a Time magazine reporter who was embedded with Alpha Company, and moved down with Alpha Company, and he had his bag or something like that. I wasn't physically there, but he had his bag somewhere in the bubble rack of the Bradley and Lieutenant Iwan had climbed out of the Bradley to pick the bag up to throw it to the guy and give it to him as he was leaving. And just then the insurgents – I don't know if they were waiting and observing this or they were creeping up towards Alpha Company at that time – but a hail of RPG fire went out and that's what hit Lieutenant Iwan. He took an RPG round to the hip. It lodged in there. It did not explode. He fell into the track and was evac'ed out of the track and brought back to Camp Fallujah. From what I understand, he died on the operating table in the aid station. That was already pretty much of a shock to the Alpha Company. They actually liked that guy a lot; he was one of my young lieutenants as a rifle platoon leader. Very good kid. The next day, literally, the Alpha Company was still a little bit shocked

from that, but still had other missions to go to. Alpha held through that night in their positions. They had battle positions across and they had one or two platoons holding those buildings in the defense. The CP was a little bit back, and then either behind or behind to the left was another platoon from Alpha Company in security. That next morning, they were basically going to push south. What happened was, [Captain] Sean Sims got out with his combat air controllers and his small security element from his headquarters element. He was going to move to another building that I think was taller, to place his combat air controllers to observe CAS [Close Air Support] missions and everything for the attack south. The platoon that was in the rear here was called off the line by battalion to escort CNN to observe some cache they found. So they went back to pick up CNN and bring them forward to some cache that they wanted to have filmed for a story on CNN. I don't know if this was in that timeframe or they were already gone when this happened, but the insurgents attacked as the company commander was going into the next building. I don't know the specific details of what happened. I know the combat air controller was wounded. I think his driver was wounded, and Sean Sims was inside the building when everything happened, and that was the other two guys within his team that were about to go into the building. So they were both wounded outside the building – and it took a while for the company to go inside that building and to get hold of Sean, and by then he was already dead.

MM: Were there any other casualties with any of the other company commanders or platoon leaders?

EK: No. That was the first and only. Iwan was the first officer. First Lieutenant Cole Namkin was injured – but it was either an IED or rollover or something and he broke his leg. But other than that, there were really no officers that were shot or killed.

MM: Does anyone have a figure on total wounded in this fight? KIA [Killed in Action] or –?

EK: Yes. I have a little thing here that we looked at. We took 39 who were returned to duty, wounded. Wounded in action, 34. Some of those don't correspond – those two numbers – that's just what we had when we first left. We had four KIA. Now, of those four, one of those was a staff sergeant and he was attached to the IIF, and so that was a very confusing fact. When he was killed actually, we had information that it was a staff sergeant. We didn't know who he was, and when the name came up and everything we sent it forward – but it was one of the guys attached to the IIF. That was a major problem actually with the Marine Corps side. We think it was probably someone within that – it was a National Guard or Army Reserve training team that was attached to the IIF, and those guys had gone off more or less on their own. There was a complaint that his wife was literally called

from the battlefield, probably through a Thuraya phone, and we think it was one of the NCOs or the OIC in charge. Someone called that wife directly from the city of Fallujah and said, “By the way, your husband is dead.” Which went outside the chain, and that was something that came down later on – but we had no idea that that had happened.

MM: How did you end up as the battalion executive officer?

EK: Major John Petkosek was the XO. The problem was that we were splitting the battalion. We took our Alpha Company from 2-2 Infantry, our Charlie and Bravo Companies stayed back in sector, and so we needed a field grade to OIC operations back there in the rear. To clear fires, you need a field grade. That was under the rules that we were operating under. So we left Major Petkosek behind. I had gone forward, I had experience with the battalion and was a captain promotable at the time, so instead of maneuvering the S3 to be the XO – he was already squared away with the plan and he went forward in the TAC with the colonel. Then I was back as the XO so I could keep an eye on the S1, the S4 and the actual TOC operations as well.

MM: Did Lieutenant Colonel Newell go forward in his own Bradley?

EK: Yes. The attack was a consolidated attack. Instead of pushing the S3 in one location and the battalion commander in another, they consolidated both of those Bradleys for security and two additional ‘113s. One additional ‘113 came from Bravo, 1-63 Armor just to haul all the embed reporters. I think we had 20 embed reporters. It was just basically baggage.

JM: You’ve mentioned these embeds quite a lot. What are your feelings on the embed process and did they hamper or in any way help your operations in Fallujah?

EK: It was unique. I’d never seen that many reporters in one location in any given time. In some aspects, it seemed like a circus on the way down, because we just kept picking up more and more and more and more. When we would go through rehearsals and everything, you always had these reporters and they’re always asking questions. In other aspects, from what I’ve heard just from guys on the outside – 2-2 was in the press 24/7. So I guess it helped out when you talked to the Family Support Group, because they could see Jane Arraf or Scott Ritter on Fox News or CNN. They were with 2-2 and they would say they were with 2-2, so it kind of boosted morale a lot. In fact, Scott Ritter left a couple days before the battle ended but he flew back to the United States and, on the way, stopped at our battalion headquarters and did a talk to the Family Support Group just to say, “These guys are okay. These are the guys I saw. These are the guys I talked to.” So that was a good thing that he did for us. In some aspects, there were some conflicts back and forth. Dealing with reporters – some are really good, some are really bad.

The worst I saw was when pictures of Sean Sims' body got out in the press. It was initially published in a German paper and then got on the Internet after that. One of the reporters – I forget what agency he worked for – it was almost like UPI, but it was a European version of it. I think it might have been Knight Ridder or something like that. He was just a photographer. He would get out and take pictures and everything like that. So he had taken pictures of Sean Sims' body and came back before anyone else had seen what he had done. He uploaded them on the Internet and emailed them out and sold them within a few hours of his death.

MM: How did you move your TOC around?

EK: The problem was that we did not move the TOC at all. We would have liked to have moved the TOC to this building right out here. It was a secure compound, a warehouse basically. The problem was just connection with the Marine Corps. That was our big fear, that we would lose connectivity with the Marine Corps. We had a landline phone – not a TA-312 – but we normally used it just as regular DSN [Defense Switched Network] line. But the problem was that our version of that phone was a newer version and was not compatible with the Marine Corps' version of the DSN phone. So if we picked up the phone to talk to the G4 or the regimental '4, we couldn't talk. So we had to get a Marine Corps version of it and be tied in landline to the other Marine battalions and tied into the Marine regimental headquarters that way. So therefore, we were limited in how we could move.

MM: So there were some communications problems?

EK: Exactly. The other major factor was that they used a Microsoft chat to do a lot of their instant messaging, even between battalions, the regiment and division. In some aspects, it was really great, particularly for intel. We could get a lot of information fast: disseminate it, print and save it – and a lot of the spot reports, we could keep from different sectors, whether it was 1-3 or 1-8 Marines. So we could inform our guys of what was going on. The problem was that the Marines have some kind of wireless capability that they could put their TAC [Tactical Command Post] out north of Fallujah and still talk off an Internet laptop. We just didn't have that capability. We had set up a satellite system that would tie in that way. It was mounted out of two Humvees, basically. We could mount it on a roof if we were in an abandoned building, and that's where we basically stayed the whole time. The TAC could move back and forth but again, with the majority of the regimental communication not on FM traffic – it was on this instant messenger stuff – the regimental traffic was very quiet. So that was something that was difficult to keep up with. We did update a lot on FM, but a lot different than the Marines did. So we would take it off Blue Force Tracker and we would update it at my TOC and send it forward to the regiment. Or, every now and then, they would call or the regimental

commander would come into sector and talk face to face with Lieutenant Colonel Newell.

MM: How did you work the indirect fires? Was that just your call for Air Force or artillery?

EK: A mixture of both. We had combat air controllers that were out: one with Alpha Company, one with the BRT, and there was also a section up at the TAC. So they worked a lot of that internally. We did some coordination for that, but not a lot. Same thing with indirect fires. We did indirect fires in the deep fight using UAVs [Unmanned Aerial Vehicle], whether it was Predator, Shadow or anything like that. We would use that to ID targets, get grids and fire.

MM: Was that all coming back directly to you?

EK: Yes. And in our TOC, we had links and we could observe all that. UAV feeds that couldn't get into the TAC – other than Raven – they could observe. But Raven, we put them with the mortars and they were out in this area off to the side. It could spot targets for mortars, basically – for the deep fight that was. We had FISTrs [Fire Support Teams], of course, with the Alpha Company, infantry and with the BRT, and then the FSO was back in the TAC so he could communicate everything back and forth. That was the big problem: FM communications. The TAC initially stayed out north of the city. Once we secured Fran and pushed south – and once we had secured this area here – then they finally moved in to this area right in here, just south of Phase Line Fran. And it was just on the edge of the city but just enough to maintain communications-wise. There was a rock quarry up through here and then down through here were all kinds of cut-out quarries, which made communications a little problematic. We could communicate from the TOC here, and once guys got close to Phase Line Fran, we could communicate with the northern side of the city here. Once they got inside the city and down into this low ground just north of the railroad tracks, we really had problems communicating. We tried pushing retrans out. Retrans went out with the mortars, but it was just ineffective. Whether retrans was out south of Fran or not, we ended up pulling retrans in because we could talk to everyone; we could hear everything here; but it was north of the city here in that first 10 to 12 hours or so. That first night, we really had problems listening and understanding everything that was going on, even though we had retrans out. The buildings within that area – once they went inside the city, we basically lost communications with them.

MM: It must have been a nightmare talking to the 6th Battalion Iraqi individuals here?

EK: There was really nothing besides face-to-face communications. The NCOs – I forget how many teams they had really within here – they had SINCGARS and

they had up-armored Humvees and that was the only way we could communicate with them. So it was very limited, and a lot of it was face-to-face communication.

MM: Were there any incidents that you were aware of, of any indirect fire killing any friendly individuals, or how about cross-boundary fire from the Marines?

EK: Initially, we didn't have any problems because, for the first 12 to 24 hours, we stayed along this area here and the Marines were still fighting south. We cleared some fires across and we actually destroyed some targets out in this area – outside of our sector – in 1-3's sector. But 1-3 was still only a few hundred meters into the city fighting, and so that whole area we knew was clear. We called them direct and they told us to go ahead and engage. What was really very effective was we had a Bradley/tank team with our forward observer NCO here, at this cloverleaf, and he was using LRAS [Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System] to observe. He could see all the way down Highway 10 and pick off targets and groups of insurgents moving back and forth across that highway. Once we ID'd the buildings they would go to, we could actually destroy them with that. But we could see almost all the way down, halfway through the city that way. And that's the same with what the BRT did. They more or less set up observation points along that highway as we fought south towards Fran. They observed any lateral movement back and forth, going west to east or east to west, behind the buildings. In some aspects, they were able to engage with direct fire, with a Bradley or a tank, but a lot of times they were able to just destroy them with indirect fire.

MM: Did you have a lot of communications with the 2d Brigade Combat Team that was down south with the Stryker battalion?

EK: No, I don't think they stayed. Before we crossed the LD, they were recalled back to Mosul and they were gone. We saw them leaving and that was about it. 2d Brigade, I was able to do some coordination with them, but we really didn't come in to talking with them until we got into the south part of the city and the last couple of days – then they would contact us or we would contact them directly. A couple times they ID'd targets or buildings that they were receiving fire from and we were giving them authorization to fire based on what our troop locations were. Also, they were seeing targets and we were observing and figuring out where their reconnaissance elements were and where their blocking elements were.

MM: Do you recall any of the tanks or the Bradleys being knocked out by RPGs?

EK: I was just telling this story, too. The platoon from 1-63 Armor, the lieutenant's tank actually got hit with either seven or eight RPGs. The whole thing erupted into flames, but it was not knocked out. In fact, one round was a dud that was lodged inside the turret, at the very front of the turret, but didn't explode. It was sticking out. But the scout platoon thought it was destroyed, went out with fire



extinguishers thinking they were going to have to pull the crew out. And literally the tank traversed and started engaging the RPG gunners with the coax. It was in operation the entire time. There were issues with tanks and Bradleys at times having mechanical problems, but when those platoons would pull out into the FLAT or our forward FLAT, the mechanics were good at doing some pretty quick BDA [Battle Damage Assessment] and getting everything back in action, so we never lost one tank or one Bradley the entire time.

MM: Were M-88s (M-88 Recovery Vehicle) able to get into the heart of the city and if you had to, to pull somebody out?

EK: Yes. We did do a couple of recovery missions. I'd only heard secondhand, but I think it was the Alpha Company '88 crew – because they were following behind – the company was engaged a couple times with small arms fire. They were able to pull back and actually return fire and got into some of the fights, but I know they were covered. The scouts: we lost two up-armored Humvees just off to this side because the scouts were trying to move outside the city and keep an eye on the buildings just to the east side here. When they came across, they came across two mines and they blew up two up-armored Humvees. But the crews themselves didn't take casualties from that. There were concussions.

MM: In the 113s (M-113 Armored Personnel Carrier) you were using, that's pretty much your medics?

EK: Medics, the mechanics had tracks, '113s, and we had two '113s in the TAC forward, one for the reporters and one just for security personnel.

MM: No catastrophic losses with those or anything?

EK: No, surprisingly not.

JM: During this time, from your perspective, what was your assessment of the enemy: his tactics, his adaptability? What were you seeing on that score?

EK: In this northern section of the city, north of Fran, we thought we were seeing basically the remnants of the Fallujah Brigade. We decimated them with indirect fire initially within the first 12 to 24 hours, even before we even breached. And those guys – as soon as we started coming into the city – they ran straight back literally. Once we got south of Fran was where we started hitting a lot of the foreign fighters, and that's where we got a lot more accurate fire: guys who were really very well trained. I've heard some of the soldiers say that some of these guys were even singing songs and happy and cheering the whole time while they were fighting. The foreign fighters in the south, when we'd go into the buildings where the bodies were, there were needle tracks. I don't know if it was heroin or some other type of drug they were on, but they were pretty doped up.

MM: So you would say, based on your observation, that the foreign fighters probably knew more about what they were doing than the actual individuals who were remnants of Saddam's army.

EK: Exactly. These guys were very well trained, very good shots, very good marksman – some with RPGs, some with rifle fire. Very specific. They knew who they were looking for. They had areas that were really tagged out, small dugouts where they could literally hop from one building compound under a wall to another group, or to another area and escape. So they could fire some shots, draw you into somewhere, hop under a wall and then take off and disappear – or hop to another building and continue fighting.

JM: Did you know that you were going to be encountering people like this?

EK: Not really. We knew there were going to be foreign fighters. We knew these guys would be a lot more trained. We were told there were certain areas where there were training ranges set up, to include this open area here. They had observed some guys doing some type of military training out there, so they knew there was something going on.

MM: Between the foreign fighters and the Fallujah Brigade individuals, did you guys take a lot of indirect fire coming in?

EK: Not really from them. When we first set out the field trains and moved into that area, they received some indirect fire. Captain Fred Dente was HHC commander. He received some indirect fire, and he says he thinks they were bracketing him because he saw fire forward of him and behind him and it was more or less being bracketed in. There was a counterfire mission about the same time that that went out and we think that probably hit them, so that pretty much negated that. But we did find in the seven buildings in this area of the city, south of Fran, there were rooftop rockets and they were pointed towards Camp Fallujah. There were firing devices and these homes here had them on their rooftops. The firing port would be down in the basement a couple of buildings over to get away from the counter-battery fire. So they had these rockets lined up ready to fire, that they could fire remotely from a couple buildings away, down in the basement where they could actually take cover.

MM: Was somebody out there with Q-36s or Q-37s?

EK: The Marines did have that and they were consistently firing counter-battery every now and then throughout the battle. Up until the very end, they still would have mortar or rocket fire, but it was only one or two rounds and then the counter-battery would go right back.

MM: Do you know if the Marines had the Q-36 or the Q-37?

EK: I don't know which. You could tell within minutes that they were automatically counterfiring. We had two 155 [millimeter] guns, Paladins, attached to our battalion during the entire fight, so we more or less had our own fire support organic artillery. We could, and we did a couple times, use Marine Corps batteries to shoot, but a majority of that time was just shot on our guns – and that was one of the major limiting factors, just the amount of 155 rounds we had. Getting it every night off Chinook runs and we even sent PLSs [Palletized Load Systems] to each of the Marine Corps batteries, because they weren't shooting as much as we were. And literally a couple times we drove PLSs straight up to Marine Corps batteries, pulled a couple racks of 155 rounds right from their guns, drove them to our guns, fired the whole rack up, and came and dumped the dunnage right back to them within an hour or so. I think we shot over 900 just HE [High-Explosive] rounds alone.

MM: I think I've got the major points. Did you have a few more, John?

JM: Yeah, I was going to ask you, what did you look to as the explanation for the successful conclusion of this fight? What was most important in your mind?

EK: There was a lot of information that was pulled. I think this was a major defeat for the enemy. These guys were gung-ho. Based off the Marines pulling out the first time, they thought, literally, that they had won against the United States, and here these guys stood up for a second time and failed. We came in and crushed them pretty quickly, and I think that was probably a big demoralizing factor for those guys.

JM: And what accounts for the quick crush, if you will?

EK: I think it was firepower, just overwhelming them with firepower. To observe the amount of firepower that we, just in our sector alone, unleashed on these guys, that was probably the most awesome sight I'll ever see in my entire life. To see areas that were buildings and factories that were literally dust just a couple days later, it's kind of humbling in that aspect. It was amazing to see.

MM: You get on Google and look through a lot of stuff on the November battle of Fallujah and they say it's a big Marine victory. Marines did this, Marines did that. Do you think the Army's been overlooked at all in this?

EK: Well, we were under the Marine Corps when we did this. There were only two Army infantry battalions that were attached. You could specifically see the differences in how we fight: the Marines and the Army. When we rolled down with tanks and Bradleys and we would receive sniper fire or direct fire from a building, we'd immediately put a 120 millimeter HEAT [High Explosive Anti-Tank] round straight into the building. We'd do whatever we could to drop that building first. The last possible resort is we send an infantry squad in to clean up the remnants.

And the Marines were almost the exact opposite. They took a lot heavier casualties than we did because they'd walk through with a squad, take a lot of fire. If they couldn't, with direct fire, assault that building with that squad or platoon, then they would call up their one tank and start engaging the building or something like that. So it was the complete opposite way of using firepower. We walked rounds, right after Sean was killed, in the south here. I don't know the exact grid and I don't know if I'm even allowed to say them, but we did eight guns on line of rolling barrage south with a Marine Corps battery and our guns shooting also. We had eight 155s that shot one kilometer south – basically one foot each time, make an adjustment, south and back north and back south again. So we swiped the area three times with indirect fire and just leveled buildings. We got into that hornet's nest where there were a lot of foreign fighters and we knew where their concentration was and we had them engaged. For us, it was great opportunity to pull back, douse them with indirect fire – as much firepower as we had – crush these guys, and then push back forward through and see what's left.

MM: Yeah, that is a big difference from the Marines. One of the things that my paper is going to talk about is how the Army operated differently than the Marines.

JM: Would you have changed any elements of your planning, looking back?

EK: I think we knocked out a lot of the questions that the company commanders had through our rehearsals. There was some stuff within the staff that we really had to tweak out, because it was a junior staff. The S2 initially that we had, that was part of this and forward in the TAC, had not been the S2 in the battalion; he had just showed up a couple of days prior. So our real S2 was Captain Natalie Friel. I put her in there on the contact list. But again, she was a lieutenant who had just made captain. Same with our S1, our S4. Our staff was very junior, so when it came to this type of planning, it took a lot more direction, a lot more supervision in some aspects. The S3 had been there since August and was new. He had just come from division plans section. So, really, to have a lot of planning that you'd think a unit going into Iraq would be very used to working together, and have set SOPs and what a rehearsal looks like, what kind of things a company commander is going to back brief – we didn't have that. We had a staff planning book that was actually developed by Major David Batchelor, who's now Lieutenant Colonel Batchelor. But this was years ago, back when I was the S4, before I even took command in 2-2. So when I came in as the XO, I pulled that book out, because that was the only staff planning SOP that we had, and starting bringing it up to guys and saying, "This is what you're going to brief; this is the SOP and how everything's going to run." But that was all developed under a different battalion commander so there was a little bit of a kickback to that. The new battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Newell, didn't like that and wanted his own staff planning SOP, but it

was not in effect and there really was none prior to. So we had to throw out the old staff planning book and operate, not using the old staff planning book, but using something different – just due to personality differences and everything like that. And if you don't have a senior staff and guys that can easily adjust off something like that, that's a little confusing.

MM: Had anybody been through the battle command and training warfighters or any experiences like that?

EK: No. As a staff, these guys were all pretty new. In fact, the S1 was a company XO initially in Iraq and he had just switched over. The S4 was a support platoon leader initially in Iraq; he had just switched over to the S4. I think Natalie was in the job as the S2, but she was kind of second-seated by the brand new S2 who came in, although he had never really worked with us and had just come from division. So he didn't really know that much. The S3 was new, so he had not worked really much with the staff before. So there was a lot of difference in that. It was like forming a hodgepodge unit and throwing them together. As for company commanders, [Captain] Paul Fowler was the Alpha Company commander – never worked with us before. He was from 2-63 Armor. Sean Sims had worked with us, of course, and the BRT company commander – Captain Kirk Mayfield – he was new and had not worked with us before either.

MM: Was there any consideration given, or was it just the luck of the draw on what companies were sent on this operation?

EK: We initially asked to take both of our infantry companies and then the tank company. The problem was that it kind of got dictated to us exactly how we were going to take it. Some of that was because the brigade wanted to make sure that the whole brigade played in this, so we got a company from 2-63, our company, and we wanted to take our second company but there was a lot of kickback from division headquarters. I'm not really sure how it came about, but there was fighting between General [John] Batiste and the Marines on exactly how much they could take from 1st ID, and so it was very specific on that. It wasn't, "Hey, whatever you need, take it." It was, "Hey, I'm only going to give you the bare minimum that you demanded that I give you." And that was something that came through corps headquarters to kick this off.

MM: In the new book about Fallujah that Bing West put out, *No True Glory*, we got the 1st Marine commander telling the Army, "Hey, I need 2-2 and I need 2-7." You probably read that part there.

EK: That I had actually known about. I didn't know the specifics of it, but we knew there was something going on and our guesstimate was that it was because Samarra had just ended and 1st ID was pretty angry about doing Samarra on their own and not having any support, so I think they were kind of in the same mentality:

“We did it with Samarra; why don’t you guys do it on your own with Fallujah?” They didn’t want to cough up anything. Then there’s also the problems we had when 3d Brigade pulled completely out of Najaf, left sector, and left about a platoon or the BRT stayed in the brigade sector and each of the battalions left maybe a team and a half back in sector. And the sector – all the engagements fell right off. A lot of problems occurred because the whole brigade pulled out and went to Najaf. Another thing division didn’t want to do is to pull an entire battalion out of sector, ending any good work they had done prior to that, leaving it for a month or an unknown, unspecified time, and then having to come back later on. So that’s why they wanted to pull as few as they could from other units within the sector and spread it out evenly across.

MM: When Task Force 2-2 took off to head for Fallujah, were there any IED events or anything like that going down there?

EK: I was in the advanced party so I came down about 24 hours or so prior to, to set up everything. It was me and the sergeant major and the scout platoon, to start receiving the guys as they came in. I think Alpha Company, 2-63 hit an IED, and it was one of the HETs [Heavy Equipment Transporter] with a tank on it. The HET actually caught fire because of the fuel, but the tank itself was fine. It was burnt up a little bit, but they drove the tank right off the HET and put it on another HET and moved it forward. But I think the HET drivers were injured in that one, but not the tank crew itself. It was the same on the way back. We took a couple IEDs on the way back. The convoy I was in got hit and one of the HEMTT [Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck] drivers from support platoon was injured with shrapnel to the face and neck. He was evac’ed but later came back to duty a week later. I think there were two other IED strikes. I don’t know specifically which serial numbers in our convoy.

MM: Do you know anything at all about the Marines using any sort of armor or the few tanks they had?

EK: I think they had a platoon of tanks almost per battalion; that was it. So they had about four tanks per. 1-3 and 1-8 both had a tank platoon each, and I think they had either a company or a platoon of LAVs also. I think it was just a platoon. Just watching them operate and as they were staging, they had some Amtracs, but they really didn’t have a lot of equipment, which was kind of confusing for us. We were going with tons of stuff.

MM: Well, that’s all I have, John.

JM: Were there any major lessons learned that you had, either just in general or specifically about urban operations, that you took away from this fight?

EK: As a young soldier, you're always taught that you clear every building, you move from one building to the next, and you clear everything – and we just didn't have the personnel to do that. It was such a huge city and it was so complex – it was a nightmare. And so everywhere we went, basically no building was secure unless you had guys standing inside that building. So everywhere you went, you always maintained 360-degree security. I used to drive into the city once, twice a day. You always were under sniper fire or had something else going on, so you always had to be careful of anyone moving or anything moving around, so you always had to maintain contact, even if you're going to observe or take a look at a building that you had seen. We had to go back and re-look at a VBIED [Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device] factory that we found. You had to go back through with your security element and clear every building first before you start looking at the building. So as soon as you leave a building, it's no longer secure. And that's something that we pushed through. As we came down to Fran, we did some search and attacks back north and the same thing as we came down to the bottom part of the city. We'd get called back a couple times to come back through and find these pockets of resistance. And a lot of the guys who were operating in the city – it was a very simple tactic they would use – they knew that we wouldn't shoot at them if they didn't have a weapon, if they were walking in the street. So a lot of times they would fire from one building, drop their weapon and run to another building, where another cache was. We kept finding these caches strategically located throughout the city. So they'd run from one to another without a weapon, thinking that we wouldn't shoot at them because that was against our ROE [Rules of Engagement]. But at that point, we were 100 percent sure that everyone to our front was enemy, and we were coming through to kill everything we possibly could as we came through the city. When you have to call that off, it's kind of a difficult thing. The Marines, for a while, 1-3 took over our sector once we went south of Fran, and there was a big point of contention between 1-3 and our guys because we were rounding up all military-age males no matter if they had a weapon or not. If they would surrender, we'd pick them up and send them to the MPs. The Marines were not doing that, so they were letting people wander back and forth through the streets and then, sure enough, someone would walk right through your formation or around your formation, count your people, and probably come back and shoot at you later on.

MM: So some of these people that your folks caught – you were sending them back north and the Marines were just letting them go, basically?

EK: Yeah. One of the major problems we had was the EPW [Enemy Prisoners of War] thing, especially towards the end of the fight. The MPs were very keen on two sworn statements plus all the EPW cards, and if you're collecting guys in a high-intensity conflict, you're just rounding them up and you're sending them

out. The foreign fighters basically fought until the death, so that was pretty simple. But the Iraqis that were there, which we think were part of the Fallujah Brigade, they surrendered. But again, you're asking some PFC who's got another building to clear to fill out a sworn statement – that's too much paperwork. HHC would fill out some of the paperwork, but there were times we'd shift back personnel and the MPs just wouldn't accept them, and they'd release them right at the gate.

MM: These are Marine MPs or Army MPs?

EK: Army MPs. Yeah, it was a disappointment actually for that. Finally towards the end of Fallujah, we got these gunpowder kits, instant residue stuff, that we could shake on a guy's hand and it would show a certain color if the guy had gunpowder on his hands – then you knew he was firing a weapon. So that became a great tool to use, but it was only at the very end of the fight when we were down in the southern part of the city, just on some small search and attack operations. So really, by the time we got it, 48 hours later, we had pulled out of the city and we were done with that.

MM: Before the operation, did anyone express to the higher-ups that maybe there weren't enough people to perform this operation, or did it seem like everybody was motivated and knew they could perform the operation?

EK: No, we had requested a couple times to take our Charlie Company at least, saying that we didn't have enough infantry squads to do the operation, but we were basically told, "Nope, you're going to fight with what you got."

MM: Now is that coming from 1st Marines or –?

EK: No. From what I understand, that was from our brigade and division headquarters, because we wanted to take our Charlie Company. When we got to the Marine side, we fought with what we had, basically.

MM: That's all I have, John.

JM: Okay, I'm good too.

MM: This is super. I extremely appreciate it.



## **Major Sean Tracy**

### **15 March 2006**

JM: My name is John McCool (JM) and I'm with the Operational Leadership Experiences (OLE) Project at the Combat Studies Institute (CSI), Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I'm interviewing Major Sean Tracy (ST) on his experiences in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). Also present is Matt Mathews (MM), also of CSI, who will be asking questions as well. Today's date is 15 March 2006 and this is an unclassified interview. Before we begin, sir, if you feel at any time we are entering classified territory, please couch your response in terms that avoid revealing any classified information. And if classification requirements prevent you from responding, simply say you're not able to answer. Sir, could you please start off by telling us what unit you served with during your operational deployment?

ST: I was with III Corps headquarters, which was the Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I). First we were Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)-7 on the tail end of V Corps, and then on 15 May 2004, we changed over to the first MNC-I. With that, I was in the fires and effects cell, but I was the joint fires planner that was attached to the G3 plans shop.

JM: You were based at Camp Victory in Baghdad?

ST: Yes.

JM: What was the time period of your deployment?

ST: I was there from 10 January 2004 through 13 February 2005.

JM: Could you give us a sense of what your major responsibilities were?

ST: As the joint fires and effects planner, I've got to tie all the lethal and non-lethal effects into all the corps plans. At the time, I didn't write the information operations (IO) piece, but it was a part of our responsibility. We were supposed to ensure that the effects objectives for the corps were being represented in all our operations; and if an effects objective needed to change due to an operation, we took that effects objective, gave it to the effects assessment group, where they would make metrics and measurable effects so we could actually assess that objective. If you have an objective that can't be measured, it's useless. And twice a month, we'd brief the commanding general (CG) on, "Here's our list of effects objectives and here's what we're using to assess them." Our major goal for that year was leading up to establishing local control of the 18 provinces to be able to have an effective first election. That's how we measured success: we didn't think it was going to be in the mid-70s, the percentage of voters; we were going to be happy with the mid-50s.

JM: A better turn out than in the U.S.

ST: Yeah, it's all relevant. If you look at our 35 or 36 percent voter turnout, needless to say, we were happy when it was 70 or so percent that voted.

JM: Can you outline what your chain of command was and where you were on the totem pole?

ST: My direct boss was Lieutenant Colonel Joe Gallagher. He's since been promoted to colonel and is at the War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. He was the deputy fire support coordinator. His direct boss was Brigadier General Richard Formica who's been picked up for a second star and is at the Pentagon. He was the fire effects coordinator for the corps. He was dual-hatted; he was the III Corps artillery commander out of Fort Sill, Oklahoma. That had a lot of weight, having a general in charge of your section. We didn't really fall under the '3 shop; we were a separate war fighting force. When you have a one-star general, your chief of staff is also a one-star, and you have a working relationship where we're not being beaten down like other staff sections, so we had a lot of power to throw around and do our jobs.

JM: One of the principal operations you had some visibility over and did some planning for was Operation Phantom Fury, also known as Al Fajr. Can you walk us through that from the beginning?

ST: Starting back in April 2004, we were looking at doing operations because we knew it had to be cleaned up. For hundreds or thousands of years, this place has been the eyesore of Persia, then Iraq. We knew it was inevitable and it was going to happen, and we were actually there on the day the four Blackwater guys were killed. We were talking to the Marines about needing to do an offensive operation against Fallujah. The morning part of that day, they said, "That's just the wrong thing to do; we're making a lot of headway here. We're cleaning up what the 82d Airborne Division caused." The 82d had a philosophy of if you shoot inside a crowd of troops, you will be shot – and they exercised that. The people of the town were pretty skittish, and the Marines thought they were making significant headway with, "Hey, we're good; we have this Fallujah Brigade that we had to equip and man more than twice," that I know of, "with weapons and vehicles and training and –"

MM: Most of those fellows just melted into the city, didn't they?

ST: Well, we were finding vehicles as far as Basra and in the far east of Iraq. So anyway, we went to lunch and we came back and were watching CNN – because we weren't in the city; no one was in the city. You couldn't go in, no fire area, no entry. So, we came back from lunch and CNN has charred bodies dangling off the bridge. I don't know about the phone calls that the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commander received that day, but I'm sure they were to the effect of, "Get in the city and take care of it." There wasn't any corps planning for that,

that's why we were down there. We were there to do a deliberate planning and that was the normal standard of what we did as the plans team. If you weren't 1st CAV Division, because they were right there with us at Victory, we would go to you. We would go there and ask, "Hey, what do you need? We'll do our best to get it to you." So our team left, "Okay, they don't need a plan, they're doing it." I know the Marines thought they were about three days out from what they needed to do in that city when they were asked to stop. Needless to say, when we went back there in September to start deliberate planning for Fallujah II, there was a lot of consternation among the senior MEF leadership: "Hey, are your Army boys going to stop us again?" That's nothing to do with us; we were as mad as anybody. We realized it was a problem and that's why we were down there in the first place.

MM: How did the hierarchy work there with the I MEF and III Corps? What was the chain of command there?

ST: I'm actually writing a piece that's got a portion of it in there. You had a really weird command structure, and I don't know why this would happen. I've got my inclinations why it happened but, initially, you had General Ricardo Sanchez, the V Corps commander, and he was, at one time, the commander of CJTF-7 and then the VII Corps commander. And I believe he was also the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) commander before Third Army took over when we changed over to MNC-I. He's the commander and then General Thomas Metz comes in with III Corps and assumes the duties as the deputy CJTF-7 commander. So, you had two lieutenant generals in the same room; and then in the middle of May, General George Casey comes in to stand up Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I). They were also in the same building with us before they went down into the Green Zone. Then you had Lieutenant General James Conway with I MEF. He's occupying a division sector with a three-star general; he's got two two-star generals and a one-star or more, I don't know. They come heavy to the fight, and my personal belief is that they brought their brass heavy guy in to protect the corps. I understand that. But it seemed like MNC-I and CJTF-7 had major subordinate commands. We had our divisions under us. We had the brigade up in Task Force Olympia that took over for 101st Airborne. And then you had the Marines. There was a line: you had the Marines and then you had the rest of us. When he left and General John Sattler came in as the I MEF commander, the air changed. He had been the J3 at Central Command (CENTCOM) prior to coming down. He understood, and I'm sure General Conway understood the big picture as well, because you're not going to get where you are without it. But he understood this whole theater because he had been working with CENTCOM. The other day General Sattler came in and spoke to us – great working relationship with General Metz. In November, when this operation went down, there wasn't any longer a dividing line; it's like the walls were broken down. "Hey, look, we're all one force here

and you guys have a big piece of the pie, but we're always here to help you." And I think the Marines realized that after that – well, probably after Najaf, because General Sattler jumped right into Najaf. I believe that was the timeframe, maybe not, but he was definitely there for Phantom Fury. But as far as command, I think it's tough, and I would have thought that we might have learned from our history. There's friction there. You have a three-star over here, and, oh by the way, this guy has date of rank on every three-star general in the Army. General Metz would never have let it out or said anything because that's the type of leader he is. But there were things I really can't go into that were happening over here, that one of our major subordinate commands or divisions never would have done. I look back to CENTCOM in allowing this to happen. When I MEF came over to replace the 82d, they wondered, "What are you doing here with all that brass heavy leadership? You don't need this much." "This is how MEF comes." Okay, whatever.

MM: Do you think the Marines would have been successful in the April fight?

ST: No.

MM: Just from what I've been reading, it seems like they were violating their own doctrine by not completely sealing off the city. They really didn't have enough force there to do what they wanted.

ST: Back in April '04 when they were saying, "We need three more days," I probably would have leaned towards, "Okay, that sounds good." But what I think what would have happened is, it would have been turned into another Baghdad. It's only six kilometers by six kilometers and you have a lot of Marine ground forces, but I think it would have been messy and it would have taken a long time. That's a lot of area to clear, and you have a lot of bad guys as well as civilians in town. By the time we started planning going through November, they weren't any civilians left. We gave them the opportunity to leave. As the Marines and the Army guys were going down the city streets, there weren't any vehicles; because if there were vehicles, there were going to get blown up. There weren't any people. So back to your question, no doubt, they would have been in the city and still occupying it; but I think it would have been at the risk of losing a lot of Marines. And what's more, there were so many civilians that the IO war would have been totally lost. It would have been ugly. There's no way they would have left the city on their own, no way. They would have stayed there, but I think it would have cost a lot of Marine lives.

MM: Fill us in, as far as you can, on the dates of when the Fallujah II operation first started planning for that and the ramifications. You've already discussed how the Marines and the Army worked better this time.

ST: We never really stopped the planning process. When we started in April, I said, “Yeah, our hands are up, we’re done,” but we really weren’t; we were still looking at it and strategic level targeting was going on in the city. The operation started on 17 June 2004 with our first shaping targets, but I can’t go into the level of telling you whose targets those were. We did this deliberately because we only wanted to hit a few targets a night for a long period of time. We didn’t want to have to kick off on 9 November; we didn’t want to have 70 or 80 2,000-pound bombs dropping on a city. You’re going to hear that and the surrounding area’s going to hear that. One of our smart IO guys came up with an IO threshold for Fallujah. “This is the point we can push in Fallujah without losing the IO plan with other cities in Iraq.” Not that we’re concerned with what was going on in Fallujah, but you start watching this on TV and you’re seeing 60 to 80 2,000-pound bombs coming in, somebody’s going to throw up their hands and say, “Hey, isn’t this enough?” So we didn’t want to do that; we wanted to push it along the way, a couple bombs a night, and we didn’t do them every night. By the time the ground war started, our targeting in here was done. When the ground war started, there were more targets but we mostly used close air support (CAS) against those. We didn’t have to worry about going in and finding the safe houses because we had softened the targets up. They had all these barricades on the major roads and we flew in and hit them.

MM: You guys also took out the parked cars that had been there?

ST: General Sattler said that the other day, and I wasn’t really aware of that. The psychological operations (PSYOP) guys had distributed leaflets that warned the people not to leave their cars in the street because we were going to blow them up before we come in. Guys don’t want to lose their cars. They had plenty of time to leave the city, and they got in their cars and left. We didn’t want any vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), guys jumping behind cars for protection and then the whole thing blows up. And from the photos he showed, it looked like a ghost town. I didn’t know they had done that.

MM: Is there anything else you can tell us about the plan, good, bad or ugly, as it all came together?

ST: We brought more troops than we needed, and that was okay. For instance, there were Stryker guys coming down from Mosul and then we kicked off. It started getting hairy up in Mosul: “We have our control here, release the Stryker guys back.” So, they boogied back up 300 or 400 kilometers to Mosul to take care of their problems. Looking at it, the Marines have a lot more ground troops than we do, but they didn’t have the equipment they needed for this. For instance, you have two Army brigades up in the north that were leading their way through, specifically the Jolan District right here, which was by far the worst with all the intelligence we received. “Send your tanks and Bradleys through there with your infantry guys

on the ground going behind them.” From Karbala to Najaf, the British were doing it great out in Basra with movement by fire with their tracked vehicles protecting guys. The Marines were dying to get our Paladins. It’s got the same capability as their M198 towed howitzers. It may be a little faster hooking up with a global positioning system (GPS), but the tubes, the ammunition and the range are the same.

MM: The Task Force 2-2 people told me they brought two of their own Paladins to shoot for themselves.

ST: Yeah, we brought a battery down to 1st CAV; and as a matter of fact, we got that battery there to them fast. I’m thinking September or October. Anyway, we got them there fast because, “Hey, you guys need to get down there because they’re going to want to use you before we kick this thing off.” I went down there two days before we started and the Paladins were firing away. I think if the Marines are going to continue to fight – and they’re great at it, but they need more equipment. They need the equipment to be able to fight these urban fights; they need the equipment to fight inland as opposed to amphibious landings. They’ve been taught forever that they’re the early entry amphibious forces here. But clearly, they’re fighting right here in the middle of the inland and they have to look at beefing up their equipment.

JM: What sorts of recommendations would you have in that realm?

ST: Other than get them more tracked vehicles – get them some Bradleys. I know they have limited tanks, but I’m not necessarily sure they even need tanks. Maybe some sort of Bradley Fighting Vehicle at least with a 25 millimeter main gun. Definitely get them some self-propelled howitzers. They just upgraded to the new lightweight 155 millimeter howitzer. It’s pretty much the same thing they had before; it’s just new. I think if they’re going to continue to fight like this, they have to get beefed up with more equipment. I just don’t think it’s doing the Marines justice. “Hey, we have a lot more guys, just push on, we’ll accomplish the mission.” And they will. They would accomplish the mission if you just set a bunch of Marines on line out there and do it, but they would have lost a lot more people. The real success story here, as I see it, is our CAS. We started immediately planning. We didn’t want this thing to turn into another Anaconda where you have one aircraft flying over with 37 terminal air controllers on the ground feeding this guy information. Who are you going to drop for? You’ve got 37 guys down here on the ground that need CAS; who are you going to give it to? So the Air Force guys in the air operations center with III Corps, they broke this six-by-six box down into little bitty blocks, all the way through this town. Because in Fallujah I, you had aircraft coming in, you had Marines down on the ground and they were directing from the cloverleaf. “Hey, I’m two kilometers west of the cloverleaf and one kilometer south.” That’s how they were doing it. Well, the pilots went into this one

with their little knee pad, these broken down grids, almost like a kill box but even broken down smaller. They were directing, “Hey, go to,” let’s say this is block five, “5W1.” Bam, they went straight to it. There wasn’t a single case of fratricide. I’ve got the statistics here: 386 total CAS strikes, we fired 14,000 indirect fire rounds, seven different types of fixed-wing platforms including AC-130s. I’m absolutely amazed there wasn’t any fratricide because it’s so restricted: a six-by-six box and there are thousands of troops inside this town.

MM: There were Marines and Army there, and it was amazing that there weren’t any cross-boundary –

ST: Well, we talked with the Marines, their Marine air wing. “Okay, what do you want to use your air wing for?” And they told us, “Okay look, we want to go in there, prep some targets like this.” We said, “Well, how about Air Force stuff?” “Once the ground war starts, we’ll have them flying orbits and they’ll be able to come down and provide you with CAS.” “Sounds good.” And of course we had the Navy, Marines and Air Force coming in for the three or four months of shaping we had. I think it was a very impressive model. The people who were involved with the model should take it out and teach people that this is the right way to do it.

JM: Did you do a formal after-action report (AAR)?

ST: No.

MM: I have the AARs from the two Army task forces, but that’s all.

ST: When they get back, they collect all the data from the products that were produced during the planning and monitoring of the battle. You have a commander that when you get back to the rear is directing, “Hey, I want all this stuff documented.” I’m sure that’s probably what you guys do here. We need to capture this stuff so it’s not lost. And I know the air guys have done a lot of research and captured this stuff because I was sitting in a class the other day and they brought up some of the things. “Hey, that’s pretty good.”

MM: I talked with one of the intelligence people for this fight. After the April fight when they decided to get the civilians out of Fallujah before they went in again, did anybody say anything or give any consideration to the fact that that was allowing a lot of the insurgents in there to just leave? This intelligence person I talked to said it almost seemed as if when Phantom Fury started, attacks erupted all over the place. She thought maybe 2,000 insurgent leaders left when they were given the opportunity and then waited for this operation to start.

ST: They wouldn’t have done it in April because, when the Marines went in, they cordoned off this entire city and had a couple exit routes. I think one was up here at Checkpoint 1. We allowed the families to leave; women and children could leave. As carloads of them would come up to the checkpoint, if you looked like an

able-bodied male, old enough to fight, you were told to go back. “Your family can go out, you’re going back and we’ll see you tomorrow.”

MM: That was in April?

ST: That was in April. The elderly people and women and children could go, but they weren’t letting able-bodied men leave.

MM: As far as you know, were they doing that prior to the November fight?

ST: We weren’t in the town. There were traffic control checkpoints but I don’t exactly know what they were doing. I would say more came in. They didn’t want to leave. Honestly, they thought they had won in April, we were incapable of beating them, and they were just beefing up.

MM: But then you started this big IO campaign prior to the November fight to say –

ST: They knew it was coming. We warned them, “Get out while you have the chance because we’re taking it.” If everybody would have left, that’s fine; they would have moved somewhere else. But at least Fallujah wouldn’t have been Fallujah anymore, and that was the objective. Yeah, it was a great thing killing all the bad guys and getting their safe houses, their torture chambers, their IED factories we found there. But the objective was that this cannot be a safe haven anymore for terrorists. If they all leave, we’ve got the city; we’ll get you eventually. It was really nice if 2,000 or so of them stayed. Honestly, a couple days after this fight, Fallujah was the safest town in Iraq. The Iraqi Army fell in behind us, so as we pushed through they occupied parts of the town and stayed there. You’d go there a few weeks later and every corner, every street, there’s either a Marine or an Iraqi soldier standing there. It’s safer than Baghdad is now. The problem with Fallujah is you can’t grow within to replace the police and nobody wants to come in from outside. It’s like the joke that we’re going to send you to Siberia. Instead we’re going to send you to Fallujah and nobody wants to go to there. They don’t have permanent changes of station (PCS) moves. “We’re going to PCS you and your family to Fallujah.” No thanks! It’s not going to happen. When we were going through the planning, we wondered if we were prepared to establish martial law in the city because that’s what you’re going to have to do for probably a year and a half; it’s just going to have to happen. We saw what happened when you try to use internal police: the Fallujah Brigade – we ended up fighting them. We gave them weapons and equipment more than once and then had to turn around and fight these guys in November – and their equipment was being found all over the country. We stomped our feet about that one, but we were told to get them equipment so we got it. We didn’t want that to happen again. It’s going to take a generation change to be able to build this town back up.



JM: Did you have any role in actually prepping the battlefield? You know, the attack comes from the north and they were arrayed to expect an attack from the south.

ST: We had some units and some of our aviators down there. But for weeks – I don't know how they would have known it wasn't coming from the north unless they just thought we were going to continue our deception plan. Our troops would run all the way up here to this road like they were ready to go. All we were doing was collecting intelligence on them, because every time we did that they'd pop up on buildings, our snipers would get them, the aircraft flying over would zap them. We were just collecting information. I know before our troops actually went in, we kept that up for seven to 10 days, every night. So these guys were tired. Some of them may have put down their cup of tea when they heard the vehicle noises, because they were running south – vehicle noises from our broadcasters. It probably got to a point where they were like, "Nah, they're not coming from there." If they didn't know we were coming from the north, they'd have to have been crazy because there were a lot of troops up there. There were three or four brigades abreast up there in the north ready to come down. That was pretty far; you're talking four or five kilometers. And I don't know – they thought we were coming up here because we did go up the peninsula first thing and take the hospital. But I don't think they thought we'd come in on that bridge. Maybe they thought we were coming from the south, but a rational person wouldn't think that way with as much firepower as we had up there in the north.

JM: Looking back over the course of your deployment, were there any major lessons learned or takeaways you had, either from the joint fires perspective or the joint perspective in general?

ST: I think this fight right here has set the standard for what we're going to be doing for a long time to come. You can probably write the book on joint operations from this operation. Every service had a part of this thing. From having to cancel shore leaves for the aircraft carrier out in the ocean so we could have their air power, to every air frame we've got, to include all the intelligence assets, three-letter agencies, inter-service agencies – we all came together for this and I think it turned out extremely successful. There were light casualties and we took a city and still have it. At a corps-level plans team, you don't go through your deliberate military decision-making process (MDMP) step by step by step for the majority of the operations, mainly because you just don't have time, but we did it for this. We were very methodical, stretched it out, went to the Marines, whatever they wanted we tried to get it for them. The rehearsals were outstanding, all the way through the actual execution of the mission, being able to battle track everything. It was professionally developing for me. I can take this with me. And Najaf was another one, and that was a classic example of precision strikes. We had to keep going down

and down and down on the mosque to actually preserve the mosque itself. But everything inside the confines of that mosque, there were bad guys shooting out of it. I don't know if you know, but this is the city of mosques here, in Fallujah, and we did everything we could to preserve their mosques and the minarets. People were firing at us from minarets and we took out the minarets and didn't scratch the mosque. The difference from 1991 until now, with our capability, is like comparing apples and oranges. The precision weapons we have are phenomenal. Maybe precision literally is only your laser guided stuff. But your GPS stuff – if it's not precision, it's damn close. You're talking three or four feet off target, and that's pretty good. I think we used the right amount of force we needed so we didn't level the city. Of course, we could have gone there and done that, but we're better than that; we have the capability not to do that.

JM: Were there any ways the coordination could have been better?

ST: At my level, I didn't really see it. You might want to ask the Marines because I think their plans shop liked us coming down there with them more than two or three times. "Hey, we'll give you the world, whatever we can give you." They came to us for back briefs. The working relationship we had with the Marine planners, it didn't seem like we were outsiders once we started planning together. There wasn't any inter-service infighting. It was just, "Hey, we're here to help you because we're your higher headquarters whether you like it or not." I think it went well.

JM: Okay, thanks very much for your time today. We appreciate it.

## **Major Doug Walter**

### **21 July 2006**

JM: My name is John McCool (JM) and I'm with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today I'm interviewing Major Doug Walter (DW) reference his experiences in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and specifically Operation Phantom Fury. Today's date is 21 July 2006 and this is an unclassified interview. Sir, for the record, if you feel at any time we are entering classified territory, please couch your response in terms that avoid revealing any classified information; and if classification requirements prevent you from responding, simply say you're not able to answer. Could you start off by giving me a little bit of background on yourself: where you grew up, how you got commissioned, and maybe a brief sketch of your military career?

DW: I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and grew up on a farm outside of Brookville, Indiana. In 1991, I graduated from high school, attended the United States Military Academy and graduated in 1995. I was commissioned as an infantry second lieutenant, went to Fort Benning, Georgia, for the normal Basic Course and Ranger School. I went to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, from 1996 to 1999. I then went back to Fort Benning for the Infantry Advanced Course and then to Europe. I spent a year on the US Army Europe (USAREUR) staff in Heidelberg, then on to 3d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (ID) in Vilseck, Germany, where I spent a year as a brigade planner. I then went to 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry Regiment, where I served as the battalion maintenance officer (BMO) and then as the civil affairs officer (S5) during the KFOR B deployment to Kosovo. While I was on USAREUR's staff, I also deployed to Kosovo during either the 2A or 2B rotation. I was the S5 and then took command of Alpha Company, 2-2 Infantry in February 2003 in Kosovo and commanded the company until February 2004. Due to an illness, I had to relinquish command of the company and stayed in Germany when they deployed to Iraq. Once I was healthy, I was able to rejoin the brigade in July 2004 where I served as the brigade assistant operations officer (AS3), specifically working with the standing up, formation and training of the Iraqi Army in 3d Brigade's area of operations (AO). Then in November 2004 in Fallujah, I took command of Alpha Company again after the company commander, Captain Sean Sims, was killed.

JM: Was Captain Sims the one who took command after you originally relinquished it?

DW: Yes. When I became too sick to deploy, Sean stepped in just days before the deployment and took over the company.

JM: Can you tell me a little bit about Sean and your relationship with him?

DW: Sean was a very good friend of mine. We had similar backgrounds. He had been a lieutenant in the 101st Airborne Division as well, although I didn't know him at the time. He spent a year in Germany working in Grafenwoehr and I spent my first year in Germany working in Heidelberg. I worked for USARER as did he, working for the 7th Army Training Command in Grafenwoehr. We arrived in Vilseck – I got there just a couple months before he did. He moved over from Grafenwoehr. He didn't have to physically move; he just changed jobs and started working in Vilseck where he was the brigade assistant logistics officer (AS4) planner and I was the brigade AS3 planner. I got to know him real well during that time. Again, we both had similar backgrounds; both had been light infantry guys in the 101st. We were both Catholics, which is important, and that's part of our relationship. We spent that year on the brigade staff together, became pretty good friends, and then while we were in Kosovo – when I took command of Alpha Company – he moved down from the brigade staff to be the battalion AS3 in 2-2. Through the deployment and until we returned to Germany, he continued to be the battalion AS3. The original plan was for him to take command of Alpha Company around December 2003 and I was going to move to Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC). But because I was sick, they were worried I may not make the deployment and didn't want to have two new company commanders on the eve of deployment if I wouldn't be able to go. So they decided I would remain in Alpha Company, they would get someone else to take over HHC, and I would just change out of Alpha Company sometime later down in Iraq. But when I ultimately got too sick to deploy, he was the next one in line so he took command in February 2004 right before the deployment.

JM: When did you first hear that what became Operation Phantom Fury was going to happen?

DW: I guess it was late October. When I originally arrived in Iraq in July, I was working out of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warhorse down in Ba'qubah where the brigade headquarters was. We were establishing a school for training the Iraqis and 2-2 had really led the way for the brigade in the formation. Captain Brian Ducote had done an outstanding job with the unit 2-2 was training. The brigade was looking to build on that success and use the cadre he had established, the training plan and the facilities they had been building, and establish a brigade training school up in Muqdadiyah. I relocated up there once we had laid the groundwork for transitioning it to a brigade operation and bringing units in from all over the Diyala Province up to the training center. I had relocated there to get the school started and was actually supposed to transition into assuming command of HHC 2-2 that December. They had decided to let me take command again after I had returned to Iraq, after I proved I could stay healthy. So I was up there establishing that school. When I got back up there, it was great. Of course I had seen some of

the Alpha Company soldiers when I had been in Ba'qubah and down at Warhorse. Occasionally they would show up down there and I had had the opportunity to talk to and see Sean again. But when I moved up there, it was the opportunity to really see the whole company again and Sean was great about that. I was with him almost every night in his company command post (CP) and in his room. We had been good friends and he knew it meant a lot for me to go back and see the company again after it had happened with me getting sick and not being able to deploy with them. It was a great time and I was spending almost every night with Sean when he didn't have an operation to conduct. When they received the first warning orders that they may be going to Fallujah, it was mid-to-end of October when all this started happening. I was pretty much living with the battalion and spending a lot of time with Sean and with First Sergeant Peter Smith, who was the company first sergeant and had been my first sergeant as well.

JM: Were you and Sean talking about what Alpha Company's role would be?

DW: Oh sure, we talked quite a bit about it. Sean would tell me what he'd been told and he showed me some of the documents he'd received as far as the intelligence they had on it and what they thought their mission would be.

JM: Once the operation kicks off, what kind of visibility did you have on how it's going?

DW: I would stop by the battalion headquarters at FOB Normandy. The battalion forward down in Fallujah had a hard site on Camp Fallujah with established phone lines and everything. Communication between those guys forward and the guys back at Normandy was pretty good, so I could easily stop in there and get an update. I hate to say it, but unfortunately it was usually just stopping in and checking on the casualty list during the day. Once it kicked off, they really started almost immediately.

JM: Did you have a role in any of the planning phases?

DW: At that time, I was working for the brigade training the Iraqis and we actually had a unit of Iraqi platoons up there in rotation when they deployed. My day-to-day business was going down to the school and training the Iraqis. This was during Ramadan, so training in the evenings was pretty limited; by late afternoon, we were usually finished because it was Ramadan and I'd usually then go down to Alpha Company. They were really helping me out logistically for support and training of the Iraqis.

JM: How so?

DW: I was up there working for the brigade but I didn't really have a lot of the necessary resources. The brigade expected 2-2 to help me out with that, but it wasn't a formalized process. Sean, being a good friend of mine, was also someone

who really embraced and understood the importance of training the Iraqis – I think before a lot of the other people did. He understood how that was really going to be the key to our success. He worked very hard at it in his own unit, in the company, making sure he took the Iraqi units out with him. Captain Ducote can probably fill you in on that because Brian led that effort for 2-2. I know he and Sean had a close relationship. He wanted to integrate those Iraqi units into real missions that the US Army was conducting, so he went to Sean who wrapped his arms around those guys and took them out on a lot of missions. Sean understood the importance of it. When I needed help, I would go see Sean and he provided everything from vehicles and radios to targetry, just all kinds of things. Of course I knew 99 percent of the company, so from the company first sergeant to the master gunner, the supply sergeant, those guys were always giving me resources and supplies in order to facilitate the training of the Iraqis. I don't think I could have accomplished my mission up there without Sean granting me permission to use his company resources, and not without the willingness of other members of the company to assist me and provide those resources.

JM: When did you first hear that Sean was one of the casualties?

DW: I was down at the school. FOB Normandy was a huge base. It had been a former corps headquarters in the old Iraqi Army. I was there with the Iraqis, finishing up. I think we had just graduated a class either that day or the day prior. Captain Ducote was a member of 2-2 and had actually been on his R&R leave when the battalion deployed. When he came back, the unit was already in Fallujah and they told him to just stay there and continue his work with the Iraqi Army, so he never actually went down to Fallujah. I had been down all day with the Iraqis and hadn't really checked in with the battalion since early that morning when I found out that Lieutenant Ed Iwan, the executive officer (XO), had been killed. Brian pulled up and said, "Hey, I've got bad news," and that's when he told me, on the afternoon of 13 November.

JM: It's my understanding that First Sergeant Smith was either officially or unofficially put in charge of Alpha Company for a time. Are you aware of that or what was the actual situation was?

DW: I think I understand it pretty clearly. Lieutenant Iwan, who normally would have been second in command, had been killed the day prior. He was killed on 12 November. Given the situation and what had happened, obviously everyone was under a lot of stress. Lieutenant Jeff Emery, who was the senior platoon leader, also stepped forward. But there was a debate: if he comes up and he's already trying to fill some of the XO role and now becomes the company commander, who's going to be the platoon leader for that platoon? So I think it was a joint effort between First Sergeant Smith and Lieutenant Emery; when it came to actually

writing the plans it was a joint effort. But when they executed, First Sergeant Smith went ahead and moved into the commander's Bradley, allowing Lieutenant Emery to focus on fighting his platoon. So it was a dual effort between those two. First Sergeant Smith was obviously the senior non-commissioned officer (NCO), very experienced, and was a very intelligent and capable man. I think he understood and didn't want to push the entire load of everything that had happened onto the very able but very young shoulders of Lieutenant Emery, who was also very competent and an outstanding young platoon leader. I think it worked out pretty well the way they handled it.

JM: Did Lieutenant Colonel Pete Newell make a formal announcement or was it implicit, just understood that First Sergeant Smith was effectively the company commander?

DW: I think it was more how Alpha Company worked it out on its own. I think it was Lieutenant Emery and First Sergeant Smith just understanding what was important, what roles they needed to fill and, to their credit, I think they did a pretty good job of working that out and making things happen.

JM: Were there any problems you noticed or heard of between Lieutenant Emery and First Sergeant Smith?

DW: No, not at all. During that time, they were completely focused on completing the mission, trying to do their jobs and bring home the rest of the company. I'm not aware of any kind of friction between those two.

JM: How did First Sergeant Smith do in running Alpha Company, your former company?

DW: From what I heard everything went well. He may not have been completely comfortable in the role and with the confusing command and control (C2) relationship that existed there. They were able to make it happen for a short time. I think he understood that, regardless of who it was, somebody had to be put in charge as the company commander. They were able to execute for a day or two that way, but it was too much responsibility for them to have. Regardless of who it was, somebody had to be – "Hey, this guy is the guy in charge." Any organization is that way; you can't exist in that kind of nebulous environment for very long. First Sergeant Smith just wanted a commander appointed so those C2 relationships were established.

JM: Now, obviously you were the commander who was eventually appointed. Can you tell me how that came about?

DW: All I can tell you is that I was back on FOB Normandy in a pretty distressed state of mind. Sergeant Major Steve Faulkenburg had been killed, then Lieutenant Iwan and then Captain Sean Sims who had been a very, very good

friend of mine, along with all the other men who had been wounded. I'm not going to lie to you, I was looking at the overall picture of things and thought it made sense that maybe I'd go back – and I was hoping for that. And as it turned out, I received a call on the afternoon of 14 November that they wanted me to do that, that a helicopter would be coming into FOB Normandy to pick me up and I needed to pack my bags. The brigade XO actually called me from FOB Warhorse and told me to pack my bags, get ready to go because they were coming to pick me up. I'm not sure what exactly facilitated that, whether it was Lieutenant Colonel Newell on his own – and I guess First Sergeant Smith had asked for that to happen. I guess it really didn't matter how it happened; that was the decision they made.

JM: Did this go as high as Colonel Dana Pittard, the 3d Brigade commander?

DW: Yes, and I think even the division commander, General John Batiste, was visiting the guys when it came about.

JM: Once you heard that you were going to be retaking Alpha Company, how did you overcome this situation, prepare yourself and get yourself mentally straight enough to assume this tremendous responsibility?

DW: The first part of that was, I still thought of those guys as my men. Of course when I got sick, the guy I wanted to take over was Sean because I knew him, had a tremendous amount of faith in him and I knew he would be an outstanding commander and would look out for those guys. The company had really been through a lot – whether it was nine months in Kosovo, having been extended down there and then coming back; having your block leave cut short so you could go back to the field for seven months. It had really been a rough time and we had been through a lot. When Sean stepped in and just did a phenomenal job, there wasn't any doubt it was his company but I still cared a lot about those men after all they had been through. One thing that certainly helped me stay focused was the fact that, despite all that had happened, these men were still alive and they deserved hopefully someone who could do a halfway decent job, keep them alive and bring them home. The other big thing that helped focus me was the fact that Sean believed in what he was doing and obviously he died for that. We weren't going to let him down by failing to do the mission now; we needed to stay focused and do everything we could to complete the mission and bring everyone home, because that's the way he would have wanted it done. When I got there, that's what I put in my mind. I talked to those guys who were closest to Sean and me when I got back there, including Staff Sergeant Brandon Knicely, who was the company master gunner as well as the company commander's gunner. In the Bradley he sits right next to you. I talked to them about it and said, "Hey, we're going to mourn this when we get back and have time to catch our breath; but right now, we have a job to do. The most important thing is to complete this mission and bring the rest of



these men home alive. That's where we need to stay focused." I remember telling Staff Sergeant Knicely, "If I start to lose that focus, you need to kick me in the ass and make sure I maintain that."

JM: At this point, what was the morale of Alpha Company like? Did this pose a leadership challenge for you?

DW: No, it was not a challenge for me. Obviously the guys were distraught when they realized what had happened, but they also understood that they had a job to do. We all knew we would have to deal with what had happened at some point, but at that particular point in time, that wasn't it. That would only result in us getting distracted and possibly losing more men. So the guys were very professional and I really didn't have any leadership challenges at all. I just gave them task and purpose and they moved out. When I got there I told them, "I'm glad they brought me in because I know you guys and I know you don't need somebody coming in trying to tell you every little thing you need to do and micromanage. All you need is somebody to report for you, let you know what's going on and to keep everyone else off your back because you're going to execute and do an outstanding job." And that's what they did and that's what I felt my role was: to facilitate them doing their job. I really didn't need to come in and take over everything. They knew what they needed to do and they were more than capable of doing it. The fact that I knew them and understood what their capabilities were was the one thing I was able to provide over someone else. I didn't need to micromanage them.

JM: What's the official date that you retook command?

DW: I arrived in late evening on 14 November and received a briefing on Camp Fallujah primarily from the assistant intelligence officer (AS2), Lieutenant Natalie Friel, who did a phenomenal job by the way. She gave me the briefing at Camp Fallujah and I then hopped on a convoy and they took me outside the gates of Camp Fallujah, out to the logistics support area where two-thirds of the company had come back that night to refit, rearm and refuel. I got out there somewhere in the middle of the night. It was around 0200 or 0300 in the morning when I linked up with the company on 15 November.

JM: You said you gave them task and purpose. What was that and how did you see the company's role for the remainder of the fight?

DW: For that particular day, at that point in time, we were really focused on this last part of southeast Fallujah that had yet to be cleared. I got the mission from First Sergeant Smith, woke him up and got the briefing from him; and then that morning after everyone got up, they already had what they were supposed to do but I went over with them and made sure I understood. Two of the platoons were there. Lieutenant Emery and his platoon were still in the city and they had established a stronghold in a building at the beginning of the block we were about

to clear. They told me what they were doing and I was prepared to C2. Once we kicked off, I guess there had been confusion from the order the night before and we weren't really executing exactly what Lieutenant Colonel Newell wanted. The first time I saw him, he linked up with me behind the Bradley explaining to me what he wanted to do. I had to pull everybody back, got two of the platoon leaders together, briefed them and then we kicked back off again. It was an interesting start. But what we were really doing was clearing that last area in the southeast corner of the city.

JM: Can you talk me through the process of clearing, any enemy contact you guys had?

DW: It was going house to house, room to room of every building in that last district of Fallujah.

JM: You guys are dismounted at this time?

DW: Yes, they're dismounted but we were integrating a lot of the resources we had using indirect fires, using the 120 millimeter main guns on the tanks. We had two operational tanks and were also using the 25 millimeter main gun on the Bradley. I can't tell you for sure exactly but I think there were about 13 enemy that we found. Most of them were in large part killed by artillery or the support by fire weapons that we were using, as far as the Bradleys and the tanks to engage the buildings before we entered. What I remember most is the huge number of caches we found. Every building it seemed like was an arsenal: from weapons, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), tank mines, explosives, anything you can imagine was in that area along with a number of bunkers that they had. I remember one house in particular had 15 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that were radiating out from one central house that housed the guy who would actually detonate them. Luckily he was killed before he could detonate any of them. Once we discovered it, it was our engineers who went around and destroyed the IEDs that radiated out from that house. If I remember correctly, the count was 15.

JM: Did you have any contact or working relationship with any Marine units?

DW: At this point, I had not worked with the Marines at all. I was talking to Lieutenant Colonel Newell on the radio and Captain Jeff Jager, who was the AS3, and they were working with the Marines. I had the Brigade Reconnaissance Troop (BRT) on my left flank, the east flank, and to the right was an uncleared area where the Marines were but they were back a little bit. They weren't as far forward as we were at that time.

JM: Do you have any general impressions about Army/Marine Corps integration in this fight? Is this something you had any visibility on?

DW: Very little. The most interaction I had was a couple days later as we moved back up the city and moved a little bit to the west to continue outside what had been the original 2-2 AO, to help the Marines out in other parts of the city. We were getting ready to kick off into the industrial district and on my far right flank was the seam with the Marines. There were a lot of people who were coming out of that seam – and I don't want to call them civilians because I don't think that reflects who they actually were. A lot of military-aged men with recently shaved beards, one of them with a gunshot wound to his leg being pushed in a wheelchair. I got a call saying they were walking out and I sent a platoon sergeant, because we had already started attacking into the industrial district. Sergeant First Class James Cantrell went down, rounded them up and he said, "Okay, the Marines have them now." So he moved back over to his platoon and then we realized they had been released and kept walking. So we went down there, rounded them up again and I went and found a Marine lieutenant on the ground and asked him what was going on. He said that his chain of command had told him they didn't have room for any more enemy prisoners of war (EPWs) and he was to just tell them to continue walking north and turn themselves in further north. Needless to say, I didn't think that was a good idea. Like I said, there were caches located all over the city and it wouldn't have been difficult for them to move back north, find another weapons cache and then come in behind us. So I went ahead and rounded them up right there, about 10 of them. I then called our HHC commander, Captain Fred Dente, and let him know the situation. He had some Iraqi Army guys working for him who were kind of attached to the battalion for that operation. They had some trucks and stuff. Captain Dente actually led the convoy down Highway 10, the main highway that bisected Fallujah north to south. He drove right down there with them, linked up with me there and I turned them over to him. Again, that interaction with that Marine lieutenant, I basically said, "I don't agree with that and I think we should detain these guys. I'll go ahead and do it through my chain of command even if yours is telling them to move north." That was really the extent of my interaction with the Marines.

JM: All these caches, what was the procedure for securing these, for making sure they didn't fall into the bad guys' hands again?

DW: We had the Iraqi Army coming behind us and they had Americans working with them. Normally what we would do is document it, get a good grid for it, and report it up. If we thought it needed to be secured, we'd secure it until explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) showed up and have them try to deal with it. But it came to the point where we were just overwhelmed and we'd still be there today, I think, if we had waited for EOD to blow it up. I had a platoon of engineers attached to the company and they'd been attached since they arrived in country. We had actually deployed with four platoons. Alpha Company, even back in Germany,

had been plussed-up a platoon. We actually had 18 Bradleys and 180 soldiers in the company when we had trained up in Germany. Two of those platoons were task organized elsewhere in the brigade and we received a platoon of engineers in return. They were a great bunch of guys, very capable, very competent, and they knew a lot about demolitions. Those guys ended up helping do a lot of the demolition to destroy a lot of that. Some of the stuff we felt was really unstable so it was a combination of where we could get EOD support, but EOD was so overwhelmed and we used that when we could. If we thought the stuff was relatively stable, then we'd try to pass that off to the Iraqi Army as they came in and let them haul it out. Otherwise the engineers we had attached to us went around. For instance, the house that had the 15 IEDs radiating out of it: they went around to each one of those and detonated them. So it was a combination of EOD support when we could get it, passing off the mundane stuff like the rifles, etc. to the Iraqi Army, and then using our own engineers to destroy some of the other caches: the mines and IEDs that we found.

JM: Since you had so much experience in training the Iraqis, do you have a sense or impression of how generally these Iraqi Army units performed in this battle?

DW: I can't really tell you too much about that because they always came behind us. At this point and time, they didn't work directly for us. After we had gone through an area and went through the buildings room by room, one of their primary responsibilities was to remove the dead insurgents we'd killed as well as reducing the caches that were there. I didn't work with them at this particular point and time in Fallujah. I didn't work with them in an operational sense where they had a mission to my left, right or in front of me. They were always coming behind, helping to clean up.

JM: That was a mission they were well suited for?

DW: I think so. From what I understood, they seemed to do a good job. I only have a little more insight on that because when I moved to Fort Polk, Louisiana, where I'm at now, the lieutenant colonel I worked for here happened to be one of the lead advisors. He was in another part of the city. He wasn't exactly with us in 2-2, but he had been in Fallujah with an Iraqi Army brigade, I believe, as an advisor.

JM: What's his name?

DW: Lieutenant Colonel Marcus Deoliveira. At the time, I wasn't really too interested; I was focused on what I was doing. But once I arrived here and met him, I worked for him for a year and in our discussions, he filled me in a little bit on what they were doing.

JM: Once you all finished clearing that one particular section of the city, what was the next mission Alpha Company was given?

DW: After we cleared that that day, we were pulled up further north again and then moved west and continued to clear south again through areas that had already been through but that needed to be gone through again. In those following days it was a detailed building-to-building, room-to-room kind of thing. Again, there were just huge numbers of caches. That's when we found an IED factory, a vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) factory; we found an insurgent training classroom with stuff up on a white board with diagrams on how to shoot down US aircraft. It was amazing the stuff we found. I think one of the sites, the VBIED factory, they actually found black flags with the yellow moon in the middle that was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's symbols. The press had come in by then and all that was actually on CNN.

JM: Did you guys have any reporters embedded with you in Alpha Company?

DW: Not in the company per se; they were with Lieutenant Colonel Newell. He pushed them down as he saw fit or where he thought they might want to get a story. When we found that training classroom that was adjacent to a large cache we had found, and then the VBIED and IED factories, that's when they all came around.

JM: What was your overall assessment of enemy's tactics and capabilities based upon your time there?

DW: Based on that time and what I saw later on, these guys were firstly a little bit better trained than your normal run-of-the mill guy you would see up in Muq-dadiyah. Secondly, not only were they better trained but they were also willing to stand and fight and, in a lot of cases, willing to die. A lot of them did right there. I think they knew that if they were still in Fallujah after the Marines had allowed so many of the civilians to leave, they were staying there to fight and probably die for their cause. They were better trained and more dedicated to their cause than you would find, for example, in Muqdadiah – your average guy who was maybe just doing it for the money. These guys were doing it because they obviously believed in it. I'm not an expert at examining the bodies or anything, but I believe if you look at the statistics and what the experts found, you'd find that a lot of those guys were foreign fighters who were killed in Fallujah.

JM: To what do you attribute the overall success of the mission? Do you have any general thoughts about how it went?

DW: The training we went through prior to the deployment – I guess I can speak specifically for Alpha Company when we were in Kosovo. Kosovo obviously wasn't Iraq, but the day-to-day activities like going out on patrols, accountabil-

ity, communication and that kind of thing were all very similar. If we had patrols out, we always had communications with them. They had to do pre-combat checks (PCCs) and pre-combat inspections (PCIs) before they left the gate and before they came back into the gate. I took command in February, and at the end of March was when the war started and OIF I began. It didn't take a mathematician to figure out that there are only so many divisions in the Army and we probably would end up going. So we really focused on what we were doing in Kosovo. We integrated patrols so we'd normally stop by a range at least once a week or so and shoot. So in Kosovo, we really started the train up. It was that core of guys in the company, I would say at the sergeant and staff sergeant level, that when we got back to Germany and got a lot of new soldiers, that core had been in Kosovo and had operated like that for awhile. They were trained to do it. So when we started training again in Germany it wasn't from square one; it was guys who were experienced. And thanks to stop-loss, not too many of them were able to leave. We already had a cohesive core of well-trained soldiers and we were able to hit the ground running in August when we started training. By the time we went through gunnery and went to Hohenfels and the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) rotation, we felt like we were well-trained and a good unit, and I think that carried through the whole time we were in Iraq.

JM: What are your thoughts with respect to urban operations and mechanized units operating in cities, either from a doctrinal perspective or just what you observed on the ground?

DW: From what I observed, I would say there's really no other way to do it. I have a light background, and prior to going to 1st ID I'd been in the 101st. But the way we were able to operate in that city using the mobility, firepower and protection of the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, I'm confident that saved a lot of lives. One thing I felt the company was able to do because we really trained hard was integrating the Bradley into our operations and using mounted and dismounted operations to attack a particular objective. Using that maneuver, firepower and protection of the Bradley to the utmost really facilitated us being able to accomplish the mission down there and kept our casualties to a minimum. In contrast, had you had a light unit in there without that firepower, protection and maneuverability, I think the casualty figures certainly would have been higher.

JM: Like with the Marines?

DW: I think maybe you did see that on the Marine side.

JM: Were there any assets or resources you felt were lacking, that you wish you'd had in hindsight?

DW: No, I don't think so. The battle was certainly more intense in the early days. Someone who was there – obviously Sean would have been a great guy to

ask that question to. As far as I was concerned, I was pretty comfortable with what we had once we were there. Maybe that's because I was focused on what I was doing, I knew what I had and had to be able to use that. I was pretty comfortable at the time. We had pretty good support. The mechanics were right there keeping our vehicles up and they were outstanding. The medics were there. It was a great effort, I thought, on the part of a lot of different people who kept things going. I really can't complain about any lack of support or lack of an asset.

JM: At this point, was there much need for fire support?

DW: We did have artillery that we used. Captain James Cobb, the fire support officer – just a fantastic job by him and his whole fire support team. The guys we had in our company – I can remember Sergeant O'Brien and Sergeant Laird. Those guys did a phenomenal job. The artillery support early on was outstanding, and even after I got there we continued to use it.

JM: We've mentioned a number of them, but are there any other particular individuals whom you think deserve special recognition for their role in this operation?

DW: Oh yes. I'll tell you – and maybe my situation is a little bit different than everyone else because I went in there at a different time. Staff Sergeant Knicely, who was the company master gunner, served more of a role than that because he was in that Bradley with me and with Sean. He was a young staff sergeant, but remarkably competent and I didn't have any problems dismounting that Bradley. I didn't have an XO at the time, and that's normally how we trained up in Germany. The XO had done a lot of the reporting back to the battalion to allow the commander to focus on his platoons and command at the company level. I didn't have an XO to do that for me, but Staff Sergeant Knicely was able to step in. You talk about a young staff sergeant who could talk on the radio, who understood company/battalion-level operations and could report back to the battalion in a clear and concise manner so they understood what was going on on the ground – he was just amazing. He did that throughout the deployment. He meant a lot to the company, what he was able to do. I thought I could dismount that Bradley and link up and talk with my platoon leaders or first sergeant or whoever I needed to talk to; and even if for whatever reason I might not be able to monitor the battalion nets, I had 100 percent confidence in Staff Sergeant Knicely. He could talk to the battalion commander as a staff sergeant and tell him what he needed to know as far as what was going on with the company.

JM: Is Staff Sergeant Knicely still in the Army?

DW: Yes, he is. He was selected for sergeant first class and is at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, as a drill sergeant.

JM: Let me toss out some more names and maybe have you give your reaction, if you like. Major (Dr.) Lisa DeWitt?

DW: She was great. Obviously operationally she didn't have a large impact, but the support and the confidence I had and all the soldiers felt – because she seemed to know everyone. You knew that if you were wounded or something happened to you, you were going to have the best medical care. You certainly knew there wouldn't be any lack of effort in somebody trying to get you fixed. Between her and Lieutenant Greg McCrum, the battalion physician assistant (PA), just a great team that those two were. I can't speak for all the soldiers, but I know I had a lot of confidence in them. If I were shot or wounded, whatever, you could count on those guys to do everything they could to help you. That was a great morale boost, I thought, and she's just a great person overall too. I was very grateful for her support during that time as well.

JM: What about Lieutenant Colonel Newell and his S3, Major, now Lieutenant Colonel, John Reynolds?

DW: It's kind of hard to speak about them. They were busy at the time and I was focused on the company. But I'll say this about Lieutenant Colonel Newell: I'll always be grateful to him for allowing me to come back to the company at that particular point and time. They could have easily brought someone else in. I still cared about those men more than anyone else, other than Sean, and when he was killed, I really wanted to get down there and help them in any way I could. So I'm eternally grateful to Lieutenant Colonel Newell for bringing me back in there at that time. I really appreciated his trust and confidence in me to do that. Like I said, I'll always be grateful to him for that.

JM: What can you tell me about Staff Sergeant David Bellavia? We were having a hell of a time getting a hold of him, then we found out he was back in Iraq – as a civilian, since he's apparently now out of the Army.

DW: Yeah, and actually he's back now. I'll tell you, that guy could make a living as a standup comedian if he wanted to. He's a very funny guy, very easy going. But when it came to the business of soldiering, he's a very serious, very competent soldier. He was one of the guys who was with us in Kosovo, who'd been with the company for a long time. He was a great leader, a great example for soldiers. I don't know if you want me to go into everything he did.

JM: Is he still being considered for the Medal of Honor?

DW: I believe so. In fact, that's something I need to actually follow up on. In talking with him, I thought it was still in the process.

JM: It was the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) originally, I understand.



DW: That's what I sent it up as because that's what I was told to send it up as. We would send it up as a DSC with the hope that it'd be promoted to a Medal of Honor. I guess captains aren't supposed to submit Medals of Honor. [Laughter] I don't exactly know how that system works and my own ignorance worked against me there, but there are probably not a lot of people who've written Medal of Honor nominations before. I don't know if you're aware of the situation.

JM: I am to some extent, but I'd be interested to hear your account of it.

DW: Sure. He was a squad leader in 3d Platoon at the time and they had been fired on from a building, fired on by some insurgents. They had cordoned off the block of about 10 to 13 houses. They began clearing each house, trying to find out where the guys were who had shot at them. About the tenth house they went into, Staff Sergeant Colin Fitts, who was another guy – remind me and I'll talk a little bit about him. His squad had entered the first room of the house and, as they were about to enter the second room, they were engaged by a couple insurgents who were hiding behind a concrete Jersey barrier they'd brought into the house. They were in a narrow area underneath a staircase with the Jersey barrier in front of them and they were firing into the doorway leading into the room. It's kind of hard to explain, but also in direct line with that was the doorway to the room the soldiers were in that led to the outside of the house. So, the soldiers were trapped in there. They couldn't enter the room because of the amount of fire coming out of it and they couldn't exit that room either because the insurgents had a direct line of sight from where they were at through the door to that exit door – if you can envision that. Rounds started penetrating the wall they were taking cover behind. One guy's vest was penetrated away from the plate, grazed his side and went out the back of the vest. So it was a pretty dire situation. Anyway, Bellavia was outside and picked up an M249 squad automatic weapon (SAW). He stepped into the doorway where the bullets were impacting and suppressed the insurgents long enough for the squad to break contact and move out of the building. To hear the guys tell it who were in that room, they looked back over their shoulder into that doorway they wanted so badly to get out of and there's Bellavia standing there with rounds impacting all around him, shooting back with that SAW, and suppressing the enemy long enough for that squad to break contact and get out of the building. Once they broke contact, out of the building, they brought up a Bradley and tried to put some 25 millimeter rounds in the building. But with those courtyard walls they have around the buildings in Iraq and not being able to get the gun tube low enough to get into those bottom floors, they weren't sure if they were able to affect anything inside the building or not. So Bellavia took a small team and went back in to see if the Bradley had any effect. As he did that, he was in that room where Staff Sergeant Fitts and his squad had been trapped; and as he looked into the doorway where the insurgents had been, he saw one of the insurgents preparing an RPG. To hear him tell it, he

understood and it snapped in his mind at that time that this guy could inflict a lot of casualties either on the dismounted squads that were running around or on the Bradley itself. He felt it was a target that needed to be eliminated immediately so he went ahead, entered that room and destroyed the guy with the RPG.

JM: Did he still have the SAW?

DW: No, he had an M-4 (M-4 Carbine) at this time. As he eliminated the guy with the RPG, another guy shot at him from the side and Bellavia was able to shoot and wound him as that guy fled into another room to the back side, off to the right. As he did that, he ended up turned around facing the door he had just come in and realized that behind him was another room that had not been cleared. He thought he heard something in there, so he moved into it, shooting into the corners because he couldn't really see; and as he was doing that, the guy he'd wounded came back out of that other room and started shooting at him as well. Just then, another guy came down the stairs – because the door was right by the stairwell where those insurgents had been hiding. So Bellavia was being fired upon by those two insurgents simultaneously. He was able to return fire and kill those two guys. After he killed those two, he's back in the room which he realized was not clear – and once again, he had his back to it. After killing those two guys he was still receiving fire. It was then that he realized there was a guy inside the closets. It's like in Germany where they don't really have closets in the houses themselves; they have these wall units for clothes. Anyway, a guy comes busting out of there, firing wildly over his head. The whole wall unit comes down with him and he and Bellavia end up on opposite sides of the room. They exchange gun fire at very close range with neither of them hitting one another. That insurgent flees out of the room, up the stairs, and he's wounded. Bellavia follows him out – and I'll add that Bellavia had left two soldiers outside. He brought one guy in but, for whatever reason, that guy only had a nine millimeter pistol. He was a new guy who had just shown up. He expended all his ammunition shooting at the guy Bellavia had wounded and who fled to another room. Bellavia sent him out of the room. I tell you all this with the caveat and with Bellavia's acknowledgement that it probably wasn't the smartest thing he ever did. [Laughter] It was something that, once he got started, he couldn't really stop. He saw the guy preparing the RPG, saw he needed to eliminate that target; and once he got started, there wasn't a whole lot he could do but finish it. So he exchanged gunfire on the stairs with this guy, and from that stairwell there was an entrance onto the first level roof. Bellavia moves up there, and it's a small room that exits to the roof. He throws a grenade and the insurgent moves out onto the rooftop to avoid the blast. He was wounded by it but wasn't killed. Bellavia moved into that room. He continued to try to manipulate his weapon to engage Bellavia, who shot him, and he fell at Bellavia's feet and continued to scream, yelling to another insurgent, communicating with another guy. Obviously Bellavia felt the

insurgent was giving away his position, trying to tell the other insurgent where he was at, so he actually pulled out his knife and killed the insurgent right there as they were fighting on the ground. That's four guys he killed. Then he moved up on the second floor, something like a balcony. As he's looking out onto the roof through a window, a guy jumps off the third floor roof onto the second floor roof and Bellavia shoots him a couple times. The insurgent falls down, wounded. Bellavia thinks he might be dead; and as he has to move from the window, he has to move down a couple feet and go out a door. And as he goes out the door the guy had gotten up, moved to the edge of the roof and was trying to get over the roof. Bellavia shot him again and he fell off the roof. By that time, one of the squads had come into the house and was yelling for him. They actually had to pull out of the house because they were going to drop a joint direct attack munition (JDAM) onto a house nearby where they had had contact. So they had to pull out. By the time they got back there, they couldn't actually find the fifth guy he had engaged, but they had the four he had killed. He single-handedly cleared the house, killed four guys and probably mortally wounded a fifth.

JM: Didn't he at one point grab a shotgun?

DW: No. When Sergeant Scott Lawson was in there with the nine millimeter, he sent him out and told him to get a shotgun. But Lawson never made it back in before –

JM: Oh okay. I knew he'd asked for one, I just wasn't sure if he actually ever got it.

DW: It was pretty amazing.

JM: No kidding. It's a regular Rambo story!

DW: It kind of is. He'll admit that it wasn't the smartest thing he's ever done. His mind just snapped when he saw the guy preparing the RPG; and then once he got in the house, there wasn't a whole lot he could do. He was trapped and had to fight his way out.

JM: You mentioned Staff Sergeant Fitts?

DW: During the April fight in Muqdadiyah, Staff Sergeant Fitts had been shot three times. It was right before they had gone down to Najaf, a day or two before. He was shot in both arms and through the knee. He was evacuated back to the rear and I talked to him because I was still back there, but I didn't get to see him because he had been evacuated to Walter Reed Hospital before I had a chance to make it over there. He eventually came back to Germany after beginning rehab. His arms were okay, he had been grazed on both arms, and it didn't really debilitate him in any way. But the shot to the knee had been pretty severe. He definitely had a limp. But he worked hard – and his whole intent was to make it back to Iraq and

link up with his platoon and company again. I deployed in July and, sure enough, I think he showed up in late September, early October. The doctors of course were telling him that it probably wasn't the best idea, but he'd been told that all he had to do was pass the physical training test and he could go. So he worked until he could pass the test, running enough on that leg. He came back to Iraq, with already having been awarded the Bronze Star with Valor and having three bullets in him. He returned to his job as squad leader.

JM: Which platoon was he in?

DW: He was in 3d Platoon also. It was Lieutenant Joaquin Meno's platoon and Sergeant First Class Cantrell was the platoon sergeant. Staff Sergeant Fitts was another one of those mid-level guys who had been with us in Kosovo, who had come back and trained with us in Germany. I don't think you could ask for a better example than a guy who's been shot three times, still has a significant limp and probably didn't have any business being where he was. But he was bound and determined to be there. I don't think anyone wanted to tell him no because that's what he wanted to do, that's where he thought he needed to be. But there he was on the streets of Fallujah leading the squad again and doing an outstanding job.

JM: After the battle was over, how much longer did you command Alpha Company?

DW: I commanded until July 2005. There was a debate as to whether I was going to take over HHC in December when we got back up to FOB Normandy or whether I would continue to command through the deployment and go ahead and redeploy with them. I'm thankful they went ahead and decided to leave me in. I think they thought the company had been through enough transition and everything. They didn't want to throw anything else at them at that time, so they let me go ahead and stay in that position.

JM: Are there any other major takeaways or lessons learned that you have from this fight, anything you think has contributed to your professional development?

DW: I definitely think that the mounted and dismounted integration was key to saving a lot of lives there. I was a light infantryman through the early part of my time in the Army and I love the light infantry. There are a lot of guys I run into all the time here at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), guys who had always been light and for whatever reason don't want to go mechanized. But I definitely learned a lesson there, that there's a time and a place for mechanized infantry – and if there is, that was it for sure. The integration of those assets saved a lot of lives. You don't get a lot over there in the current environment. You're not fighting that large high-intensity conflict battle like, during the Cold War years, we spent so much time training for – and even into the 1990s. One thing I also took away about high-intensity conflicts was that the way we had trained all those years works. The

integration of your close air support (CAS), your indirect fires, your field artillery guys: the way we train works in that high-intensity conflict. There's no doubt that it worked. I think the training piece of it, understanding the importance of having trained squads and platoons – if you have well-trained squads and platoons, maybe this is blatantly obvious, but if you have that then you're going to have a good company. Having those core guys, those E4 through E6 level soldiers we had in Kosovo who carried on in Germany and then onto Iraq – having that well-trained core in the company just paid huge dividends at the squad and platoon level. Those guys were very strong. All you had to do was give them task and purpose and they were going to accomplish it. Coupled with that is one of the things we focused on during predeployment, which was our medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), getting soldiers from the point of injury back to level-one care. We beat that into their heads, did it over and over again during training, and I think that paid dividends too. Those are things I'll take away from that particular battle. Whatever influence I have on units in the future and positions I have, if I can replicate that, I will definitely try and do so.

JM: What's your position currently at JRTC?

DW: I'm an observer/controller (OC).

JM: Well, I'll tell you, sir, this has been extremely interesting. Is there anything else we didn't discuss about this operation that you'd like to get on the record, other points you'd like to make?

DW: The only thing I feel bad about is when you asked about guys I think need to be recognized – it's a very long list. First Sergeant Smith is obviously one of those guys, and I think you've talked to him.

JM: We have.

DW: I'm forever indebted to him for the way he handled that situation, the role he played in getting me back in there, and the confidence he had in me and the two of us as a team. There are just so many guys from the private on up, and I could probably submit a list of every single guy who was there almost. I think what I'm most proud of with that company was the fact that not one guy shied away from his responsibilities. They stood up when they needed to and what they accomplished down there, I don't think is anything the Army has seen in a long time. I'm just grateful to those guys. I maintain contact with a lot of them and try to make sure they're doing well, even those who are outside the Army. While I was on leave last week, I was able to see Specialist Joey Seyford, now Mr. Seyford. He was with Sean when he was shot and was actually shot through the shoulder at the same time Sean was killed. I was able to see him just last week up in Ohio. I guess I'd like to go on record as saying it was a phenomenal effort by those guys from the private level on up. Everyone really did their job and I was just proud to be a part of that.

There are others too. Command Sergeant Major Darrin Bohn did a tremendous job. He was hurting as much as everyone else, because obviously he knew Command Sergeant Major Steve Faulkenburg and had also been a good friend of Sean Sims. But he was able to maintain his composure and keep us all focused. He was always out with the soldiers, setting the example and also providing advice and always willing to assist in any way he could. When he showed up to go on a mission, he was never a distraction, always a great help. I really appreciated what he did for the battalion, the company and for me personally in that incredibly difficult situation. Finally, there's Sean Sims. Sean had been like a brother to me for the previous three years and his death was the hardest thing I've ever had to deal with. He was an incredible soldier and even better person, and I don't think you can overestimate the impact Sean had during the first difficult days of that mission. He was always the battalion main effort, from conducting the initial breach onward. He did an incredible job and I think there are a lot of other people who are still alive today because of the way he led that fight. He gave his life fighting for something he believed in: trying to make the world a better place. He is truly a hero.

JM: Thank you very much for your time.

# Captain Chris Brooke

## 1 May 2006

MM: My name is Matt Matthews (MM) and I'm with the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today is 1 May 2006 and I'm interviewing Captain Chris Brooke (CB) who was the commander of Charlie Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment (2-7 CAV) – or Task Force 2-7 – during Operation Phantom Fury. Let's begin with you telling me where you were born, where you went to school, how you got commissioned and various assignments you had up until Operation Phantom Fury.

CB: I was born in San Antonio, Texas, and I went to Texas A&M University. It was during my freshman year there that a senior by the name of Sean Sims introduced me to the idea of seeking a commission as an officer in the U.S. Army. By the end of that year I knew I wanted to earn a commission and that I wanted to become an infantryman, and I haven't looked back since. My first assignment after the Officer Basic Course, the Mortar Leaders Course and Ranger School was 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division (Light) at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. While assigned to 1-14 Infantry, I served as a rifle platoon leader, a mortar platoon leader, and the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) executive officer (XO). Following my time in the 25th Infantry Division, I attended the standard package of professional schools including the Captains Career Course, Combined Arms Staff Service School (CAS3), and the Bradley Leaders Course. Upon completion of these schools, I was assigned directly to 2-7 CAV, 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and took over as the assistant operations officer (AS3) for plans. I occupied this billet for just over two years until I received the opportunity to command Charlie Company in October of 2004, a month before we repositioned to Fallujah. I stayed with 2-7 CAV until we redeployed to Fort Hood and began reorganization and modularization.

MM: Could you talk me through what happened with your unit up to their arrival in Iraq and the planning and preparation that went into that?

CB: Well, once we received final confirmation that we were not participating during OIF I, we began to prepare to deploy in what we anticipated would be the spring 2004 timeframe. To the best of our ability, we followed a progressive training glide path, focusing initially on individual tasks and progressing through crew and small-unit collective tasks to our culminating mission readiness exercise (MRE) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, in November 2003. This was our big-ticket item in preparing for deployment, and the entire brigade deployed there. From my perspective, the cadre down at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) put on an absolutely fantastic training event for us, considering they had to anticipate an op-

erating environment that was literally changing every day. To illustrate the point, during the rotation there was an incident in theater that involved some kind of grand theft of a large amount of money while in transit. A few days later, a similar scenario was incorporated into our training rotation. My hat is off to those guys for doing their best to make our training as applicable as possible. I think they did a hell of a job. A common after-action review (AAR) comment was that the rotation didn't simulate the day-to-day patrolling we would have to execute in theater, but I don't know if that's a fair comment to make considering they only had one month in which to cram as many tasks as possible. Also, at the time of our JRTC rotation I don't think anyone could have foreseen the likelihood of the high-intensity combat that 2-7 CAV experienced in both Najaf and Fallujah. As a result, most of our training focus was on dealing with the neighborhood advisory councils (NACs), the sheik councils, and sewage, water, electricity and transportation assessments – all oriented at the low-intensity end of the spectrum. Through all this, we incorporated convoy security and basic cordon and search procedures. Additionally, we began receiving limited training on improvised explosive devices (IEDs). You've got to remember that, at that time, IEDs were just starting to emerge as an insurgent tactic. We were learning a lot through the blood of some brave 4th Infantry Division (ID) and 1st Armored Division (AD) soldiers, but at this time we hadn't identified the IED as becoming the preeminent tool of the insurgents during OIF II.

MM: Did you guys do any training on heavy mechanized tanks or Bradleys fighting in the city?

CB: Not really. Nothing like what we did in Fallujah or in Najaf the August before we went into Fallujah. Of course, we conducted gunnery at Fort Hood and, again, conducted an abbreviated gunnery as part of our reception, staging, onward-movement and integration (RSOI) in Kuwait. When we were in JRTC, however, our focus was definitely on the low-intensity end of the spectrum. Based on the current operating environment at the time of our preparation, we anticipated executing a stability and support mission, with limited engagements with armed insurgents. Of course, our elements were mounted on Bradleys and tanks, but we did not use them in a high-intensity urban assault. In fact, at one point there was a debate regarding whether our tank company would bring tanks or not. With that said, the companies did make contact and have a few fights during our JRTC rotation, but no deliberate attacks at the task force level. Even though our training was focused on low-intensity operations, it did contribute, however, to providing commanders with fundamental training on the basics of maneuvering platoons and sections through built-up areas. However, as the commanders were receiving training on maneuvering their vehicles through urban areas – a fundamental task that's important in both low- and high-intensity situations – the battalion staff received no training whatsoever in planning and executing the high-intensity urban fight.



The key components to our success at the task force level – coordinating air support, clearing fires, etc. – were not trained at all or were trained very superficially during our MRE. I can't stress enough, however, that I don't think this is a failure of the cadre at the JRTC. They've got the tough mission of supporting units and training them on as many applicable tasks as possible in a very short time. At the time of our training rotation, I don't think anyone would have guessed that almost exactly one year later, we'd be participating in our second high-intensity deliberate attack of an urban area, working for a Marine higher headquarters.

MM: Could you describe your company at this time? What was the task organization in your particular company?

CB: I took command from Captain Jason Toepfer in October of 2004. Jason was a great officer who left a great company. The company was identified to be detached to a National Guard battalion early in the preparations for deployment to Iraq. As such, Charlie Company conducted everything from its gunnery to its MRE at the JRTC on a separate and distinct timeline from the rest of 2-7 CAV. The company deployed pure in April of '04 and executed its RSOI with the rest of 2-7 CAV. Task organization became effective before we left Kuwait, however, so though the company's Bradleys moved to Taji with the rest of the task force, they repositioned to Baghdad almost immediately after their arrival. The company actually had a pretty interesting history for those first few months. Task Force 2-7 CAV retained 1st Platoon at Camp Taji, while 2d Platoon was attached to 2-162 Infantry from the Oregon National Guard, and 3d Platoon was attached to 1-151 Infantry from the Arkansas National Guard. Within both of those light infantry battalions, Charlie Company's detached platoons were further broken down among different companies. Having three platoons in three separate battalions spread across three separate forward operating bases (FOBs) in Baghdad created a very difficult situation for the company and platoon leadership to work through. In the end, it stands as but one more testament to the remarkable skill and professionalism of Jason, his XO Captain Sheldon Morris, and above all the company first sergeant, Larry Hudnall – probably the single best NCO I've ever been honored to work with. When Lieutenant Colonel James Rainey came aboard, we successfully got the entire company under Task Force 2-7 control around the October timeframe when I was taking command, and then we remained under Task Force 2-7 for the duration of my command in Iraq.

MM: Can you talk me through arriving in country in April and basically anything that stands out between then and November 2004? What your company was doing and what was going on during that timeframe.

CB: When we arrived in Kuwait, our immediate focus was RSOI. Part of the RSOI package involved small arms qualification, abbreviated tank and Bradley

gunnery, and a convoy live-fire exercise. Additionally, we received a few classes on current IED tactics, which by this time had become the primary tool used to inflict casualties on our forces. Much like at the JRTC, I believe that the cadre in Camp Udairi did the best they could considering the available time they had. Again, it's important to remember that when we arrived in Kuwait in March 2003, all major indicators pointed to heavy emphasis on stability and support operations (SASO). As a matter of fact, I distinctly remember crossing the line of departure (LD) into Iraq around 5 April 2004. We left Camp Udairi anticipating low-intensity operations. As we closed on Convoy Support Center (CSC) Navistar, we received reports during the nightly intelligence update that a Marine garrison, I believe in Najaf, had sustained a sizable attack. At the time it seemed almost implausible, and was interpreted by many as a false report. By the time we left CSC Navistar the next morning, it was evident that the report from the night prior was indeed correct: the current operating environment had changed literally overnight. As we closed on Camp Taji, we arrived in an environment that we had not anticipated when we were in Kuwait just a few days before, or during the vast majority of our train-up for that matter. The task force sustained its first casualty on our first morning in Iraq from indirect fire, and our second a few days later from a coordinated ambush. For whatever reason, no other unit was outside the wire in our area of operations (AO) besides the aviators, so we basically put our right-seat/left-seat rides on hold, set up our tactical operations center (TOC), and set about the business of gaining control of our AO. From those first few days that our task force assumed control of our AO, we worked closely with our aviators and began to foster a bond that became increasingly tight as the deployment went on. There are too many to list by name, but the aviators of 1-227, 2-227, and 1-25 are some of the most skilled and courageous warriors I've met. Aside from our daily operations in the Taji area, I would say that the key event leading up to our participation in Phantom Fury was our fight in Najaf in August of 2004. Operating as the corps operational reserve, we received notification that we would reposition to Najaf at approximately 1030 in the morning. Our advanced party deployed that night, followed quickly by the rest of the task force. As the task force planner at the time, I remember being absolutely amazed at the speed and efficiency that our companies transitioned out of their sectors, prepared for movement and repositioned halfway across theater. There are so many moving pieces to a mechanized task force, particularly considering its maintenance package, that are absolutely essential to its mission accomplishment. To this day, I still don't know how Captain Jacob Brown, our forward support company (FSC) commander, managed to pack up his entire company, while continuing to conduct maintenance on the battalion's vehicle fleet, in one day. It was a great example of how great non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and junior leaders truly can make incredible things happen.

MM: Can you talk me through what happened when you first found out that Task Force 2-7 might have to go help the Marines again in the Fallujah operation, and also what happened the first time you linked up with the Marines?

CB: In August of 2004, upon completion of our offensive action in Najaf, the task force waited in Camp Duke for orders to return to our battlespace in Taji. During that time, rumors started to whisper regarding the task force repositioning to Fallujah, rather than Taji. Ever since the Marines had been pushed out of the city the previous April, it seemed that almost all the really bad things that were happening in our AO and in Baghdad somehow originated in Fallujah. Weapons and munitions were connected to Fallujah. Insurgent money and leadership was connected to Fallujah. Vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs) were originating in Fallujah. We had a battalion of fighters who had just proven themselves in tough combat, and they were chomping at the bit to continue high-intensity operations, especially if it would have a significant impact across the theater. When we finished our actions in Najaf, the task force was on a high. We had successfully executed one of the most high-intensity assaults of OIF II to date, with devastating lethality. Our soldiers fought with incredible tenacity during an intense urban battle, with temperatures in excess of 135 degrees! When it was all finished, there was a bond of trust that spanned all the way from the battalion leadership down to the individual soldier, and from the individual soldier all the way back up. The officers and soldiers alike would follow Lieutenant Colonel Rainey anywhere. Most important of all, the soldiers trusted each other. Accounts of valor became almost commonplace across the battalion. Whether it was Sergeant Tetulli from Alpha Company physically mauling an insurgent with his bare hands as the insurgent tried to use a hand-grenade against his team, or Sergeant Sue from Charlie Company who positioned his own Bradley in between intense rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fire and a disabled Bradley in his platoon to enable vehicle recovery, the soldiers of TF 2-7 knew they could count on each other when the chips were down. Another significant aspect of our time in Najaf was that it was the first time many of our soldiers and leaders witnessed the full impact that a mechanized task force could have in an urban fight when given robust rules of engagement (ROE). With all this in mind, when we began hearing rumors regarding sending the task force to Fallujah, we were ready. At this point, however, it turned out to be really just a lot of talk. We returned to our sector in Taji and resumed operations there. Captain Toepfer and I conducted our change of command in early October, and shortly thereafter the task force regained control of Charlie company's 2d and 3d Platoons, led by Lieutenant Anderson and Lieutenant St. Laurent, respectively. During the month of October, we also replaced both platoon leaders from 2d and 3d platoons, entrusting Lieutenant Ben Polanco and Lieutenant ReBrook with the significant responsibility of leading men in combat. We began receiving serious talk about repositioning the

task force to Fallujah around mid-October. At the time, my company was serving under Task Force 3-8 CAV in the International Zone, in response to two suicide bombers that had infiltrated into the bazaar a week prior. During our two weeks in the International Zone we maintained contact with our battalion headquarters up at Camp Taji; and when we received orders to return to the task force in preparation for movement to Fallujah, we picked up and got ready to go. The company began movement from the International Zone to Camp Taji on 1 November 2004. Upon arrival at Camp Taji, all soldiers and leaders worked around the clock preparing their vehicles for combat and conducting pre-combat checks and inspections. Despite being three days behind the rest of the task force in preparation timelines, the company was ready for movement with the task force on schedule on 2 November. For some reason, the task force SP date and time were delayed 24 hours. The company utilized the additional time to make final adjustments to vehicle load plans, and conduct military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) rehearsals in a group of abandoned buildings located on the north side of Camp Taji. This dedication of all leaders within the company to utilize the time available for preparation and rehearsals proved critical in the days ahead. Through the hard work of our great junior NCOs, led by fantastic platoon sergeants like Sergeants First Class Parham, Spann and Taylor, we were ready to roll ahead of time; a phenomenal job by all of our junior leaders.

MM: When you did roll out, did you drive your Bradleys down to Camp Fallujah?

CB: Yes, we did.

MM: Was that in several different serials or just one large serial?

CB: We moved in four separate serials. Charlie Company departed Camp Cooke at 0445 on 2 November as the fourth serial in a four-serial movement along Route Senators to Route Force to Route Huskies to Camp Fallujah. Movement to Camp Fallujah was stalled for approximately one hour as the company was on the elevated portion of Route Force, due to a maintenance issue in one of the leading serials. Once movement began again, our convoy speed was kept at a slower than planned pace, in an effort to maintain space between serials 4 and 3. Movement to Camp Fallujah was otherwise uneventful, with the exception of one non-casualty producing IED that detonated on a 3d platoon Bradley inflicting no damage to personnel or equipment. We closed on Camp Fallujah early in the afternoon, conducted post-operations preventative maintenance checks and services (PMCS), and began preparation for combat tasks.

MM: What happened when you rolled into Camp Fallujah? Did the Marines have things set up for you?

CB: As far as the big pieces that really mattered – from my point of view as a company commander – they did a fine job receiving us, considering the large package of vehicles, personnel and equipment we brought with us. We rolled into Camp Fallujah and immediately received fuel and directions to the area that had been designated for us to park and conduct maintenance on our Bradleys, which was my first priority of work following the road march. I didn't do very much coordination directly with the Marines at that point, because I was going through the battalion, but the one thing that does stick out in my head is that there were no tents for my company. It wasn't a huge deal and we managed to make do; other than that it was fine. I remember a lot of other units passing through. It was an exciting time, like the calm before the storm where you could tell there were a lot of people coming from a lot of different areas and they were just fixing to put the hurt on some people. Morale was high.

MM: Did you guys have any rock drills with the Marines or any sort of planning with them prior to going into Fallujah?

CB: With the exception of the direct planning I conducted with the Iraqi Army leaders and their Marine advisors, the majority of the planning and coordinating with our Marine higher headquarters was conducted by the task force staff. The company commanders attended the regimental rock drill, and I remember seeing one slide that displayed fixed-wing air assets stacked upon each other for what seemed like miles; it was very impressive. The most useful rehearsals and coordination exercises were conducted at the task force level. The task force conducted several internal rehearsals, and I of course executed numerous internal rehearsals within my company. That's one thing that's etched in my mind about our time in Camp Fallujah before the attack. So much energy at all levels: the individual level, the organizational level, both the leaders and the soldiers. In those final days before crossing the LD, we maintained our equipment and we rehearsed. That's how you ease nerves. You make sure every single piece of equipment that's coming through the breach works like it's supposed to. Then you check it again. You rehearse everything. You rehearse your actions as an organization, and in your quiet time you rehearse your own actions in different situations. Those two actions, along with prayer, are the most important ways my soldiers occupied their time in Camp Fallujah.

MM: Can you talk me through the pull out for Fallujah and getting set to LD once the breach is blown on 8 November?

CB: The task and purpose for Charlie 2-7 – Comanche Company – changed several times during preparations at Camp Fallujah. Our final mission was to secure Route Henry to facilitate the freedom of maneuver of the task force/regimental combat team (RCT); on orders, follow and assume the TF main effort.

Our specified tasks included maintaining appropriate combat power – specifically ammunition, for which the task force had a finite amount of 25 millimeter high explosive (HE) with which to conduct resupply – to follow and assume either Cougar (Charlie 3-8) and/or Apache (Alpha 2-7), or to secure casualty evacuation (CASE-VAC) efforts in a potentially isolated urban environment. Our initial plan involved passing through the breach, assaulting east on Phase Line April, and then attacking south on Phase Line Henry with an intermediate limit of advance of Phase Line Cathy followed by Phase Line Fran. After several delays, the TF crossed the LD through the breach. As Cougar and Apache traveled east on Phase Line April, Comanche held at the release point near the farmhouse approximately 500 meters from the breach site. On order, we initiated movement to the breach. During our rehearsals and planning sessions, I had envisioned the task force exploding through the breach one company after the other. What we ended up experiencing, however, was in fact a very slow process, executed a few hundred meters at a time. Once we closed on the breach sight, one of the reasons for our delays became very clear. During our final approach to the breach site, we witnessed a scene that can only be described as absolute chaos. A sea of Humvees from the Marines had formed, apparently in preparation for passage through the breach, and every one of them had a chem light on their antenna. This amplified our challenges in passing through the breach – a task already made difficult by the fact that the marking system for the breach relied on chem lights, which were invisible to the thermal sights in our Bradleys. The addition of this unidentified wheeled unit, positioned incorrectly in the order of movement and now parked outside of the breach sight with chem lights on their antennas, created an obstacle that would be unpassable without dismounting ground guides. Therefore, I decided to dismount my lead platoon leader, Lieutenant William Lewis, to ground guide our column through the maze of wheeled vehicles. Once through the breach, Comanche traveled east on Phase Line April as planned. Rather than continuing south on Phase Line Henry, however, our limit of advance remained the intersection of Phase Line April and Phase Line Henry. The company established a series of attack by fire positions oriented north to south from Phase Line Henry to Phase Line Jacob.

MM: So now you're in position and you're waiting until you can take off down Route Henry. Could you talk me through when you actually start moving into the city down Henry?

CB: As dawn broke, we began movement down Phase Line Henry to Phase Line Kathy. Initially, the company established a series of section-sized attack by fire positions oriented east and west along Phase Line Henry, with a limit of advance (LOA) of Phase Line Donna. To increase our understanding of the terrain and the enemy, we began to conduct section-sized movements to contact from west to east between Phase Line Henry and Phase Line George. This is when we began

to make contact. The company's first contact was initiated by 3d Platoon's Alpha Section, led by Sergeant Loukus, in the vicinity of the 213 block between Henry and George. The three-vehicle element, consisting of Alpha Section, 3d Platoon, and my command Bradley engaged and destroyed an entrenched enemy in what appeared to be a fortified schoolhouse, with 25 millimeter HE. It soon became apparent that in the battlespace between Phase Line Henry and Phase Line George, we could expect to encounter significant contact with the enemy. The company secured two platoon strongpoints at approximately noon on the first day of the battle. 1st Platoon seized a building on the northwestern corner of the intersection of Cathy and Henry. 3d Platoon seized a building on the eastern side of Henry halfway between Cathy and Donna. From these strongpoints, both platoons began to conduct section-sized movements to contact in the battlespace separating Phase Line Henry and Phase Line George. A coordinated fire line (CFL) was drawn east-west along Phase Line Beth, and the restricted fire line (RFL) along Phase Line George remained intact. The Phase Line Beth CFL was soon adjusted south to Phase Line Cathy. We experienced heavy contact in the alleys separating Henry and George throughout the first day, and engaged enemy elements both fighting from within fortified buildings and repositioning through the alleyways. Additionally, we engaged and destroyed all personal vehicles to reduce the VBIED threat to friendly elements, and called for indirect fire on any buildings that appeared to be fortified. When the enemy initiated contact, he initiated with RPG and automatic rifle fire. They predominately initiated contact with sequential salvos of RPGs, as opposed to coordinated ambushes tied into planned obstacles. I'd like to think that this was because we attacked in a direction and manner that he didn't expect. At the time, I remember thinking it was an indicator that our actions were forcing contact with the enemy on our terms as opposed to his. It's my impression that once he identified our main avenue of attack as Phase Line Henry, he attempted to reposition in that direction. Through the actions of the great soldiers of the company, fighting in sections and led by NCOs like Staff Sergeant Young, Sergeant Loukus and Staff Sergeant Lewis, we broke any plans they may have had to reposition and denied them any access to Phase Line Henry from east to west. Absolutely no contact was made by any friendly element along Comanche's portion of Phase Line Henry during movement to and from the task force support area (TFSA). As night fell, the company altered its tactic for engaging and destroying insurgent forces between Henry and George. Platoons were ordered to continue to conduct movements to contact, but instead of attempting to maneuver on the insurgent positions, they were to fix the enemy with 25 millimeter/coax while the company fire support officer (FSO) and enlisted tactical air controller (ETAC) coordinated for indirect and fixed-wing aviation fires. This technique was used repeatedly throughout the night, utilizing 120 millimeter mortar fires, 155 millimeter artillery fires and 500-pound bombs delivered by fixed-wing aviation. As insurgents engaged Comanche

forces with small arms or RPG fire, we engaged with the largest sized ordinance the FSO could achieve clearance for. This proved to be highly successful. As dawn broke on Day 2, we identified the enemy's most dangerous course of action as using the buildings surrounding the two strongpoints to mask his maneuver as he conducted an attack or attempted to infiltrate the buildings with a suicide bomber. To mitigate this threat, the company repositioned the command post (CP) to a building on the southeast corner of the intersection of Phase Line Henry and Phase Line Donna. Both platoons were brought to this new location, to provide additional security and to allow the infantry squads to enact a much needed rest plan. The company continued to conduct movements to contact throughout the day between Phase Line Henry and Phase Line George, with the southern LOA being adjusted to Phase Line Elizabeth. In comparison to the previous day, fewer contacts were initiated by the enemy and more contacts were by us. Both platoons identified more and more insurgents bounding from building to building, and fewer insurgents laying in ambush. Significantly, as the company was repositioning from the first CP on the eastern side of Henry mid-way between Phase Line Cathy and Phase Line Donna, we witnessed the first group of insurgents surrendering under the white flag. Moving east to west down an alleyway adjacent to our CP, approximately 12 to 15 military-aged males and one elderly female approached Henry waving a white flag. Staff Sergeant Gregory Van Horn identified these insurgents and fired several bursts of 7.62 coax as warning shots to halt their advance. Iraqi Army soldiers, proceeding down Henry behind Comanche Company, received and detained the personnel and then extracted them back to the detention holding facility. This pattern of handling surrendering insurgents would repeat itself often over the next few days. The company CP remained at the corner of Henry and Donna for approximately 18 hours. That night, the company was called to suppress enemy positions that had pinned down Marine forces in the vicinity of the intersection of Henry and Fran. The company led with 3d Platoon, who engaged targets to the south and southeast until their ready boxes were depleted, and then passed through 1st Platoon, who engaged targets more discriminately primarily to the southeast. As Cougar and Apache pushed the attack down Henry, Comanche remained at Readiness Condition 1 (REDCON-1) awaiting orders to assist with CASEVAC or to follow and assume either company's mission.

MM: What was happening at this time over on your left flank? Were you in contact with the RCT that was coming in through that area?

CB: To our west was Phase Line Henry. We knew the Marines would be coming through there so that was not our sector to go into, but to our east to Phase Line George, there was nobody there. At this point, we did not have visual contact with any friendly elements east of Phase Line George. With that said, I understood Phase Line George as an RFL, and that was clear enough guidance for me to fight



my company. The open battlespace between Phase Line George and Phase Line Henry, given my mission to prevent any movement of enemy forces attempting to maneuver on the flank of either Apache or Cougar, enabled my company a freedom of movement that was unique compared to other elements fighting along Phase Line Henry. This was a sizable portion of terrain, in which I knew with absolute certainty what the positions of friendly elements were, since they were all under my control and reporting on my net. Led by competent, aggressive leaders like Lieutenant Lewis and Sergeants First Class Parham and Spann, they proved lethal in this environment. I couldn't have asked for a better group of soldiers and leaders.

MM: Can you give me an idea of what kind of contact you experienced?

CB: It changed over time. At first, it came from fortified buildings just as we had been briefed. We had been told they would fight from fortified buildings and that there would be fanatics all over the place. There would be suicide bombers waiting for infantry squads to come in and then they would blow the building. In the beginning of the first day, we witnessed probably the most competent small arms and RPG fire that we'd seen during our time in Iraq: well aimed shots that were hitting on Bradleys regularly, luckily to no effect. When we took fire from these buildings, it didn't even cross our minds to try to clear them. We just destroyed them. In Najaf, we discovered that entire buildings could be set on fire if gunners engaged the fuel blivets that were kept on the roofs, which proved to be a very effective and efficient technique to kill enemy with limited commitment of dismounted infantry. The houses in Fallujah did not have these blivets on the roofs – perhaps removed during their defensive preparations – however on occasion our 25 millimeter would ignite the linens inside the building as we engaged enemy. Whether we engaged with 25 millimeter, air-delivered ordinance or both, we attempted to fight with the full force of the firepower at our disposal in every engagement. We had that open battlespace, and once we got our CP established, got our ETACs to where they could see fires and our FSO, Lieutenant Passereli, where he could talk, we'd call in the biggest amount of ordinance we could find while we maintained contact. By the end of the first day and into the next day, we started to see the enemy engaging in a way that seemed less consistent and more erratic, consistent with someone trying to reposition. We would catch them in the alleyways, they would duck into the buildings and then we'd fight them from there; much different for our soldiers and crews than being engaged from a fortified position. We had them off balance and had complete firepower overmatch. By the end of the first couple days – and I don't know where they were headed to, if it was Jolan Park or further south – but my impression was they were trying to reinforce and they weren't expecting us to be fighting the way we were. Maybe they were expecting

us to get into the buildings and clear them, but we didn't do that. So they were trying to come to us and we were catching them as they were off balance.

MM: What kind of indirect fire were you guys calling in?

CB: We were calling in whatever we could get. We started with joint direct attack munitions (JDAMs) and worked our way down. We had the luxury of being able to do that because, between George and Henry, I knew exactly what friendlies were there because it was my company – and if it wasn't in my company, then it wasn't friendly. One of our challenges was getting our snipers or our observers into good positions because all the buildings were about the same level. There was a mosque at the intersection of Henry and Cathy and we had talked to the leaders there, since we had some of the Iraqi Army with us. We coordinated to put our ETACs up in the mosque minaret because it was the only place they could see from; and the enemy was using this technique pretty effectively on us as well, I might add. My ETACs began calling ordinance with great effectiveness. We called for 500-pound bombs and 155s, but the 120 millimeter mortar from our battalion was definitely the most accurate indirect fire, with an incredible response time. It's just a phenomenal system with its digital grid system and its pinpoint accuracy.

MM: That's what I've heard about the 120. I interviewed Colonel Michael Shupp and he said it was unbelievable. The Marines were even calling in missions with it.

CB: Absolutely phenomenal.

MM: Could you tell me about the Air Force and Marines you had with your company?

CB: The Air Force gave us two ETACs that worked as a team up in the mosque, and they were heroes in my book. There was a very thin stairway to get up to the top, and in the event they started taking any serious fire, it would be very difficult for them to get down. The best we could do was guard it with a Bradley. In addition to Air Force ETACs, every company had some plug-and-play guys from the Marines. We received a demolition team, which consisted of a corporal and two Marines. It was great to have them. We didn't use them to gain entry into buildings very often; if there was a building we needed to breach, we blew a hole in it with our 25 millimeter or rammed a hole in it with our Bradley. Captain Pete Glass' tanks already conducted all the big breaches up and down Route Henry, so they didn't execute that type of mission for us. We did find several caches of weapons as we were clearing rooms along Route Henry, and Marine demo guys were the ones we used to blow up those caches. That was pretty much the extent of what the Marines demo team did for us – blew caches in place and served as riflemen. They were a great part of the team.

MM: What's happening with your company as Alpha 2-7 takes Jolan Park and Charlie 3-8 is moving down towards Highway 10 or Phase Line Fran?

CB: I don't remember exactly what accomplishments both Alpha 2-7 and Charlie 3-8 had each day. On the morning of Day 3, however, my company reoccupied the stronghold previously held by 1st Platoon at the northwest corner of Henry and Cathy. This position held the best fields of fire and observation, and sat at the corner of Cathy, a four-lane road. Additionally, Cathy held a more central position along our portion of Henry, which by now was becoming a heavily traveled main supply route (MSR). Mid-day of Day 3, Apache Company suffered a series of casualties. Comanche responded with a section of vehicles, which could sprint down the MSR from the intersection of Henry and Cathy very quickly at this point. Following the extraction of Apache's casualties, Comanche maintained 100 percent of its combat power facing south on Henry, awaiting orders to follow and assume as we had rehearsed. The orders did not come and, after three hours, the company returned to conducting movements to contact and securing the strongpoint at Henry-Cathy. Later the next day, we repositioned and they retrograded back to Cathy and Henry. Our new responsibility was to secure Henry between Donna and Grace, tying in with Cougar's positions at the intersection of Grace and Henry. Once Apache got back on their feet, they picked up our mission on the northern portion of Henry. We transferred control of the strongpoint on Henry-Cathy, and occupied a new position on the west side of Henry between Donna and Elizabeth; this would be our final location for the company CP during the Battle of Fallujah. From this position, we controlled Henry from Donna to Grace through continued movements to contact. Enemy contact during these missions became increasingly sporadic, gradually being replaced by increased numbers of individuals surrendering. As friendly elements began their north to south approach through west and east of Phase Line Henry, our method of controlling Henry eventually transitioned from patrols to section-sized mounted observation posts at the major road intersections. The M2A3's commander's independent viewer (CIV) enabled two Bradleys to actively scan in four directions, day or night, with crews remaining in the closed protected position.

MM: Could you talk me through the rest of the fight from 11 through 21 November and what you recall?

CB: After about the sixth day into the fight, contact became increasingly sporadic along Phase Line Henry. We weren't taking as much fire, and if we did it was increasingly less coordinated and deliberate. We executed CASEVAC on several occasions, predominately for Marines with injuries inflicted by indirect fire. At times it would happen right before our crew's eyes. A section would control an intersection and mortars would begin falling on a group of Marines getting ready to enter a building. We'd grab them in the backs of our Bradleys and run them

back to the train station, which was where the aid station was. It was just the right thing to do. This was the guidance I had issued to the company, given the decline in significant contact we were experiencing: if you see a Marine element that needed CASEVAC, your priority is to get them to the aid station and then get back to the fight as fast as you can. With each day the contact grew less and less, and a growing sense of frustration could be felt among my soldiers. We could hear Marines making contact and wanted to stay in the fight. Without knowing exactly which Marine elements were in contact and what their locations were, there was simply no way to fire across the RFL to the west of Henry. The Marines were clearing in that area west of Phase Line Henry and it seemed like they were clearing the same buildings several times. It became increasingly difficult to track the location of Marines – and we’re talking about dismounted squads – to ensure that our fire control measures were still relevant. The difficult piece for me involved ensuring that their positions were disseminated down to the crew and squad level. When you’re firing 25 millimeter, you can’t just pull the trigger without knowing who’s behind the building you’re firing at. We didn’t have that kind of situational awareness.

MM: Do you think it was a factor of the Marines not having Blue Force Tracker?

CB: Blue Force Tracker is a great thing to help, but there is no substitute for a well planned, coordinated and rehearsed visual marking system. Commanders simply must maintain positive control of their elements and communicate complex concepts like RFLs and CFLs down to the soldier and crew level, in a language that tough American infantrymen, who have got a tremendous amount of adrenaline in their veins and have perhaps never drawn a set of operational graphics, can understand. This was my biggest concern. Most of what we were seeing was dismounted infantry – clearing buildings moving through alleyways. Even with Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade and Below (FBCB2), I still sent reports over the task force net and still received reports from my platoons and sections over my company net. I had the battalion TOC deconflicting the movement of Comanche, Cougar and Apache, and they did a great job. Communicating with the Marines, however, was very difficult. West of Phase Line Henry was Marine territory and we all knew that. But when you’re talking about the Marines being a few buildings away from us and he’s got a rifle and I’ve got a Bradley with a 25 millimeter chain gun – it quickly became apparent that lines drawn on a map and effective crosstalk at the battalion level were less important than individual squads and fire teams knowing with absolute certainty that the shadow he just saw down the alley was a Marine. And this is just as important: to have confidence that that Marine knows that my guy is a soldier. This is tough enough to do among squads operating on the same platoon net or even companies operating on the same battalion net, but here we were talking about soldiers and Marines in a very dense urban area along a task

force boundary. I think you've really got to guard against relying on Blue Force Tracker or FBCB2 too much, especially at the company level and below. These challenges I'm talking about aren't some newly discovered concept, nor are they unique to a joint environment. Our doctrine has stated for a long time that operating along boundaries is a difficult task. I can attest to that. It's up to the squad or team leader on the ground to make it happen.

MM: How did you usually track them? Did you have any means whatsoever of talking directly to the Marines or did you have to call your TOC to find out who these guys were?

CB: We had a comm sheet that enabled us to talk to the different battalions and different companies, which was adequate at first. The problem was figuring out which company somebody was in, especially once 1-3 Marines began detailed clearing west of Route Henry. Luckily by this time, the amount of contact we experienced declined considerably, so we were able to enforce a much tighter weapons control posture. The most significant challenge regarding direct communication with the Marines involved our efforts to coordinate with Marines to get into the fight. You've got a company of battle-hardened fighters. They fought extremely well against a tough enemy for past few days; they've got firepower and mobility. They're a mech task force and they can do a lot of damage. All they want to do is keep fighting. They've got brothers in the Marine Corps who are phenomenally brave but are fighting with significantly less firepower than we can bring with one Bradley section. We can help and we want to help, but without effective communication and a visual marking system that's agreed upon by both the Marine squad in the building and my Bradleys, we're limited in what we can do. Once we had killed all our targets and Henry was secure, we just wanted to get back into the fight and help these guys out. We were either doing CASEVACs for these guys – throwing their young Marines in the backs of our Bradleys – or we're watching their CASEVACs going past us on the street. All we want to do is get in there and continue killing enemy.

MM: What about the Iraqi units that were there? Jane Arraf of CNN told me that the most dangerous place you could be in Iraq was in front of an Iraqi battalion.

CB: [Laughter] The success of the Iraqi people to field an Army that's trained and equipped is essential to our strategic objectives in that theater of operations. I understand the reason for committing them to the fight, and the fact that they were able to play a role was extremely important for many reasons. But it was difficult. One of our battalion mantras was "skill plus will equals kill." The Iraqi Army in Fallujah had the will, there's no doubt about that. Additionally, I believe they had been given a task that was within their skill: clearing buildings along Route Henry

simplified their command and control and kept the Iraqi Army elements close to my forces if they needed additional support. Looking back, however, I would have preferred their introduction into the battle to have happened on Day 2, Day 3 or even later, rather than the first morning in Fallujah. There was still a considerable amount of fighting going on, and the sound of small arms, RPG, and of course 25 millimeter chain gun was everywhere. It takes a certain level of discipline to fight within your sectors of fire, to adhere to established fire control measures, and to maintain awareness of friendly elements fighting in close vicinity to your position. The United States has the best trained, equipped and led military in the world, and I'm convinced we have the best soldiers anywhere. Still, preventing fratricide is nonetheless a challenge that takes a considerable amount of energy and thought. It doesn't just happen automatically. It takes an incredible amount of discipline and training to fight within your sectors of fire, and I don't think there's another army in the world that could do it as well as our Army. The Iraqi Army, at the time of this fight, was still in the process of building that level of discipline. Here's an example: As the battle continued past the first week, an issue started to develop regarding large numbers of dogs ending up in and around our CP area. The battlefield was not necessarily policed very well during the fight, and we had every reason to believe that these dogs were carrying disease. Our soldiers could not shoot the dogs, however, because the Iraqi Army had established its CP directly across from us on Phase Line Henry. To shoot even just one round to kill a dog would result in a 15-minute firefight between the Iraqis just shooting down the alleyway at shadows – and our guys trying not to get hit by ricochets or anything else. The new Iraqi Army at the time of the fight in Fallujah was still in its infancy in many ways, and from what I hear they're continuing to make huge strides. It was very interesting working with the Iraqi Army at that time, but it was difficult. Regardless, the fact that they participated in the liberation of one of their own cities and assisted in the destruction of a group of fanatics that were killing their own countrymen can be counted as a huge success.

MM: Is there anything you'd like to impart to a brand new company commander or other officers in the Army from your experiences over there?

CB: Fight with the full amount of firepower at your disposal as is appropriate within the ROE. This nation is blessed with the most courageous, intelligent and resourceful servicemen in the world, whether they serve as soldiers, sailors, Marines or airmen. When it counts, they will do their job with valor and a competence that's unmatched by any other fighting force in the world. Period. I do not believe that firepower is a substitute for courage. At the same time, it's our job as commanders to think through the challenges of the battle and find intelligent and creative ways to bring all of the firepower at our disposal on the enemy at the appropriate time, so our soldiers don't have to fall back on that courage for which

they are so well known. There is no such thing as a fair fight. If you fight fair, your soldiers will pay the price in the end. Sometimes, soldiers need their commanders to be smarter tactically than they need them to be brave – especially when operating in a joint environment. Lastly, I think we’ve got to break our mentality of the urban fight as purely a light infantry endeavor. With our current capabilities as a joint force, it’s not. The combination of the direct firepower of a mechanized task force – or even more so of a combined arms battalion – along with the observation and ordnance capabilities delivered by our aircraft, have proven to be an unstoppable team in supporting the light infantry squad, on whose shoulders the responsibility of closing with and destroying the enemy within buildings and rooms will remain for the foreseeable future.

MM: I’ve got a copy of the 2-7 AAR here and it says under the heading “Maneuver”: “Not a precision strike force; caused significant damage when employed in an urban area.” Do you think the Marines underestimated what sort of destructive capabilities you guys had? I was talking to Major Tim Karcher and he said something to the effect of, “We did some pretty robust destruction.”

CB: Absolutely. But if you think about it, there’s been very few times that a modern mechanized task force has been unleashed in a high-intensity urban fight. We had great equipment and we had earned experience in the streets of Najaf. Most importantly, we had great leadership and phenomenal soldiers. I don’t think the enemy knew what we could do to them and how fast we could do it. When Pete Glass took his tanks and just rolled over the barricades they had set up, they weren’t expecting that. When Ed Twaddell’s company busted through, took the Jolan and destroyed everything in their way, they weren’t expecting that either. They had fortified their positions, they thought we would fight them house-to-house from the start, and they had decided they would fight to the death. Well, they did fight to the death; it just wasn’t as they had anticipated. I don’t think anybody expected us to move that quickly down Henry and execute our objectives. Personally, I believe that if Task Force 2-7 CAV had been given a little more time in the city prior to introducing the Marines or Iraqi Army – even just another 12 hours – we could have done a lot more damage than we did. Obviously, once you enter friendly light infantry, there is a considerable need to assume a more restrictive weapons posture, resulting in a decline to a certain degree in the amount of firepower you’re using. So yes, I definitely agree with Major Karcher’s statement. I think I heard somebody liken it once to playing tackle football in a hallway. It was a pretty interesting time.

MM: Do you have anything else you’d like to add?

CB: Not at this time, thanks for putting this together.

MM: Thank you so much for doing this interview.





# Captain Chris Carlson

## 20 July 2006

CI: This is Dr. Christopher K. Ives (CI) with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Today is 20 July 2006 and I'm interviewing Captain Chris Carlson (CC). If at any time during our discussion on your experiences in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and the November 2004 battle of Fallujah we move towards something classified that you don't feel comfortable discussing, please let me know that that's not something you can discuss and we'll change the subject and move on. Would you state your name and rank and where you're currently assigned?

CC: My name is Captain Christopher W. Carlson and I'm assigned as a medical planner/operations officer for the 2-91 Training Support Brigade (TSB) stationed out of Fort Carson, Colorado, currently on a permanent change of station (PCS) to Fort Riley, Kansas.

CI: Where were you assigned and in what capacity during your involvement in the battle of Fallujah?

CC: I was the medical platoon leader assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), Task Force 2-2 Infantry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 1st Infantry Division (ID).

CI: What were your responsibilities?

CC: My responsibilities were as the overall medical planner for operations, personnel administration, patient administration and logistical operations for the medical support of the infantry task force.

CI: You were actually part of 2-2?

CC: Yes, I was assigned to 2-2 Infantry.

CI: Were you part of the medical battalion and attached to 2-2 or were you literally assigned to them?

CC: I was literally assigned to HHC, 2-2 Infantry.

CI: Where were you when the battalion was alerted to form a task force in support of the Marines in Fallujah?

CC: I was conducting normal operations at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Normandy in Iraq in the Diyala Province.

CI: What were your normal FOB operations like in support of the element there?

CC: Typically my platoon was split up into three sections. I had a section of line medics – essentially my line medics were cross attached to infantry and armor platoons in all the three line companies that were assigned or attached to my infantry battalion. I had an aid station section which we ran 24-hour operations out of a makeshift aid station that we created when we first arrived in March 2004. I also had an evacuation section which I owned but I would regularly cross attach to my infantry and armor companies. It was basically mission dependent in support of operations out in sector.

CI: Were your evac guys under armor?

CC: They were. Typically they would go out in M-113s and it was really essentially mission dependent. If we were doing military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) when contact was either projected or imminent, they would go in 113s. If we were doing logistics package (LOGPAC) or combat patrol type operations or operations that required swift movement, we would utilize 997s which have a Kevlar outer shell in the patient compartment and the operator compartment had add-on armor. I guess that armor was only good up to 7.62 millimeter but we were pretty lucky and didn't take any casualties in any of our ambulances that would go out. On several missions we utilized both 113s and 997s. We would utilize 113 support right there at the point of action and then we'd utilize 997s for basically evacuation from point of injury or point of patient evacuation up to either our aid station or further up to higher echelons of medical care.

CI: Did a lot of battalions have surgeons?

CC: We actually have what's called the Professional Officer Filler Information System (PROFIS) so we had a surgeon with us, Major (Dr.) Lisa DeWitt, who was an emergency medical physician from Florida, a National Guard unit there. But as far as the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), we're not assigned one when we're not technically at war. Usually we're given a physician assistant (PA) as our MTOE interim physician.

CI: How does PROFIS work?

CC: Throughout the hospitals in the Army community, doctors, nurses, medics, medical service corps officers – all medical professionals – are open to being required to fill a PROFIS position depending on what type of unit they're assigned to. So if a unit such as an infantry battalion doesn't typically have a doctor assigned to it and it goes to war, they will be assigned one of these PROFIS fillers. Medical personnel will be pulled out of the hospital somewhere and then they'll be attached to the combat unit that goes to war. Essentially there's an MTOE PA who's always with an infantry, armor, artillery or engineer battalion who's always training, always with that unit and always in charge of covering over the medics as

far as utilizing the [inaudible] for the medics to work under you. It's a special case when there's an actual doctor that's given to a battalion.

CI: At what point were you brought into the planning and military decision-making process (MDMP) of the battalion's deployment in support of the Marines?

CC: I think it was fairly early into the MDMP process. I don't remember the specific date we were brought in but –

CI: It was at FOB Normandy?

CC: It was. It was still pre-command decision and was actually still before there was a decision brief even given to Lieutenant Colonel Pete Newell, our battalion commander. We were actually players in the logistics planning piece and the actual mission analysis piece.

CI: What sort of things in the course of action development suggested themselves to you as medical support issues?

CC: There were definitely different aspects to it. First we discussed things with the battalion operations officer (S3), executive officer (XO) and HHC commander such as what routes of supply would be used and what main supply routes (MSRs) and alternate supply routes (ASRs) were being planned on being used before, during and after combat operations. That was the number one thing: you need to make sure your supply routes are open so we could get our Class VIII medical supplies to and from where we were receiving patient casualties. On top of that, it's basically location of where you plan on putting your logistics area, your supply area, as well as where the battalion aid station and your evac routes were being placed on the battlefield. Those are the main areas you first look at in the mission analysis piece.

CI: You were not only providing advice to the S3 during the course of action development, but you were also turning around and telling your PA and your non-commissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) what you were looking at so they could start their troop leadership procedures (TLPs).

CC: Right. I had a pretty proactive PA. A lot of providers sit back and let their medical service corps officer basically do everything, and then other PAs are a little more proactive, more assertive about the types of support they want to provide. So the PA, the doctor and I actually made up a pretty good team as far as our outlook and what our vision and concept of support was medical wise that we wanted to and felt we should provide the battalion. So when we first found out about the mission, between the three of us, we talked about how we would like see our support given to the battalion, and then we were able to come to a consensus and approach the battalion on our preferred courses of action. We let them know

the parameters we needed as a medical platoon in order to provide that proper support we wanted to give.

CI: How long had your surgeon – since she was an augmentee – been with the battalion at this point? The battalion had been in country more than six months at this point.

CC: When we first deployed to Iraq, we had an interim doctor given to us who was basically sub-par, so we were able to change out him for her. I believe it was early April – sometime around 1 April 2004 – that we were actually able to get her from the forward support battalion (FSB) that was supporting us and get her down to the infantry battalion. Then it took us forever to get attachment orders for her, so officially I don't think she was attached to us until sometime in May or early June, but she had been with us since early April.

CI: So she really had an opportunity to see how the battalion was organized, get to know the personalities, and pick up some of the soldier things that aren't normally part of a doctor's professional knowledge.

CC: Right, and she was really good about that. One of her biggest priorities was to really get to know the soldiers, the leaders and also – being a female in a typically all male infantry unit – she kind of took on a motherly role as well, not only for the soldiers, the company commanders and junior leaders, but also for the battalion leadership as well. That being one of her largest priorities, she really had a personal conviction to give the best medical support she could possibly give.

CI: So you had a great opportunity to get together as a team well before this operation came along.

CC: Oh yeah. As a matter of fact, at the end of the spring timeframe when the uprisings were going on around Ba'qubah and An Najaf with Moqtada al-Sadr and in Sadr City, we actually deployed as a forward task force for the first time to cordon off the city of Najaf. That was really our first chance to work together. In the beginning stages, it was a very similar mission to the Fallujah mission as far as splitting our battalion, our companies and our platoons and preparing. That mission actually gave us a lot of lessons learned and prepared us mentally for the mission we did in Fallujah. So we actually did it once before Fallujah.

CI: You mentioned lessons learned. Within the medical section – was this part of the anthropology of the medical section or was this part of how the battalion learned, or both?

CC: Speaking specifically towards our predeployment before Fallujah?

CI: Right. You mentioned you guys learned a lot during An Najaf.

CC: Oh definitely, for actually both. Your leadership at the battalion level is going to learn a lot more about what your company capabilities are when you spilt a whole battalion up. You have to maintain 24-hour operations in the sector you own, but now you have to move half your task force through a totally new sector, go 400 kilometers away, and then continue 24-hour operations at the new sector. So there were a lot of lessons learned around the entire battalion; but specifically for us we identified a lot of lessons learned such as: instead of bringing one five-ton forward with Class VIII supplies, we need to bring two five-tons and shove all our other medical vehicles we take along with as much Class VIII as possible because we're not guaranteed proper Class VIII support. You have to take that into account, as well as how your movement serials interact. How many vehicles do you put in each serial? How many soldiers should I take along as a medical platoon leader? Obviously I'll still have one medic per platoon as line medics, but do I need four ambulances, do I only need to take two or do I need more? Same thing with the providers. Do I need to take our PA and our physician along or can we do it with only one of them? So there were a lot of actions like that that we were able to explore and develop strong opinions on what we wanted to do in future operations.

CI: How did the deployment go during the first phase of the operation from FOB Normandy to Camp Fallujah? Were there any issues on the convoy down there?

CC: I can't really speak specifically a lot about that because about 10 days before they actually left for Fallujah I went on R&R. I was scheduled to go on R&R much later but a lot of us who had R&R scheduled for the time when we possibly could be in Fallujah were sent early. Even the battalion commander went, as well as several of the battalion leadership and several of the company lieutenants and platoon leaders. So they were thinking at the end of September they would go on R&R and then come back and go to Fallujah. From what I understand, the timeline to move down to Fallujah was expedited by a few days so the projected return date of me and other people interrupted that timeline. I was watching Fox News and CNN like a hawk when I was home and, sure enough, all of a sudden combat operations in Fallujah began. So of course I got on the plane and came back to FOB Normandy about one full day after the cordon happened but before they actually breached into the city. I had made plans with the battalion XO that I would be catching one of the next LOGPAC birds out of Ba'qubah to Fallujah. I sat at FOB Normandy for about a day before I was able to be transported down to the brigade FOB in Ba'qubah and then catch one of our LOGPAC flights into FOB Fallujah. I've seen many videos about the actual movement down there and I know they had Apache escorts the entire movement from FOB Normandy through Baghdad all the way to FOB Fallujah. I believe there were no improvised explosive device (IED) incidents on the way down but we did have an IED incident on the way back

after combat operations were over. It actually went off right behind my vehicle. But as far as I know, there weren't too many issues with the movement south but, again, I wasn't part of that movement, unfortunately. I sure wish I had been.

CI: You were able to fall in on your section at Camp Fallujah, right?

CC: I did. I arrived at Camp Fallujah at midnight on 12 November, a full day and a half after the breach had occurred and combat operations had begun.

CI: At this time, how had the medical section task organized to support the combat phase of the operation?

CC: We split our platoon in half. I left a small treatment section and half of the evac section back at FOB Normandy and we were augmented by the FSB with one PA and I believe about 10 or 12 medics from the FSB – Charlie Med. That freed us up to take both of my providers – my PA and my physician – which we recognized as a definite must. We knew this time would be different than Najaf and we were going to be conducting combat operations. We had such strength and confidence in both our providers that we decided we needed them both down there and our forward aid station was actually more robust than what doctrine would tell a medical platoon leader to do. I had all my line medics for our Alpha Company and then the two companies we had attached to us – the Brigade Reconnaissance Troop (BRT) and Alpha 2-63 – they each came with their own organic medics, so I wasn't liable for having to take more medics out of my platoon and give them to them. Actually the BRT medics technically already belonged to me because I had given them the medics they had when we first arrived in Iraq, because a BRT doesn't actually have organic medics in their force structure. I had about 15 personnel in my medical platoon down there, not counting myself and my two providers. So when we arrived, there were about 18 of us give or take. I left my platoon sergeant back at FOB Normandy so he could be the officer in charge (OIC) of operations back there in order to help the PA who came forward who wasn't accustomed to being separated from her medical company. We had a command vehicle, three wheeled frontline ambulances (FLAs), four medical evacuation 113s, a 577 for our command post and a five-ton for supplies.

CI: In your 577, what radio nets were you working?

CC: Typically I operated off a battalion net and both the command net and the administration/logistics (A&L) net, so I could talk to all the other logistics operators out there – specifically HHC, the logistics officer (S4) and the battalion maintenance officer (BMO). It was very important to know what was going on in the logistics area as well as the command channel so we could hear how the battle was progressing and if there were any casualties. But typically once a casualty was identified and we were in the middle of an evac, our communications would switch from the command net to the A&L net and we would work all that there

so we wouldn't take up valuable space on the command net. That way, the battle could continue to progress and they could continue to communicate about things. I had several radios in my command vehicle. I had my command vehicle parked right next to the 577, so that way we were effectively monitoring four nets at one time. I would typically drop down onto some of the company nets to monitor how some of the companies were doing, and I could talk to the FOB Fallujah medical center on single-channel plain text. Occasionally I would call them if we needed to get backfilled on certain supplies and also talk to them when we had a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) en route to their location.

CI: You weren't there yet when Command Sergeant Major Steve Faulkenberg was shot at the breach point, were you?

CC: No, that happened the night before I got there. When I came in that had already happened.

CI: I was going to use that as an example. Who got on what net to call for his MEDEVAC? How would that have been handled?

CC: I don't remember exactly how his was handled and I didn't ask how that went down. I was pretty sensitive to that situation because a lot of people were pretty upset about him going down, so I didn't do a whole lot of digging on the history of his MEDEVAC. However, I could tell you that when our first XO, Lieutenant Ed Iwan, went down from Alpha Company, pretty much everything happened on the command net with him. We heard word that the Alpha Company XO had been wounded and there was no status on him. We actually dropped down to the company net to find out what was going on but we didn't get any answers back; and then approximately two minutes before they came rolling in with his Bradley into the aid station, they actually called over the battalion net that they were en route, that he was unconscious and they didn't know what his status was. But they rolled up shortly thereafter. Everything as far as coordinating his MEDEVAC with my medics and then also reporting to the FOB Fallujah aid station was all done off the command net.

CI: Once the task force was through the breach and the companies were tasked organized and inside the city and pushing forward, what is your section doing at this time? Where was the aid station set up once the battalion pushed through the breach?

CC: Where the battalion aid station was set up prior to where they were going over the breach – I'm not familiar with the exact grid location or anything like that. It's my understanding that they were actually at the start point of the breach right behind where the tactical command post (TAC) was located on the north side of the railroad tracks. I think it was located there for a couple hours, but I don't believe

it was there for much longer than the actual evening hours once the assault went through the breach and the battle was starting to progress south.

CI: Did you push forward into the city?

CC: No, we did not. My PA had the aid station hold position with the support element, which consisted of the cooks, the maintenance section and the HHC command section so they held their position to the north of the breach. And then once it moved south and the battle began, they came back east to the highway, moved across that and set up in an open area north of the cloverleaf for about 12 or 18 hours. I know they received heavy mortar fire there during the next day so they decided to move further south to the southeastern corner of the cloverleaf where we were finally settled on the east side of the exit ramp. Essentially we had two berms between the city and us. We were right by the overpass.

CI: Presumably out of mortar range by this time?

CC: You would hope so, but we still got mortared there. It was about 10 hours before I arrived and the aid station was dealing with a mass casualty that was mostly Iraqi Intervention Force (IIF) and enemy prisoners of war (EPWs) they were treating at the time. They were getting ready for MEDEVAC when quite a large artillery barrage came in. My medics covered their patients and all that but they got hit pretty hard. There was no damage to any medical supplies and we didn't take any casualties so we were pretty lucky on that. The HHC commander and his trucks were parked about 25 meters to the south of where my aid station was and a mortar landed right in between the trucks but didn't cause any equipment damage. It did, however, wound my commander's gunner in his hand.

CI: Did you push any of your 113s forward?

CC: Yes, we did. Each company team had a 113 forward with it following behind, so each platoon had a line medic and also a company senior line medic who would move with the company commander or the first sergeant – typically the company commander or the XO in their Bradley. And then as the first sergeants moved and supported their companies, my 113s were with each company so I had two forward in the city. We actually had armed them, one with a 240 and the other with a .50 cal. They were moving in concert with the first sergeant and his 113, so there were two vehicles and they both essentially required crew-served weapons in order to move freely through the city. That was the evacuation platform from the city to my aid station. We had configured all the first sergeant vehicles with at least one set of litter chains and one litter, so the first sergeants could also carry litter patients. Typically, though, my 113s would take the litter patients and would either use the first sergeant's 113 or Bradley for casualty evac, walking wounded and that type of thing.



CI: Is this doctrine or was this based on what you guys learned earlier in the deployment?

CC: It's kind of doctrinal but it was also based on what we learned and the best methods of movement. Basically the restrictions put upon us by Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) for vehicle movement in Iraq: it's definitely not doctrinal anymore based on linear battlefield lines. All doctrinal movement is either by ourselves as medical vehicles or we're given escorts such as military police (MPs) who are charged with security behind friendly lines, on our MSRs and ASRs. Essentially it takes a little bit of combat power away from units when they have to conduct evacuation operations within Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). They have to slice off security vehicles that are organic to the infantry and armor companies in order to escort the medical vehicles back to the aid station. A lot of times we would utilize either the maintenance sections – because they had a couple 1114s – or my HHC commander who had two 1114s with his first sergeant, and they would sometimes do some escort missions as well. Primarily my HHC commander, his first sergeant, or the BMO and the S4 would conduct escort missions from our aid station to FOB Fallujah, which was about two or three kilometers to the south.

CI: Where did you have your care providers at this point?

CC: Most of the time, both of them were actually located at the aid station. For two of our wounded soldiers that we had – both the Alpha Company XO who received a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) round that went through his Bradley, and one of our other soldiers who was severely wounded – my doctor actually went with the MEDEVAC vehicle to the FOB in order to continue life support actions on the soldiers as they were being evacuated, but they did not go forward into the city. I couldn't take that risk.

CI: I understand. So we're up to day four or five of the battle. Can you proceed from here chronologically with what happens next?

CC: When we moved further south into the industrial area, we had spent about two days preparing to get to the industrial area and crossed one of the routes – I don't remember which one. That's where our Alpha Company XO was mortally wounded. And then about a day later, our Alpha Company commander, Captain Sean Sims, was also mortally wounded and killed in action, and that brings us to the industrial area. A lot of it was them finding weapons caches and clearing that open area because there were multiple minefields and daisy-chained IEDs throughout there as well. We were also able to find and destroy a vehicle-borne IED factory. Our scouts received more casualties and my scout medic was wounded when an RPG impacted the 1114 gunner's shield. Luckily he didn't lose his finger but he had shrapnel wounds through his hand and arm so they had to evacuate him.

We ended up losing the gunner. He came to us KIA. There were quite a few more casualties that occurred days five through 10 just randomly throughout the day and evening. A lot of night operations fell off a little bit and there was more action happening in the morning hours before the heat of the afternoon, and then things would die down again. In the evening hours, we would call in mortar support and that kind of stuff. I remember a lot of 120 millimeter mortar support and a lot of close air support (CAS) missions going on throughout the days.

CI: You had mentioned treating the Iraqi friendly forces from that Iraqi battalion that was part of the task force. Were there any medical issues unique to dealing with indigenous forces?

CC: Yes. Of course it's always unique doing medical care for somebody who doesn't speak the same language as you – that's always a challenge. Our translators were really good, though. We had a couple Iraqi nationals who were dedicated to us that we utilized as translators, so that's always an interesting interaction. I know that units going over now get a lot more Arabic language instruction and how to utilize interpreters – instruction and that kind of stuff – but when we were over there, we got about 20 days at the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) and then off we went to Iraq. It was a lot of learn as you go. We had quite a bit of experience dealing with Iraqis and foreign language when we supported a lot of civil affairs (CA) missions, so that was probably the most unique thing. Also, it was interesting when we had EPWs who were wounded come to us – actually dealing with wounds that our munitions caused. These were very severe wounds caused by 25 millimeter rounds.

CI: A lot of blast injury, I would think.

CC: Yeah, .50 cal can take off a guy's arm – so we saw a lot more severe injuries. Don't get me wrong: I did see a lot of severe injuries to US servicemen as well that you wouldn't want to see. So it was interesting to see the effects of what we do to them because we saw about 10 EPWs, give or take, who were still alive for medical care before we processed them and sent them on their way to the detention center or to the hospital. Also just the aspect of having an EPW you now have to treat, evacuate and guard.

CI: Did you treat any civilians?

CC: No, we didn't. That may be kind of a gray area because there were several people we considered to be EPWs but they claimed they were innocent civilians within the city. This was towards the final days of the battle when we were collecting up all the EPWs and people were just randomly walking around the city, but they were treated like EPWs solely for the fact that everyone in the city was warned to get out and if they remained in the city they were going to be treated as a hostile essentially. We didn't treat anyone for actual wounds in combat, but some

of the injuries were just blunt injuries caused by running around or by all the debris in the city and that kind of stuff. There weren't a lot of severely injured civilians that we saw at the battalion aid station. There might have been others at other battalion aid stations, but we didn't see any.

CI: Were there any joint issues that come to mind? You mentioned the fact of having to evac a severely injured person to the aid station at Camp Fallujah.

CC: There weren't really any negative issues as far as the medical system goes. Medical is medical no matter what service you're in, which is a pretty good thing. I remember about the second day I was there I went on a MEDEVAC run/supply run to the FOB so I could introduce myself to the administration officers, logistic officers and as many providers as I could, as well as get a situation report on the casualties we had already sent to the aid station. As far as their tracking methods, they were right on and were able to give us updates on all the soldiers we had thus far sent rearward to the aid station on the FOB. Their providers were great. I don't remember exactly what specialties they had there, but I know they had a trauma surgeon, an orthopedic surgeon and a couple general surgeons. They had a great medic staff and also a pretty decent communications system there. We operated with them on single-channel plain text. In the past when we dealt with the Marines, communicating on the secure net was difficult, we could never really seem to be on the same time and we couldn't make it work. So I know we had difficulty talking to other units adjacent to our sector in the city, but as far as talking with the hospital it was usually pretty good to communicate with them. Occasionally we had problems because of the distance and terrain features but, for most of the battle, I was able to talk to them from my position at the cloverleaf.

CI: As the battle winds down and the task force begins to retrograde out of the city and back to the FOB, does the aid station move and close on the FOB?

CC: I think it was around 17 or 18 November and we actually moved south from the cloverleaf to a gas station located about a kilometer and a half down the road south. We set up shop there because, essentially, now we were out of active engagement inside the city. The BRT was still screening on that major highway going north and south. Both Alpha Companies were basically in the industrial district still looking for weapons caches, IED and VBIED factories, collecting the caches they found, utilizing explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) support to destroy munitions, and also just policing up leftover insurgents, clearing the rest of the houses and buildings they had bypassed to drive everyone south towards the river. We still needed to be forward outside of the FOB in direct support of the battalion, but to be able to line up – I don't know if you have a map, but if you could find where the gas station was that had been abandoned, we basically set up shop there. Each one of my vehicles pulled into one of the actual gas stalls and we were able to set

up right along the highway for a high avenue of approach and it was easy to get to the FOB. We also had two direct roads leading straight west and then southwest directly into the city, so we were almost directly east of the operations going on in the industrial district. The longest evac time we would have to conduct was about three to five minutes by 113 going as fast as it could go. One of our key concerns was that both those routes were clear of mines, so that was one of the priorities of my HHC commander: he reconned those routes. We deemed them clear and good to go so we used those routes and stayed out with the battalion until the last unit had returned back to Camp Fallujah.

CI: Once the battalion consolidated at the FOB, how long were you there and what sort of post combat activities did you go through?

CC: We were located there for about two nights. I know it took about three days, once we were done with combat operations, for the battalion to actually move out of there, so basically we retrograded back to the FOB, conducted recovery on our vehicles, did all the normal post combat checks on the vehicles, and began at the logistic level of planning for our movement back to FOB Normandy. We started coordinating who would be in what march serial and working with my NCOIC – who was my treatment squad leader – to make sure all our personnel issues, equipment and Class VIII issues were straight and that the soldiers were physically, logistically and mentally ready to conduct return trips home. I actually returned with my PA and about half of my platoon I had forward with me on the advance party back to FOB Normandy.

CI: You were in the convoy or the serial that had the IED on the way back?

CC: I was in the convoy and the serial that got hit by an IED as we were going through. We were on the northwestern side of the city, had just gone through a larger populated area and were switching from one highway onto the next highway. We had gone down a little bit, were going underneath an overpass and all of us in my vehicle sort of looked at each other because something seemed weird. There was nobody out and we usually saw people walking around and, I swear, I almost smelled something burning. Then at that instant an IED that was shape charged and lodged up on top of the overpass – right as we had exited going underneath and a heavy expanded mobility tactical truck (HEMTT) fueller was right behind us by about 20 or 30 meters. It went off right as they were passing by. I looked back behind me, cracked my door open, stuck my head out and saw the smoke but the vehicle was still moving behind us. We continued on the on-ramp, got on the new route that we were joined on and the vehicle was still behind us but had slowed down quite a bit. They were about 100 meters behind us. Everyone was really nervous. The tactic, technique and procedure (TTP) was that if you got hit with an IED you move out, so we were moving out and reported that the vehicle behind

us had been hit. Another vehicle a couple vehicles back had reported up a secondary device went off further back in the convoy, so as far as I know there were two IEDs that went off. As we approached and went down a hill and were moving off towards the north and west a little bit, we actually came to a stop to assess any vehicle damage or casualties. As we did that, we got out of our vehicles and the HEMTT behind us was slowly rolling down the hill and came to a stop. Its engine compartment was kind of smoking a little bit. We went up and the passenger had no injuries but had some blast effects with his hearing. He couldn't hear very well and the driver had actually received several wounds, so the PA in my vehicle with me did some quick first aid on him, called in a MEDEVAC and loaded him up on a stretcher on the hood of my vehicle. My PA was up there with him and I was on the radio talking to the helicopter. My driver was driving real slowly and we took a small security element to a school we had reconned and had seen on a map. We drove up a block and the MEDEVAC came in, landed, we put our soldier on the bird and they took off. Then we went back to where the rest of our convoy was, joined up with that, recovered the HEMTT and continued on the way. The interesting thing for the return trip was that we didn't have any air assets as we were moving north at the time of the IED. Immediately following, though, we had Apaches come in and help secure the area. They were also instrumental in reconning where we saw on the map that we could put the MEDEVAC bird. They checked it out and said it would work, so they were also helping to pull security. They held tight with us for the rest of the way back to FOB Normandy.

CI: Once the battalion fully closed on FOB Normandy, did you just return to business as usual and prep for the next mission? Was there a stand down or an after-action review (AAR) or anything?

CC: There was kind of a stand down period but not really. We came in and assessed what was going on at FOB Normandy; and it was kind of nice because those people who had backfilled us were still running aid station operations so we didn't have to take over our aid station operations right away. I still had line medics with the two company teams we had left at FOB Normandy so it was still normal operations from them. We still had three more serials that had to come in over the next day or so, so we helped in receiving all those serials and downloading all their vehicles. I can't remember the timelines, but it took about two days to get all my vehicles back, download them off the transporters and the lowboys they were being moved on, get the maintenance done on them, get them turned around and combat effective again. Recovery for us took about a week to get all our Class VIII back up to speed and resupplied from our FSB, all my vehicles back and 100 percent ready to go. Especially my 113s. I had four down there and they were just beat all to hell, so it took awhile to get all those back and into good running shape. But I had a good set of NCOs and a lot of good soldiers who were very maintenance

conscious, very good at taking care of their equipment. We had a relatively good turnaround time to get us back up to operational capability.

CI: Are there any other issues that stand out in your mind that you'd like to get on the record?

CC: When I go back and think about logistical operations and the support we had, it took a little bit too long from my and my PA and doctor's perspective to get Class VIII supplies. We linked into the Marine supply channel of Class VIII to get immediate stuff like bandages and fluids and tubing for IVs. Our logistics channels were being flown in on LOGPACs from our brigade headquarters in Ba'qubah where we were getting all our support from: most of our classes of supply were coming from CH-47s flying in to FOB Fallujah and going to our support platoon leader who would then put it on his vehicles and bring it out to our logistics area forward. The Class VIII was a little slow because they didn't send as robust a support package as I would have if I'd been in that situation. That's an AAR comment that we also made when we conducted AARs after the mission, but it was also something that was in the process of being fixed during the mission. By the time the battle was basically winding down, they were on it and they were getting us everything we were asking for, but it took several days for them to get up to speed with what we were requiring. We went through a lot of stuff even faster than we had projected.

CI: Even having integrated your lessons from the campaign in Najaf?

CC: Oh yeah. We had maxed out our vehicle capacity for all our Class VIII that I had organically already put together that we had at FOB Normandy. Every vehicle was loaded to the hilt with specifically fluids, because you always have to be conscious of what types of fluids and how much fluids you have when you're over there in the desert like that. On top of that was bandages, bandages, bandages. You can never have enough of those as well as your IV tubing. We took a lot, but we went through a lot of stuff as well.

CI: Thank you for your time.

## **Captain Chris Boggiano**

### **20 July 2006**

CI: My name is Dr. Christopher Ives (CI) with the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for the Combat Studies Institute. Today's date is 20 July 2006. I'm interviewing Captain Chris Boggiano (CB) and we'll be discussing his experiences in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and specifically during the November 2004 battle of Fallujah. If at any time you think we're moving into an area that is classified or sensitive and you're not able to sanitize your answer, let me know you're not free to discuss that and we'll move on to a different subject. Would you state your full name, rank and duty position?

CB: My name is Captain Christian Boggiano and right now I'm a plans officer in Grafenwoehr, Germany. I work at the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Joint Multinational Training Center.

CI: What was your rank and duty position during your participation in the battle of Fallujah?

CB: I was a first lieutenant and a scout platoon leader in 3d Brigade, in the Brigade Reconnaissance Troop (BRT). We were the brigade combat team (BCT) reserve so we moved around from task force to task force and, in this instance, the brigade commander cut us out to Task Force 2-2 and that's why we went to Fallujah with them.

CI: Were you attached to them at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Normandy or did you marry up with them at Camp Fallujah?

CB: We linked up with them at Camp Fallujah maybe three or four days before we went into the battle.

CI: Was your entire troop there or just your platoon?

CB: Pretty much the entire troop, except for the guys who were on R&R. Our troop consisted of the two scout platoons, headquarters platoon and we actually had a Bradley platoon – we were light scouts so we were in Humvees – from Task Force 2-2 that was attached to the BRT for the entire duration of our deployment in Iraq. They lived with us at FOB Warhorse and when we went to Fallujah everything was re-task organized. That platoon gave up its platoon leader's section of Bradleys and we received from Alpha Company 2-63 – the tank company that was part of the task force – two of their tanks. So when it was all said and done, we had two tanks, two Bradleys and two light scout platoons with Humvees.

CI: A very heavy scouting element.

CB: Yes. Fallujah was probably the closest I ever came to operating as a scout but I think, in that role, we were just as much dismounted infantry and I think

that's common in Iraq. Regardless of whether you're combat arms or non-combat arms, if you end up riding around as group of guys in four Humvees, you can call yourself infantry or armor or whatever, but you're still a group of guys riding around in four Humvees.

CI: This task organization took place at Camp Fallujah. How much of an opportunity and what process was involved in sharing standard operating procedures (SOPs) and going through prep for combat?

CB: To be honest with you, there wasn't too much of that. As a troop, we were pretty much organic and were all used to operating with each other, and the two tanks were the only ones that weren't organic to the troop from the rest of the deployment. We were all used to each other and had our internal SOPs, and the two tanks – I had come from that tank company before I came to the BRT so I was friends with the tank platoon leader, First Lieutenant Neil Prakash. I knew him well so he and I were very comfortable working together. We had worked together several times before so I think, through me, he was easily integrated into the troop – plus he was a very competent officer and wouldn't have had problems with that sort of thing anyway.

CI: How was the troop brought into the troop leadership procedures (TLPs) and when did you receive the warning order (WARNO)?

CB: I came back from R&R at the end of October and we were actually down in Salman Pak. We were attached to the 82d Engineers and that was a pretty nasty town. It was really on the southern edge of our brigade sector and no one really operated there, so our brigade commander sent us down there just to see what was going on. Turns out, it was a really bad area and we were just driving around getting shot at every day. I basically went down there and met up with my troop after my R&R and then, a day or two later, we got pulled out to get ready to go to Fallujah. We had two or three days of prep and, about 3 or 4 November, we convoyed out to Fallujah. But in terms of me knowing what the plan was, we basically got told we were going to Fallujah and after that it was just get as much ammo and equipment as we could, get our trucks and equipment ready, and at that point everybody was comfortable enough doing just about any mission. Whether it was military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) or whatever, we'd done everything at that point in time – so within a couple minutes, that's really all it took for any of the platoons to be able to flex through whatever mission it was. So it wasn't very difficult even though we had very little notice.

CI: Were there any cross attachments from the Marines or Air Force?

CB: We did have an attachment of one Humvee of an Air Force joint tactical air controller (JTAC). They were basically two Air Force guys and we actually had to give them a gunner for the Humvee so they could have three guys in the



Humvee. They were basically forward observers (FOs), but instead of for artillery they would talk to the jets in the sky with different radios. It was really my only joint experience.

CI: Were they combat controllers or were they radio guys?

CB: I would say they were combat controllers. The way it worked was that somebody in my platoon would see something and, if we decided we wanted to drop close air support (CAS) on it, we would call on the radio to them or yell over to their truck and ask if they could get us some jets. They would go from there and if they could they could and if they couldn't they couldn't – but if they could, it worked out great. We would tell them the grid and the target description, and it really wasn't all that different from a fire mission with artillery. They took care of the rest.

CI: Did they have a laser target designator?

CB: No, I don't think so. The only thing they had unique in their Humvee was the radios that allowed them to talk to the jets flying overhead.

CI: What about the compatibility of your laser target designation with the Air Force? Did that become an issue?

CB: Not at all because we had a Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System (LRAS) – just a big sight with a 20X or 50X power on it and you can see really far. Whatever it sees it can give a 10-digit grid so the gunner on the truck, in addition to the one machine gun he had up there, he also had the LRAS. Everything else was just done over the radio. It was a matter of just yelling the grid over to them, what the target looked like, and then the Air Force guys would just relay that to the jets.

CI: Were they calling for fire with Air Force aircraft or Marine Corps aircraft?

CB: I have no idea. We only got to drop CAS once and it was several days into the battle. We tried several times before and, every time, they told me that the jets were working for us and that they were just waiting for our go-ahead. I would relay it up to my commander and, for whatever reason – a lot of it was the danger close nature of fighting in Fallujah – Captain Kirk Mayfield didn't want to drop bombs that close to friendly forces so he always waved that off, which got the Air Force frustrated a lot of the time.

CI: You mentioned the troop had been together for the bulk of the deployment. Had you guys had the opportunity to use CAS in some of your previous deployment?

CB: No, I'd never called for fire or used CAS. There were a lot of first times for everything in Fallujah, so things like firing a tank main gun – I was a tank platoon

leader in Iraq before I took over the scout platoon and I never fired a main gun round on my tank. If anything, it was just one of the machine guns. If you're just fighting insurgents, they're not coming out at you with other tanks. It's not often that you have the opportunity or the need to fire that sort of thing, so that level of firepower was very rare; and the only time they ever really fired artillery was for counterfire. The insurgents would fire mortars onto our base camp, the radar would pick up and give a grid, and it would just be automatic. But as a platoon we never really called for fire. Maybe before I came to the platoon the previous platoon leader had done it once, but I doubt he even did that. Certainly not CAS. We had the JTAC attached to us one or two times before just because we had gone on some operations that were outside of the range of friendly artillery, but nothing ever came of it. It wasn't needed.

CI: At what point did you get the fragmentary order (FRAGO) outlining what you were going to be doing for reconnaissance?

CB: I don't remember exactly, but I want to say it was right after we got to Fallujah. I think right around that time was when we were getting graphics that said Task Force 2-2 was going to have the eastern edge of Fallujah and we were going to have the eastern edge of Task Force 2-2, which we thought was great because we had the highway right there. We could use that to bound down the northern half of the city before having to go into the city. I don't know if anybody planned it this way, but it worked out really good because the highway was elevated; and with that LRAS I was talking about before, it gave us numerous opportunities to call for fire on targets – guys walking on rooftops in the city, for example. The city was pretty much devoid of any civilians so it didn't take long to figure out that, with the rules of engagement (ROE), anyone moving without a US Army uniform was highly suspicious – and most of the time anybody we saw moving was carrying some kind of weapon anyway. I don't know if it was just luck or if it had been planned this way, but we had done a reconnaissance of the city a couple days before and there's that highway that runs on the east side of the city. We drove along the safe side of that highway with the city on our left and no one could actually see us because the highway was so elevated. At one point, the highway dipped down and we were south of the cloverleaf intersection – where the two main highways intersected. We had stopped, I had just taken the leadership of my platoon with me, and we were only allowed to take one truck so it was me, Staff Sergeant Nicholus Danielsen, Staff Sergeant Jimmy Amyett, Staff Sergeant Mike Cowles and our troop executive officer (XO), Dean Morrison. We're all sitting in one truck and we were waiting. The Marines were in contact up at the cloverleaf because, at that time, they had a cordon around the city. Staff Sergeant Amyett was on the LRAS, he just started scanning into the city on this reconnaissance, and we could see all these insurgents standing on the rooftops. Anyway, we wanted to see if they would let us call a fire mission, so we relayed it up to our commander

and he relayed it up to Lieutenant Colonel Pete Newell, the 2-2 commander. In the end, we didn't get to fire it and the reason was because we were on a different communications security (COMSEC) fill with the radios and Regimental Combat Team (RCT) 7 so we couldn't do the fire mission, which was bad. But the benefit of it was that I think everybody realized the value of the LRAS and the capabilities it brought. We were the only ones in the task force with an LRAS. After that, we got positioned on the highway and from there it was like shooting fish in a barrel as far as calling artillery on bad guys.

CI: When did you get married up with the Paladins that were attached to the task force?

CB: I never was. I was given an FO who was attached to my platoon. I had never worked with him before. I want to say we did two reconnaissances of the city – one we did that day I was just telling you about and the other was a nighttime recon of the staging area on the northeast side of the city out in the desert there. It was my platoon's job to mark off the corners of the staging area and he was given to me that night so we could take him up on the highway. We called in some white phosphorous (WP) and were just registering the artillery so when they did the breach the next day it would all be on the target. I put him right on the same truck as the LRAS and he called everything back to the guns or to the fire support officer. So whenever I had a mission, most of the time I went through him.

CI: Did he use your radios or did he come with his own?

CB: He actually had a manpack, which was kind of comical. The Paladins were on Camp Fallujah and they never left the base. I think the Task Force 2-2 mortar platoon left because they didn't have the range to shoot from Camp Fallujah so they were a lot closer, but the Paladins were back on the base. He just set up a manpack radio and was running around next to my truck with his antenna sticking up so he could talk back to the base. A lot of times he'd talk to the Paladins and to the mortars as well, but I couldn't tell the difference in terms of when the rounds were impacting, if it was a 120 millimeter mortar or 155 artillery. They both made big booms. I'm sure he called plenty from both. I had a couple snipers in my own platoon and a sniper section that was given to me as well from the 2-2 scout platoon. BRT had worked out this crazy setup with R&R where they would send the bulk of a platoon on R&R at once. I was 2d Platoon and they sent the bulk of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon in September; and right around when Fallujah was happening they sent the bulk of my platoon. So when we left FOB Warhorse and went to Fallujah, I had nine or 10 guys in my platoon so we were hurting. For instance, my normal platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Jamie Loy, left on R&R right around the time that we left for Fallujah and didn't get back until it was over. So, I had Staff Sergeant Danielsen acting as my platoon sergeant the entire time. He did an outstanding job, but missing half of my platoon before going into the biggest fight of the deployment

was a huge worry of mine. It wasn't until a few days into the battle that guys started trickling back and we were back to somewhat regular manpower. They gave me all these onesies and twosies from everywhere else to plus us up a little bit, so I got the FO, the Air Force guys, a couple snipers and it was just a hodgepodge element – but that was really only for the first day or so. I even grabbed a tanker from A/2-63 whom I knew from my time there as a platoon leader who was going to be left on Camp Fallujah because they didn't need him. I asked his leadership if I could borrow him and they let me have him. He certainly didn't mind because otherwise he'd have been left out of the fight. I had no problem integrating all the different additions to my platoon and there wasn't any sort of issue at all. I think by that point in our deployment to Iraq, everyone had enough experience at being flexible that transitions like that were relatively easy. Plus, it didn't hurt that I had enough great NCOs in my platoon who were still there. So, the leadership of the platoon was intact even if we had new soldiers getting added to us at the last minute.

CI: They obviously understood the concept of observation and were used to using optics.

CB: The snipers were amazing. I watched a guy with one of the .50 caliber Barrett sniper rifles and the LRAS spotted a guy some 1,200 meters away. He probably shot 10 or 20 rounds at this insurgent who was hiding out on a rooftop and the LRAS gunner would say to “bring it up a foot,” “bring it up a foot”; and then all of a sudden, his guts were splattered all over the wall. We'd probably known each other for only a couple hours at that point, but everyone started working together very quickly.

CI: At what point did you move into your assembly area (AA) and move out to establish this overwatch?

CB: I don't remember the first date of the battle but we moved out very early in the morning. I had done the recon and my platoon was the one responsible for setting up and marking the corners of what became the staging area. It was still dark, it was raining when we moved out, and it was pretty painful getting off the base camp but we made it up there. Everybody got to the staging area not too long after dawn and if the breach was at 1900, we were out on the highway calling for fire at 1000 that morning or so. We were out there a good 10 or 12 hours before the breach calling artillery on targets of opportunity all along the northern edge of the city.

CI: Were you sending reports down to the battalion intelligence net to give the S2 some information?

CB: No. It was kind of a crazy situation that first day. I was only allowed to bring two of my four trucks up so, of the ad hoc platoon I had, I was only allowed to take one section of it. To this day, I don't know why I was only allowed to take

one section of my platoon up there. I took my Bravo section, which had the LRAS on it, and my acting platoon sergeant – Staff Sergeant Danielsen – and I just walked up to the staging area from the berm and we left our trucks with our gunners. Up until then, I hadn't seen the city in daylight because the one day we'd done it, we hadn't gone up on the berm when it was daylight. We'd seen it from the far south but it wasn't anything like getting up close – and the other time was at night which also isn't the same. So I was up there with two trucks calling all this fire and every company commander wants to get his lieutenants and platoon sergeants up there to see what's going on, so there was constantly this gaggle of people: reporters, other lieutenants and Lieutenant Colonel Newell – you name it. Everybody was up there standing by my truck, sitting in my truck, taking my seat, so I really didn't feel the need to relay any information to anybody else because everybody was up there seeing it for themselves.

CI: You should have been selling tickets. What's the rest of the troop doing at this time?

CB: Sitting down at the logistical resupply point (LRP). At the very beginning, Captain Mayfield was up there. In that instance, he was a company commander with one section from one single platoon, so he had no other platoons to control – so a lot of times he would sit in my truck, which got frustrating at times because then I had nowhere to sit. At one point the enemy started firing mortars into the staging area so he got tasked with going down to rearrange everybody and move all the vehicles a little farther out. That occupied him for several hours and it wasn't much of a problem after that.

CI: As it becomes night on the first day, what happens next?

CB: Right when the breach happened, Captain Mayfield made us pull about two kilometers north of the city. The highway kept on running all the way to the north and I'd marked the crossing point where the tanks and vehicles could pull up, and it was really steep. If you looked at it, you would think there was no way you could get a tank over it. The first time I looked at it I kept hoping we wouldn't flip over as we were marking the point. So we basically sat on the highway when it got to be time for everybody to roll in to do the assault on the city. I sat on the highway and watched as my FO – I think – called in all the preparatory fires on the breach spot, but to be honest with you I don't remember. We sat down and watched everybody roll over the berm onto the other side and then we watched the mine clearing line charge (MCLC) go off. Everybody had these little infrared chem lights attached to their antennas and it was just a sea of infrared chem lights heading towards the breach and into the city. For the first couple hours after the breach, you could hear all the explosions from the main guns on the tanks. There was really no more artillery after that. It wasn't until well after dark – maybe 2200 or 2300 – when we finally were allowed to bound back down the side of the city.

Our initial goal was to continue bounding south as the task force bounded south, but by the time you put two scout platoons, a headquarters platoon, two tanks and two Bradleys all along that east side of the city, we had a vehicle every 100 meters or so, so we basically stayed stationary the rest of the night observing into the side of the city. The insurgents didn't really fight much at night so I don't know what the guys inside the city were dealing with, but the couple blocks in that I could see we didn't see much movement at all. It wasn't until dawn that things started to pick up again. At that point, my platoon had bounded down to the cloverleaf and we positioned the LRAS so we could see directly down Phase Line Fran. There was one sweet spot about 20 meters wide where you could see three kilometers into the city, until there was a slight bend in Phase Line Fran, at which point the LRAS wasn't effective because it can't see around corners. We started calling in artillery on the obstacles they had set up along Fran, and that was actually cool and frustrating at the same time. We could see the concertina wire, all the HESCO bastions and all the stuff they used – and it was all American stuff the Marines had left in the city before. They'd used it to make all these obstacles, and you knew they weren't just obstacles. You knew there were going to be booby traps and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and whatever else sitting there. So we started calling for fire and I think we saw three different obstacles we wanted to eliminate. I called for fire on them but if it was just concertina wire, calling for fire isn't going to do much to that, so that was the frustrating part. The beneficial part was that we would call for fire – and say I would call in six rounds. I'd call in those six rounds and we would see 11 explosions, so we were definitely setting off plenty of booby traps and IEDs and, if not, severing all the wires they had for all the bombs they had waiting down there for everybody. By the time the rest of the task force got down there, we had taken care of a lot of that for them. At the same time, Neil Prakash's two tanks and two Bradleys were positioned right around us as well, so we were all in that one sweet spot. They were firing away with their main guns at the large targets, like the HESCO barriers, because a main gun round will take out a decent chunk of a barrier. They freed up a lot of space and made it a lot more maneuverable for the guys coming from the north.

CI: At what point did you have to adjust your positions again after the task force came down?

CB: We stayed on the cloverleaf for a long time. One thing that the artillery guys created for us was a free fire line or something that sounded just like that. The free fire line was the line which, to the south, we could fire any artillery we wanted without having to clear the area for friendly forces. I kept on getting an adjusted grid as the battle progressed and our forces moved south. Before anybody breached into the city, I could fire anywhere I wanted and it took about two minutes for the artillery because I didn't have to clear anything and we knew there were no friendlies in the area. They kept on pushing south. By dawn 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was in

clearing that very eastern part of the city along Phase Line Fran. They went in with the Bradleys and cleared a bunch of that area without taking any contact at all, and this was right before dawn. Shortly after that, we could see the friendly Bradleys and tanks start coming down from the north and hitting the highway; but right after that, we basically stayed there about a day and a half just waiting on the Marines to catch up. We had rolled through everything so fast because the rest of the task force was in tanks and Bradleys and the Marines were on foot, so they had to slow up because they didn't want to get too far ahead because then the front line of the advance wouldn't be joint and the insurgents could slip through the cracks of the different battalions – which I think they ended up doing anyway as they headed south. We stayed in that position for a long, long time and called for fire all that second day and then into the first half of the third day before we displaced. During that time was when the LRAS gunners, along with Neil Prakash's two tanks that were sitting on Phase Line Fran directly in front, did the most damage in terms of dropping artillery. We were elevated on the highway directly behind them and, at one point, Prakash's gunner in his tank sees all these guys run into a building. My LRAS gunner could see the same thing, and it looked like a mosque from where we were at because there were mosques about every 10 feet in Fallujah. At first, we didn't think we'd ever be able to drop artillery on it because it was a mosque, so I had initially asked Neil if he could use his digital camera to get a video clip so we could give it to one of the reporters to prove that the insurgents would intentionally use places like mosques and hospitals because they knew we wouldn't bomb them. For the next 45 minutes to an hour, we were working on getting permission to drop artillery on the target. It took a long time because they wanted to double check that Neil's tank and my LRAS gunner were seeing the exact same thing several times. We had to provide 10-digit grids to the target at least three times. One of the things that probably helped was that the insurgents were actually running into a building that was part of a mosque complex, and not a mosque itself. Neil and I kept relaying this to our XO, Dean Morrison, and he kept on relaying it to higher. Captain Mayfield wasn't around at the time because he was conducting a dismounted clearing operation with 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. After they finally let Neil call in a fire mission, the first round was a direct hit on the target building so he didn't have to adjust at all and they just fired for effect. After dropping 20 rounds, some insurgents were stumbling out coughing from the smoke, and that's when he asked to repeat the mission. Some of the rounds from the next sequence actually missed the building and landed right where the survivors of the first fire mission were running away to. After finishing the second fire mission and getting a request for CAS denied, we estimated that there were maybe 25 or 30 guys in there. Later on, though, some intelligence guys told us that there were about 70 guys and one of the insurgent leaders was in that mosque complex. I don't know if it was true or not, but I know there were a lot of guys in there – and when the fire

mission came in, I think it did pretty good damage to the enemy. My perception of the situation at the time was that the insurgents were trying to rally there after their setback from the attack invasion into the city. The complex was a good three kilometers into the city so it was well over in RCT-1's sector, so that's probably why it took so long to coordinate.

CI: You mentioned you had a good observation of the breach site for Task Force 2-2. Could you see the Marine RCT's breach site?

CB: I could see everything but I don't remember seeing a breach. I remember guys going through our breach but I don't remember seeing that for the Marines. I don't know if it didn't happen, if I wasn't there when it did happen, if I just wasn't looking or if I couldn't see it. I don't know what happened. I definitely could see pretty much all the way across the city from where I was sitting, all the way across the northern part of the city. You could see where all the vehicles funneled into wherever that one spot where the breach was, but I don't remember seeing the same thing for the Marines.

CI: At any time did you work directly with the Marines?

CB: Yes, on several occasions.

CI: What part of the battle?

CB: My second reconnaissance was my first interaction with the Marines when we were setting up the staging area and the Marines, by that point, had cordoned off the city. They were all sitting up on the berm up on the highway and they're shooting and shooting and shooting and we weren't seeing any tracer rounds coming back at them. Captain Mayfield wanted me to find out what was going on, so I drove up there with the LRAS truck and asked them what they were shooting at. They said, "We're taking contact from those two lights over there." I asked the LRAS guys how far away those two lights were and he said, "1,800 meters, sir." So I looked over at the guy doing the shooting, who was using a squad automatic weapon (SAW) that can shoot about 600 meters, and I asked the LRAS guy if he even saw anything there and he didn't. All these Marines all up and down the line are just shooting at nothing, so that was my first interaction with the Marines, which was a little disheartening. A lot of them didn't have any night vision equipment at all. They were shooting star clusters to see if anybody was coming up the side of the highway in front of them and that sort of thing. Another time I interacted with them was when we were south of the city and we kept on running into them on a number of occasions. There was a tank platoon driving around in the desert on the southeast side of the city and when the rest of the task force did the breach into the southern side of the city the Marine tankers rolled up and linked up with us. They had heard we were in the neighborhood, had heard about the LRAS sight from God knows where, and asked us, "Are you the guys with the crazy sight?"



We co-located with them out in the open desert and they fired some main gun rounds into whatever targets they saw on the side of the city. I don't know if they really saw anything because I know my LRAS gunner didn't see anything. I think they were just shooting into buildings just because they could. I did have one very positive experience with a Marine platoon, though, a light armored vehicle (LAV) 25 platoon – basically Bradleys on wheels. Where we were driving around on the southeastern edge of the city the highway breaks away to the east so we didn't have an elevated position to observe into the city from anymore. We were kind of driving around out there through all the minefields hoping we could find one spot that was a few feet higher than another so we could look down on some rooftops and call in some artillery, because otherwise the LRAS couldn't see more than a couple rows of houses deep into the area. While we were repositioning, we saw one house out in the open and decided to go set up next to it. So we drove to the house and lay down some suppressive fire on it initially. When we stopped and nobody was shooting back, I had most of my platoon dismount to go clear the building. Normally I almost always dismount with them because they were the platoon main effort, but this time I decided to stay with my truck because Staff Sergeants Amyett and Danielsen both wanted to go and one would have had to stay back otherwise to supervise the trucks. As the bulk of my platoon goes running off, we start to get shot up by four or five houses on the side of the city, just lighting up my platoon. Just about everybody but the gunners on the trucks are dismounted at that point because we were out in the open desert, and a couple guys were pinned down. We had linked up earlier with the Marine LAV 25 platoon, which was located only a few hundred meters to the north, and they just started laying waste to everything on this side of the city and gave us a lot of good covering fire. They were definitely good to work with.

CI: Could you talk to them on a tactical level?

CB: Yes. When we pulled up to them, we got their radio frequencies, programmed them in, and think they might have been monitoring the troop net. When I called up the contact report, right away they came back and said they had “eyes on” where my gunners were shooting at and, all of a sudden, they had TOW missiles shooting across the desert, 25 millimeter cannons and all that. I think they had six LAVs and they just started lighting stuff up. It was actually pretty amazing the amount of firepower. Like I said, I usually dismount with my guys but I was really glad I stayed that time. I didn't fire a single shot but I stayed on the radios and, in a matter of minutes, I had artillery coming in, I had Neil Prakash's tanks 1,500 meters away up by Phase Line Fran. He heard my contact report, just rolled out about 100 meters so that he was outside of the city and could see where our fire was impacting on insurgent fighting positions. All of a sudden, I see high explosive anti-tank (HEAT) rounds flying a mile through the air, blowing up one building after the next, the Marines are shooting stuff, the FO was dropping artillery, and

within five or 10 minutes everything quieted down and I got my platoon back together. So it was an interesting experience.

CI: Sounds like a positive joint experience.

CB: Yeah. Everything came together just because everybody was talking on the same radios, which is rare I guess.

CI: Did you encounter any communications difficulties during the battle?

CB: I do remember there was a nut roll about a COMSEC changeover, but at that point in time I was in the process of transitioning. We had been so successful calling for fire in the northern half of the city because of the elevated position on the highway that they thought we'd be able to do the same thing in the southern edge of the city with the LRAS. After trying that for a day or so, we realized it wasn't really working out because we couldn't get an elevated position and there wasn't much the LRAS could see unless it was the first block or so deep on the edge of the city. While they were figuring it out, they started to pull us in and, after that, we transitioned to being a dismounted infantry platoon and I don't think we used the LRAS much after that at all. Anyway, in that process was when this problem with COMSEC occurred. I don't think I was caught up with it, but I remember it being a pain.

CI: After moving south and being unable to find some friendly terrain to allow you to use the surveillance capabilities you had, who made the decision to put you guys in reserve as dismounts?

CB: I haven't the slightest clue. While we were fighting, I saw Lieutenant Colonel Newell once and I never saw anyone from the battalion staff inside the city, so I have no idea how those decisions were made. A lot of times I felt like *nobody* was making decisions, either at the troop level or at the battalion level, but it seemed like it all kind of worked out fine because you had unlimited firepower and you could just level whatever you wanted. I felt very autonomous and it worked out fine for me. I think a lot of the guys there were very competent, the platoon leaders were able to work together without necessarily a company commander telling them what to do and, simultaneously, the company commanders were able to work together without a battalion commander necessarily telling *them* what to do. I've always had the impression that there was a leadership vacuum at the top of the task force. So, the company commanders had to work together to figure out a plan and how they wanted to fight the fight because the task force-level leadership wasn't making those decisions for them. As a result, the company commanders had to give up some of their control to their platoon leaders in those instances and the platoons ended up doing the same thing at the company level. That was the vibe I had from what was going on. I never felt like anybody had a grand scheme other than to just keep going south, keep the Marines to our right and the open

desert to the left. It really wasn't all that hard. Maybe Captain Mayfield made that decision, but I don't know. I really doubt it was anybody higher up than him, that's for sure.

CI: Were you employed at this point?

CB: There was one day we weren't employed and I was very frustrated about it: that was the day Captain Sean Sims got killed. The problem is I don't remember the chronology of when things happened; I just remember specific events because it was all kind of a blur. The only day I remember being unemployed completely was right around that transition from calling for fire to the last week or so of just being dismounted infantry and going through the city clearing house after house after house. There was one day in there where we were driving back from the open desert and I remember Captain Mayfield and 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon from our troop were in the city and they were right up against Alpha Company 2-2. I just sat there listening to the radio and kept calling in and asking if I could bring my platoon into the fight they were in. Things were really bad. We heard all these things like, "Captain Sims is in a house by himself!" That's all we kept on hearing and you could only guess what was really going on in there. No one knew if he was dead or if he was just holed up in a room by himself. It was chaos. Nobody had any control at that point. I don't care what anybody tells you, there was *no one* in charge. There were guys calling each other on the radio because they didn't know where each other were. It turns out they were one courtyard away from each other but couldn't figure it out because at the same time there were insurgents throwing grenades at them, they're trying not to shoot at friendly guys all around them but still trying to shoot at the insurgents. All this was going on while Captain Sims was in a house and all I could do was sit there and listen to it on the radio. Obviously it was a very frustrating experience for everyone in my platoon because we felt so helpless to do anything. But on the other hand, it was probably a smart thing not to bring another platoon into something as completely chaotic and uncontrolled as that; it was a better decision to leave us out there sitting, but I wasn't happy about it at the time. I don't know if I'm really very happy about it now either.

CI: In a circumstance where the bad guys are all dismounted, adding additional dismounts might have had an adverse affect.

CB: The thing was: there was no shortage of firepower. We had tanks and Bradleys and you name it, and standing toe to toe the insurgents aren't going to win – and that's why we did as well as we did in Fallujah. But when everybody gets bunched up like that, it gets chaotic. Time and again it happened, and I think I said in one of my emails that I was amazed there was no fratricide in Fallujah from the amount of shooting everybody did at everybody else. I don't think there was anybody who went through Fallujah who didn't, at some point, accidentally or even intentionally shoot in the direction of other friendly forces. When you've

got three platoons, one on each block, and one insurgent in between all of them, and then there's a bunch of insurgents and the insurgents are shooting, it's kind of inevitable that that sort of thing is going to happen. I've read a couple times about how we credit all our technology for why there wasn't any fratricide, but I honestly think it was just luck. It couldn't have been more than that, plus the fact that most guys were in tanks and Bradleys. I think Neil Prakash had one of the other Bradley platoons shoot some 25 millimeter at his tank one time. He kind of got pissed about it but there wasn't much he could do. Also, there was the time that Captain Paul Fowler, the commander from the tank company that Neil ordinarily belonged to, called for a fire mission that ended up landing pretty much on top of his position. This was earlier in the fighting when my platoon was still out in the desert on the southern side of the city. I listened in on the task force net and heard Captain Fowler's voice calling in the fire mission. The rounds landed a couple hundred meters in front of Neil's tanks, which were maybe 300 meters outside of southern Fallujah. Neil even commented on the radio that those rounds landed very close to his position. Next, I heard Captain Fowler adjust the rounds 200 meters to the right, which, from where he was sitting, he should have moved them farther into the city and away from Neil. It definitely wasn't Captain Fowler's fault, but for whatever reason the rounds moved the wrong way. So the rounds moved left instead of right like Captain Fowler wanted them to and ended up coming down on top of Neil's tanks. I heard him say he was getting out of there and his driver just put the tank in reverse and hit the gas. While all this was going on, everyone in my platoon was yelling to our forward observer to get him to stop the fire mission because he had the most direct line of communication with the guns. Since the desert around Fallujah is one big minefield, Neil ended up driving right on top of an anti-tank mine while he was backing up; and since the artillery had been landing so close to his position, we all actually thought it was a friendly artillery round that had hit his tank. My platoon was racing towards his position before he was able to get back on the radio and let us know he had struck a mine and everyone was okay. That's one of many examples of friendly fire. There is a good chance that it was no one's fault, but still happened. I think there are instances where everyone can do everything right and you'll still have two friendly units shooting at each other, especially in a situation like that where everyone is so close together. I have no idea why it happened in that case, but it did then and a million other times during those first few days. So, we were all just lucky no one was killed because of it.

CI: Did you have any interaction with the Iraqi battalion?

CB: Not really. We saw them. The first day when I was sitting up north of the city watching everybody go through the breach, I watched them drive over the berm and it was my understanding that after we went in they were taking control of the rear. The US Army would have the front line and keep pushing south and they would secure the areas that had been cleared to make sure they weren't reoccupied

by insurgents. When we did the rehearsal, we had this giant terrain model of the city laid out and we did the rehearsals with all the platoon leaders for the task force. Everybody was standing in the specific spots they would be in according to the plan and the Iraqis were there and went to their spot. When it was all said and done, the Iraqi battalion commander gave a speech in Arabic to everyone and, while I couldn't understand a word of it, it was one of the most amazing things I've ever seen because he was so fired up. Other than that, I didn't have any interaction with the Iraqis at all.

CI: What happened to the troop once you guys got mounted again?

CB: What do you mean by "once we got mounted"?

CI: You had mentioned you were being used as dismounts, doing the infantry thing –

CB: We basically would garage our trucks a lot of time. We briefly went dismounted the afternoon of the second full day and our SOP was that the gunners and the drivers would stay in the trucks and everybody else would dismount. Like I said, there wasn't much to my platoon at that point; and I think even with all the hodgepodge people I had maybe seven guys, so less than a squad, including myself and a medic as dismounts on the ground. The trucks would follow us along but, as it got farther into the battle – and we were on the southern edge of the city clearing house to house – there weren't that many streets so we basically put a tank and a Bradley on each street and they would mark our front lines so the platoons could stay in line with each other. During the confusion, it's easy to get disoriented especially in that kind of situation where you don't know where the other platoons are, there are no real terrain features to go off of, and every house looks exactly the same. We would use the tanks but we would garage our trucks. We would just leave a few gunners to guard things somewhere out on the edge of the city where it was relatively safe. The Bradleys, a lot of the time, would ferry us over to wherever we had to clear or we would just walk to wherever it was we were going to clear and then we would just act as dismounted infantry. When it was all said and done, towards the end we took over a couple houses and parked the trucks around the house. We would go dismounted from there and made it a strongpoint.

CI: Is that how you spent the balance of the battle?

CB: No. The most intense part was by far the first few days and that was pretty much all mounted. Then as it progressed, it went more and more dismounted, but there wasn't any one point where we did so much of one thing that it was the predominant theme for our time in Fallujah. Part of the time we were completely mounted, part of the time we were completely dismounted, and part of the time we were dismounted with mounted support, so it was a little bit of everything.

CI: At what point did you pull back to Camp Fallujah?

CB: During the battle we actually pulled back several times. I believe it was only about two days in when they cut us back for about six hours and said we had six hours to rest. I forget why, but we decided we had to go back to Camp Fallujah to get something, so we drove back there and got a flat tire on the way there. It ended up taking us like a long time so we only ended up getting two hours of sleep, but we got whatever it was we had to get back at the base. I'd say over the course of a couple weeks that we went back every three to four days, probably a total of three or four times.

CI: Did the task force push support out to you for Class III and Class V?

CB: Oh absolutely. There was the LRP and they were initially up in the staging area and then they bounded down to the cloverleaf. As we pushed farther south, they bounded down to a spot in the open desert off the highway and everything was right there. The first full day – the morning of D-plus-one – we started taking tons of sniper fire from everyone from everywhere. I don't know how many snipers there were out there, but they were shooting up our trucks like crazy. One of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon's trucks got the radiator shot out, we had flat tires, shot up mirrors and windshields, but that stuff didn't matter. They had to take the radiator out and it was only a couple days later that they had the truck back up and running again. There's also the example of Neil Prakash's tank that hit the anti-tank mine. It blew off one or two roadwheels and the entire track on the side of the tank, but it was only a day or two later before they had it fixed and it was back in the fight.

CI: Were there any issues in evacuating casualties?

CB: Within the BRT the only casualties were minor, so no. The XO's driver, Specialist Cedars, had a round pierce the front of his truck, came into the driver's seat, hit his groin protector on his body armor and go into his leg. That was a pretty minor wound. By the time the bullet got to him it didn't have much velocity left so it was just a flesh wound. We had a couple guys who got hurt when a truck from 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon ran over a mine and their truck was all torn up from it. The guys inside were all banged up, like their knees were one giant bruise, but it wasn't a serious life-threatening medical evacuation (MEDEVAC); it was more of a return to duty. Our first sergeant, First Sergeant Luther Lancaster, always had a MEDEVAC plan because earlier in the deployment my platoon had a couple guys killed from a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) that went through one of the Humvees. It killed a guy and more or less went across the top of another guy's legs and seriously injured him. Not that they didn't have a great MEDEVAC plan then, but after that there was always a strong emphasis on a MEDEVAC plan and whenever something happened the first sergeant was all over it, so I knew it wouldn't have been an issue. I know with Alpha Company there were definitely some issues with Captain Sims when he was shot. Granted, they were farther into the city and we were right on the edge, so they would've had more problems going through a lot more urban terrain with casualty evacuation. But like I said, we were very lucky.

CI: Can you think of any issues that occur to you looking back on the battle in terms of training or TLPs or issues of that nature?

CB: I think there's a whole push starting – and I don't know if it's gone anywhere yet – of teaching junior leaders to be very adaptive. I don't know if this has necessarily been taught by doctrine before, but there's a Major Donald Vandergriff who works somewhere in DC and he's published all these papers about teaching adaptability. I sent him a couple emails because I thought he was right on the point. There were so many times – not just in Fallujah but in all of Iraq – when, within five minutes, you needed to be able to do any mission and we always had our trucks stocked. My platoon sergeant was great at this sort of thing. You name it, he was prepared for any scenario with the equipment we had on our trucks. A lot of times we were the quick reaction force (QRF) or even in Fallujah, we needed to be ready for anything. You can have the equipment ready but you also need to be able to flex to any situation, so I think that's why we were so successful going from mounted to dismounted and incorporating other guys into the platoon and all that kind of stuff. Not because anybody had trained on it but because, at that point in Iraq, through having great noncommissioned officers (NCOs), everybody had just learned to be adaptive. It wasn't something that was specifically taught or incorporated into any previous training.

CI: When you went to Camp Fallujah, how long had you been in country?

CB: We came to Kuwait in February and I would say 1 March is a good date to say that everybody was finally in Iraq. So by 1 November, we had been in country for eight months.

CI: So you guys were on the downhill slide and you'd mentioned earlier about so many folks being on R&R so, presumably, past the mid tour point. Like you said, the learning had taken place.

CB: Right.

CI: Are there any equipment issues that stand out in your mind, positively or negatively?

CB: I really only saw this in the BRT and I don't know how they pulled it off, but they had two weapons mounted on each truck, so each truck had a 240 and there was one other weapon. So amongst the four trucks, there was a total of two more Mk-19s, my truck had a .50 cal, and then the fourth truck had the LRAS as its extra weapon – and just the flexibility in terms of what you wanted to fire. If one weapon jammed, the gunner immediately had another weapon to go to. I would say Iraq is predominately a Humvee war so, when you're a dismount, that's the thing you're looking to help save your ass if you get into trouble. Having that flexibility and that fire power, I can't say enough good things. In terms of equipment difficulties, nothing really springs to mind. I think we were very well

equipped. The Army did a good job for the most part. I've seen all that stuff in the papers about not having equipment and all that, but we had everything we needed and there wasn't much that I wanted for. Maybe I just didn't know I was missing it because I didn't have it. But for the most part, I was very pleased with all my equipment. I thought everything worked out great.

CI: Did you do any sort of after-action review (AAR) when you recovered to Camp Fallujah or when 2-2 turned you loose at the end of the battle?

CB: There was an AAR after the battle, but I didn't go to it. I saw the slides from it and it seemed moderately accurate. The KIA numbers I always got a good laugh at because, how do you know how many guys you killed? Nobody was going through counting up bodies. We wanted to get out of the city so fast and, by the time we were getting out of the city, the Marines were starting to police up the dead insurgent bodies and our big goal was to get out of there before that started because the last thing any of us wanted to do was put a five-day-old body into a body bag. Unless you went into a house right after you did something, it was pretty hard to tell whether something was really successful or not. I don't necessarily trust the reliability of those numbers. I don't know if they're higher or lower, but I just know they probably aren't what they say they are. Like I said, I never went to the AAR so I don't know if anybody said what we could have done better; but again from my perspective, it was a very autonomous fight. A lot of times I didn't have anybody telling me what to do. I just made my own decisions and it wasn't just me: that was the experience across the board of most platoon leaders. A lot of times company commanders would be sticking with one platoon, and they would get wrapped up with that platoon and kind of forget about the rest of their company. I know this happened sometimes to Captain Mayfield, our troop commander. Whichever platoon he was with, he wouldn't or couldn't really monitor what was going on with the rest of the troop because he was so close to the front of the fight – at least not the first several days when some guys were mounted, some were dismounted, and we were all scattered all over the place anyway. It wasn't so much like that later on in the fight when we were all together and straight dismounted on the southern side of the city and he started actually controlling the platoons and telling us when to bound forward and all that kind of stuff. I don't think that's a source of blame or anything like that. I think it was just more the nature of the beast with the type of fighting we were doing in Fallujah. I really think that's probably the way it was in the other companies as well. I never went to an AAR. I know that one big one happened but, other than that, we never did any lessons learned. We were just happy to get out of there.

CI: At what point were you cut loose and where did you go back to?

CB: We were cut loose around 20 November and pulled out of the city. I was one of the first platoons back because, by that point, we had started really rotating



guys out, like 12 hours back to Camp Fallujah – 12 hours out of 48 you'd be back at Camp Fallujah for the last few days. It happened to be my 12 hours when they decided to send everybody else back so I was back there before everybody else, but it wasn't more than a day or two and then we had to convoy back to FOB Warhorse. The convoys from FOB Warhorse and back to FOB Warhorse were both more painful than anything we had experienced the entire two weeks. On the way there, we hit a couple IEDs, some trucks were disabled and all that kind of stuff; and on the way back, we had a giant CONEX with all our equipment – bags and whatever – which was kind of top heavy and it fell off the truck it was on. We were in 1<sup>st</sup> CAV's sector and it took forever to get back because we had to coordinate to use their resources to get it lifted back onto the truck. I know Alpha Company had one of their tanks burned up on the way back. They hit an IED with some sort of petroleum and it set the whole tank on fire. I know it wasn't just us. That route to and from Fallujah was pretty nasty and there were a lot of headaches on the way there and back.

CI: Are there any other issues about your soldiers, your training or anything else that stand out in your mind that you want to discuss?

CB: My regular platoon sergeant had gone on R&R the day we found out we were going to Fallujah, so he wasn't there. At the time, I was close to being the next oldest guy in the platoon and I was 24 years old. So you have this 40-year-old platoon sergeant and, after that, all these 23 and 24 year olds who are the oldest guys in the platoon. I had Staff Sergeant Danielsen who was 23 at the time. He acted as my platoon sergeant and I was really amazed. He was a great NCO who came into the Army as a private at 17, right after high school, and just rose through the ranks and was a stellar performer. Across the board I would say the same thing about all the rest of my NCOs. There was Sergeant Mike Cowles, again another 21- or 22-year-old at the time. He was on the LRAS truck and deserves as much credit as anyone for making sure artillery got dropped on all of the right places. There was Staff Sergeant Jimmy Amyett, another one of my right hand men, who climbed down to clear a spider hole with a flashlight and a pistol and shot an insurgent in the head. I know people preach about how great the NCOs are but it really was impressive to see those guys operate and do their thing. I never had to worry. When we were on the ground, it was just two squads and four trucks and I never had to worry about managing 18 individuals. I just told my NCOs what to do and they did it. The same thing goes for them. They had great sergeants and specialists under them so they never had to manage more than one or two chunks at a time and it was just amazing to see how well trained they were. I don't know if that's the same everywhere else in the Army, but when push came to shove it was very impressive to see how flexible and adaptive they were. There were a lot of times I wasn't able to handle everything that was going on and they were able to pick up the slack for me. I don't think enough recognition goes towards those

folks. I just don't think there was enough recognition pushed down to the soldier and NCO level. I was very disappointed about that. I never thought I deserved anything for what I did either and was very disheartened when I saw this after the battle. It's kind of the biggest black mark I have about the whole experience.

CI: Do you think that was unique to the battle or to the task force, or was that how things worked in your brigade?

CB: They gave out five Silver Stars for Fallujah and maybe in the rest of the deployment there were three or four given out for the entire brigade. On the first day of the fighting, Staff Sergeant Danielsen watched through the LRAS as a sniper lined up and took shots at him. The bullets were hitting within inches of him, but he stayed in his position because we had a fire mission coming in and he needed to be able to observe it. He wasn't awarded a Silver Star. Then there was Specialist Dawes, one of the loaders on Neil Prakash's tanks. An insurgent fired an RPG that hit a wall a few feet from him and he didn't miss a beat. He just picked up his M-16 and shot the guy before he could put an RPG into the backside of their tank – yet I had to fight to get him an award because the leadership in 2-2 thought he was sitting safe inside a tank the entire battle and couldn't possibly have done anything heroic. I think it was just that everyone was so gung-ho about how Fallujah was such a great victory, but it was a perfect example of leadership being awarded for just happening to be the guys in charge at the time. I don't know what the cause of it was. I just think it was very disheartening to see that kind of award inflation and I think it was very disrespectful on the parts of those individuals to accept those awards when there were other guys out there who really did earn the same awards. I think it deflates the value of other guys' awards when you see them just getting handed out for being a company commander who happened to be in charge of one of the companies sent to fight in the biggest battle of the year. It is what it is and it's not going to change. I'm not going to say most of those guys didn't do good jobs but I just didn't see a whole lot of heroism from those people either.

CI: Well, thank you for your time. We'll stop here.

## Glossary

AAR: After-Action Review  
A&L: Administration and Logistics  
AIF: Anti-Iraqi Forces  
ALO: Air Liaison Officer  
ANGLICO: Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company  
AO: Area of Operations  
AST: Advisor Support Team  
ATC: Air Traffic Control

BCT: Brigade Combat Team  
BDA: Battle Damage Assessment  
BMO: Battalion Maintenance Officer  
BRT: Brigade Reconnaissance Troop

C2: Command and Control  
CAS: Close Air Support  
CFL: Coordinated Fire line  
CMTC: Combat Maneuver Training Center  
CO: Commanding Officer  
COMSEC: Communications Security  
CP: Command Post  
CSH: Combat Support Hospital

DISCOM: Division Support Command  
DSN: Defense Switchboard Network

ECP: Entry Control Point  
EOD: Explosive Ordnance Disposal  
EPW: Enemy Prisoner of War

FLA: Front-Line Ambulance  
FLE: Forward Logistics Element  
FO: Forward Observer  
FOB: Forward Operating Base  
FRAGO: Fragmentary Order  
FSB: Forward Support Base  
FSC: Fire Support Center  
FSCC: Fire Support Coordination Center  
FSO: Fire Support Officer

GPS: Global Positioning System

HEAT: High-Explosive, Anti-Tank

HESCO: A company specializing in pre-fabricated protective structures  
HHC: Headquarters and Headquarters Company  
HUMINT: Human Intelligence

IBA: Interceptor Body Armor  
IED: Improvised Explosive Device  
IIF: Iraqi Intervention Forces  
ING: Iraqi National Guard  
IO: Information operations  
IP: Initial Point  
IPB: Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield  
IR: Infra-Red

JTAC: Joint Tactical Air Controller

LAV: Light Armored Vehicle  
LD: Line of Departure  
LNO: Liaison Officer  
LOA: Limit of Advance  
LOC: Line of Communication  
LRAS: Long-Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System  
LRP: Logistics Resupply Point  
LZ: Landing Zone

MANPAD: Man-Portable Air Defense  
MARDIV: Marine Division  
MCLC: Mine Clearing Line Charge  
MEDEVAC: Medical Evacuation  
MEF: Marine Expeditionary Force  
MNC-I: Multi-National Corps-Iraq  
MNF-I: Multi-National Forces-Iraq  
MOS: Military Occupational Specialty  
MOUT: Military Operations on Urban Terrain  
MPAD: Mobile Public Affairs Detachment  
MSR: Main Supply Route

NCO: Non-Commissioned Officer  
NIPRNET: Non-secure Internet Protocol Router Network  
NOD: Night Observation Device  
NVG: Night Vision Goggles

OPCON: Operational Control

PA: Physician Assistant  
PSD: Personal Security Detachment

PSYOP: Psychological Operation

QRF: Quick Reaction Force

RCT: Regimental Combat Team

RIP: Relief in Place

ROE: Rules of Engagement

RPG: Rocket-Propelled Grenade

S1: Personnel

S2: Intelligence

S3: Operations and training

S4: Supply/Logistics

S5: Civil-Military Operations

S6: Communications/Electronics

SAW: Squad Automatic Weapon

SIGINT: Signals Intelligence

SINCGARS: Single Channel Ground to Air Radio System

SIPRNET: Secure Internet Protocol Router Network

SPO: Security and Plans Officer

TAC: Tactical Command Post

TACON: Tactical control

TAD: Temporary Assigned Duty

TCP: Traffic Control Point

TDY: Temporary Duty

TF: Task Force

TOC: Tactical Operations Center

TOW: Tube-launched Optically-tracked Wire-guided

TTP: Tactics, Techniques, Procedures

UAV: Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

VBIED: Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device

WP: White Phosphorous

XO: Executive Officer

## About the Project Team

**Mr. Kendall D. Gott** retired from the US Army in 2000, having served as an armor/cavalry and military intelligence officer. His combat experience consists of the Persian Gulf War and two subsequent bombing campaigns against Iraq. Before returning to Kansas in 2002, he was an adjunct professor of history at Augusta State University and the Georgia Military College. In October 2002, he joined the Combat Studies Institute where he researches and prepares articles and studies on topics of military history. His book-length works include *In Glory's Shadow: The 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment During the Persian Gulf War, 1990-1991*, *Where the South Lost the War: An Analysis of the Fort Henry-Fort Donelson Campaign, February 1862*, and *Breaking the Mold: Tanks in the Cities*. Mr. Gott is a frequent speaker at Civil War roundtables and appeared on a History Channel documentary on the Battle of Mine Creek, Kansas, and the documentary *Three Forts in Tennessee* by Aperture Films.

**Mr. John McCool** is the administrator, editor, and senior interviewer for the Operational Leadership Experiences Project which is an oral history enterprise based at Fort Leavenworth's Combat Studies Institute. The OLE Project team conducts, transcribes, and archives interviews with military personnel who executed key operations in the Global War on Terrorism. Mr. McCool possesses a Master of Arts Degree in History from the University of Kansas and has a demonstrated background in both public and oral history. He has participated in several collaborative projects to include Web-based development endeavors. Mr. McCool has focused his research and writing interests on a wide variety of modern American political, diplomatic and military history topics.

**Mr. Matt Matthews** joined the Combat Studies Institute in July 2005 after working for 16 years as a member of the World Class Opposing Force (OPFOR) for the Battle Command Training Program at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Mr. Matthews graduated from Kansas State University in 1986 with a BS in History. He served as an infantry enlisted man in the Regular Army from 1977 to 1981. He was a Cavalry officer in the US Army Reserve from 1983 to 1986; and an Armor officer in the Kansas Army National Guard from 1986 to 1991. Mr. Matthews has coauthored numerous scholarly articles on the Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi to include *Shot All To Pieces: The Battle of Lone Jack*, *To Play a Bold Game: The Battle of Honey Springs*, and *Better Off in Hell: The Evolution of the Kansas Red Legs*. He is the author of Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 14, *The Posse Comitatus Act and the United States Army: A Historical Perspective*. He is a frequent speaker at Civil War Roundtables and he recently appeared on the History Channel as a historian for the Bill Kurtis production entitled Investigating History. Mr. Matthews is also the former mayor of Ottawa, Kansas.

**Dr. Christopher K. Ives** serves as an interviewer for the Operational Leadership Experiences Project. He possesses a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Dr. Ives works as a defense and business process consultant. His *Knowledge and Strategy: Operational Innovation, Institutional Failure, US Army Special Forces in Vietnam 1961-1963* will appear in April 2007 (Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group). He is a retired US Army Reserve officer with an extensive background in Special Forces as well as general purpose forces C4I. Dr. Ives' next project is a paper for the 2007 Society of Military History annual conference titled *Continuities and Combatants: Counterinsurgency in Vietnam*.

**Ms. Colette Kiszka** acts as the Project Technician and Transcriptionist for the Operational Leadership Experiences Project at the Combat Studies Institute. She uploads the completed oral interviews onto Fort Leavenworth's Combined Arms Research Library website. She has an extensive administrative background that has led her to work in and around the US Army for over 25 years. As a retired Army spouse, she feels most at home within the military environment and thoroughly enjoys working at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

**Mrs. Jennifer Vedder** is a Military Analyst currently charged with transcribing interviews for the Combat Studies Institute's Operational Leadership Experiences Project. Mrs. Vedder possesses a Masters of Science Degree in Health Care Administration and has previously served as an officer on Active Duty in the Medical Service Corps.

**Ms. Jennifer Lindsey** is an editor for the Research and Publications team at Ft. Leavenworth's Combat Studies Institute. She is a graduate of the University of Kansas with a BS in Journalism/Broadcast News. She spent many years as a television news producer for NBC, ABC, CBS and FOX in Kansas City and San Diego. She has also worked as a freelance writer in corporate communications and for numerous publications.