

# Red Devils

## Tactical Perspectives From Iraq



by

**Lieutenant Colonel Harry D. Tunnell IV**



Combat Studies Institute Press  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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*In memory of*  
*First Lieutenant David Bernstein*  
*Private First Class John Hart*  
*Specialist Justin Hebert.*

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## Foreword

LTC Harry Tunnell's *Red Devils* is the history of one Soldier's and one unit's experience in Operation Iraqi Freedom. War must be studied from a variety of perspectives if one hopes to understand it and profit from that understanding. Like studies of grand strategy and operational histories, personal accounts of war are a critical aspect of understanding that immensely complex phenomenon.

Using a journal which he kept during the war, then reflecting on his experiences while recovering from the wounds he suffered and while at student at the National War College, LTC Tunnell tells the story of the 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment in Northern Iraq. The story of the *Red Devils* covers that crucial period of time from early 2003 when the Army prepared for war, through the end of so called 'major combat operations,' and into the start of the insurgency and counterinsurgency which goes on to this day. This is not a comprehensive, polished historical analysis, but a first hand account of Operation Iraqi Freedom's earliest period.

*Red Devils* represents one man's attempt to make sense of his and his unit's experiences in Iraq. It represents only a small part of the history of many units and individuals which have taken part in, and continue to take part in, the defining military campaign of our time. We hope this study will be useful as readers attempt understand that complex campaign. *CSI—The Past is Prologue*.

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



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## Preface

Initial US Central Command planning for operations in Iraq commenced in November 2001 with the organization of the Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), from an augmented Third Army headquarters. The CFLCC staff planned many contingencies for major combat operations in Iraq, with most conceptually relying on a main attack from the south out of Kuwait to Baghdad and Tikrit, and a secondary attack into northern Iraq out of Turkey to advance on Tikrit and Baghdad from that direction.

By early 2003, operations in northern Iraq were envisioned to be a combination of special operations forces (SOF) elements, Kurdish forces, and conventional troops. The SOF units, under the control of Joint Special Operations Task Force North (JSOTF-N), would work with the Kurds (which directly controlled a large area of northeastern Iraq) in the extreme northern areas of Iraqi territory. The large ground force, consisting of the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) with the 173d Airborne Brigade attached, would deploy out of adjacent Turkey (in the US European Command area of responsibility) and advance towards central Iraq. This effort would provide a northern front while the main CFLCC effort would move on Baghdad from the south.

Unfortunately negotiations with Turkey failed to reach an agreement on the landing and passage of American land forces through that country and into Iraq. However, the Turks did agree to allow US aircraft to use Turkish airspace. Accordingly, US forces deployed into northern Iraq would have to be delivered by air. At this point, the 4th Infantry Division was out of the picture and JSOTF-N was given responsibility for all operations in northern Iraq. The 173d Airborne Brigade was now attached to JSOTF-N as the conventional force.

The 173d, composed of two airborne infantry battalions and associated artillery, reconnaissance, and support elements was essentially given the mission originally assigned to the 4th Infantry Division, that of opening a conventional northern front. For this mission, the brigade's two infantry battalions were augmented with an armored battalion task force. The 173d would commence operations by establishing an airhead at Bashur airfield, located northeast of Irbil within the Kurdish Autonomous Region. Once

the brigade was in place it would initially operate in support of SOF and Kurdish units against the Iraq army forces arrayed along the line (Green Line) demarking the border between the Kurdish controlled area and that controlled by Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime.

Accordingly, on 26 March 2003, the 173d Airborne Brigade began moving by C-17 cargo aircraft from its home station area in northern Italy to Iraq and parachuted the bulk of its two infantry battalions onto Bashur airfield. Within six hours, the airfield was ready for airlanding operations and within four days the entire brigade was in Iraq. Following establishment of the airhead, the paratroopers then conducted a series of operations against various Iraqi army units along the Green Line designed to fix the enemy forces in place so they could not be used in the Baghdad or Tikrit areas to the south. In early April 2003, JSOTF-N and Kurdish forces advanced south across the Green Line and liberated Kirkuk on the 10th.

In mid-April the 4th Infantry Division arrived in the Tikrit area from Kuwait and assumed responsibility for a large sector of north-central Iraq. The 173d Airborne Brigade was then attached to the 4th Infantry Division for the rest of its time in Iraq which extended to February 2004. During that time, the brigade was primarily responsible for security and counter-insurgency operations around Kirkuk. In February 2004 the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division replaced the 173d Airborne Brigade in Kirkuk. The "Sky Soldiers" returned to their home stations in Italy.

## **Introduction**

This essay describes the operations of a US Army infantry battalion as it prepared for combat at its home base in Europe and fought in northern Iraq during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. The actions described were carried out by the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry, a subordinate unit of the 173d Airborne Brigade stationed in Vicenza, Italy. Both organizations were part of the US Army Southern European Task Force (Airborne), known as SETAF, and also headquartered in Vicenza, Italy. These units were normally responsible to the Commander US Army Europe for training and tasking, and they provided the Commander US European Command (USEUCOM) with a rapid reaction capability throughout Europe, most of Africa, and parts of the Middle East.

The 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry is more often than not referred to by its World War II regimental nickname—the “Red Devils.” In the fall of 2002, the Red Devil mission was to alert, marshal, and deploy within 24 hours of notification by air, ground, rail, or sea transportation to conduct forcible entry, ground combat, or stability and support operations to demonstrate US resolve, or respond within 24 hours to crisis as directed by USEUCOM. The battalion would eventually have the opportunity to carry out nearly every task in its mission statement—although it would perform them far outside of its traditional area of employment.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Preparation and Training in Europe**

With most of Southwest Asia outside the USECOM area of responsibility, there was not a systematic brigade effort to prepare for operations in Iraq. Most of the time battalion commanders determined training priorities and established training goals as they deemed fit. However, during the summer of 2002, even though routine training focused on a USEUCOM regional employment, the Red Devils began to deliberately prepare for what was thought to be an eventual deployment to fight in Iraq.

The battalion conducted several training periods for non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers to establish a base line of knowledge among leaders. The training focused on direct combat, or preparing for deployment. The first leader-training period was conducted during the summer of 2002 and was a Video Teleconference (VTC) between Italy and Fort Drum, New York with the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry that had recently returned from Afghanistan. Red Devil leaders discussed with Lieutenant Colonel Paul LaCamera and several of his NCOs and officers the important lessons they learned during their battalion's combat tour in Afghanistan.

Additional leader training included topics on how to organize for and conduct various forms of movement to contact, how to establish traffic control points (TCPs) and inspect vehicles during combat operations, and how to prepare financially for a long deployment. The battalion also conducted a leader-training period specifically about how to operate in northern Iraq. The brigade's Deputy Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Sean Callahan, had served as a company commander in northern Iraq after the Gulf War, and he gave an outstanding presentation about infantry operations in the region. This presentation was especially relevant because it highlighted several problems that his unit had operating in the area such as maintaining Frequency Modulation (FM) radio communication over long distances.

In addition to routine infantry training such as live-fire exercises, deployments to Grafenwoher Training Area in Germany, and maneuver training and evaluation at the Army's Combat Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany, there were real-world tactical events that helped prepare the battalion for combat. The first such requirement was an operational rehearsal of

a battalion (-) reinforcement of KFOR, the long-established international military mission in Kosovo.

On 11 July 2002 the Red Devils parachuted onto a Drop Zone (DZ) near Vitina, Kosovo and immediately executed an air assault by helicopter from the vicinity of the DZ into the battalion's assigned patrol area. During the employment in Kosovo the battalion practiced several skills that would prove to be useful in Iraq such as assembling on an unfamiliar DZ, developing control measures to decrease the potential for fratricide, and standing operating procedures for parachuting with live ammunition and body armor.

While conducting tactical operations in Kosovo's low threat environment the battalion gained experience planning and executing a variety of missions such as cordon and search operations, small unit patrols, and reliefs in place with other units. These procedures were refined during training at Grafenwoher and Hohenfels, and further modified during combat in Iraq. Between periods of collective training at Grafenwoher and battalion evaluations at Hohenfels a regional crisis interrupted routine training. The battalion was alerted, marshaled, and prepared for a real-world mission in USEUCOM's area of responsibility. Although the battalion did not deploy, the detailed planning and rehearsals for an airborne assault and follow-on operations focused soldiers on the potential for combat. This helped to refine further—and in some cases validate—procedures learned earlier. The collective training in Germany and the deployment to Kosovo were planned and coordinated by the SETAF headquarters and the 173d Airborne Brigade headquarters. All of these events were superb in concept and execution, and were important milestones that helped prepare the battalion for its eventual employment in northern Iraq.

During the late fall and winter of 2002 it became obvious that the potential for war to spread to Iraq was increasing. Throughout this period the brigade focused on deployment readiness by organizing and marshaling equipment in anticipation of deploying outside of USEUCOM's area of responsibility. The battalion, meanwhile, focused its efforts on small unit tactical training and integrating new personnel into the organization. The Red Devils conducted an internal Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise (EDRE), 2-3 December 2002, to inspect alert and readiness procedures, as well as vehicle and equipment preparedness. The exercise culminated with a tactical phase that tested airborne procedures and included a Command Field Exercise night parachute assault.

Additional training included live-fire exercises at local training areas and on the installation. SETAF had an excellent on-base facility which allowed small units to conduct live-fire training with modified weapons. Each company conducted squad live-fire training at the facility and two of the three rifle companies were able to perform platoon live-fire training. Platoon exercises had to be modified because the building could not accommodate a full-size platoon. Even though a traditional full-force live-fire could not be conducted this training was critical because the training audience was platoon leaders and platoon sergeants and there were a few cases in which a platoon recently received a leader who had never led his men during any sort of maneuver training.

The battalion also conducted several “virtual” events to rehearse anticipated missions. There was an outstanding computer facility for conducting a variety of simulation-based training on the installation at Vicenza. Before the battalion’s initial objective in Iraq was determined, the unit simply selected an airfield in Europe and on 5 February 2003 conducted a computer simulation of a battalion night parachute assault to seize the airfield. This one-day exercise and after action review allowed the battalion’s leaders to train on a variety of procedures, and make sure that everyone knew and understood the standing operating procedures likely to be used during a real mission. The battalion used the computer facility twice more (during March 2003), once after receiving notification of its objective in Iraq, and later after leaders had completed their planning for the parachute assault to secure Bashur airfield in northern Iraq. These events were not only rehearsals, but also allowed subordinate commanders to present their concept of how they would accomplish their tactical mission to the battalion commander.





## **Chapter 2**

### **A Summary of Battalion Combat Operations**

The initial mission of the 173d Airborne Brigade was to secure an airfield in northern Iraq to establish an airhead and prepare for follow-on forces. The brigade's task organization for the parachute assault included elements from: Headquarters and Headquarters Company 173d Airborne Brigade; 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry; 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry; 74th Infantry Detachment; Battery D, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment; 173d Support Company; 501st Support Company; 250th Medical Detachment; Detachment, 2d Special Forces Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces; 4th Air Support Operations Squadron (USAF); and the 86th Contingency Response Group (USAF).<sup>1</sup> While employed in Iraq, the brigade's task organization would change as units were attached to, detached from, or placed under the operational control of the 173d Airborne Brigade. These adjustments were usually based on the tactical situation, or the arrival of new units into the Iraq Theater of Operations (ITO).

The 62<sup>nd</sup> Airlift Wing from McChord Air Force Base, Washington performed the airlift which began with a personnel and heavy equipment airdrop on 26 March, 2003 and concluded with air land missions the following five nights. Seventeen C-17 Globemaster III aircraft conducted 62 missions to deploy 2,175 personnel, 3,060 short tons of cargo, and 408 vehicles.<sup>2</sup> In addition to getting the remaining organic elements of the brigade into Iraq during these difficult night landings, the 62<sup>nd</sup> Airlift Wing's operations included an impressive deployment to the brigade of its attached heavy task force centered on the 1st Battalion, 63d Armor Regiment (known as Task Force 1-63) with its Abrams Tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, and other combat vehicles and equipment.

The 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry conducted its final briefings and preparation for combat at Aviano Air Base in Italy near the end of March 2003. More than 400 Red Devil paratroopers, along with the rest of the assault echelon of the 173d Airborne Brigade, cross-loaded equipment and personnel into the 62<sup>nd</sup> Airlift Wing's C-17 Globemaster III airplanes and departed for the ITO. After the battalion parachuted as part of the brigade into northern Iraq and helped secure an airfield for follow-on forces, it began a series of operations that took it south to perform independent combat operations in the vicinity of Irbil in early April 2003.

After fighting near Irbil the battalion moved as part of the brigade farther south to Kirkuk and helped secure the city. The battalion conducted a variety of infantry missions in and around the city. By July 2003, the battalion was conducting counterinsurgency operations to the west of Kirkuk in an area of operation (AO) known as "AO WEST." This area was approximately 100 kilometers from the brigade's main operating facility in Kirkuk. The battalion was withdrawn from AO WEST in September 2003 and relieved another battalion-sized task force from the brigade in an area called "AO SOUTH." This area was generally parallel to a major north-west-southeast running highway in At' Tamim province.

The battalion implemented a variety of sustainment and force protection measures to ensure success in combat. Red Devils operated out of numerous improved and unimproved locations but the battalion Field Trains continuously operated out of the brigade's main facility at the Kirkuk air base. Each company also maintained its company trains and a tent area at the base to store personal baggage and extra equipment. These areas offered a secure area where companies could rotate soldiers for rest and refit, and more advanced medical care. Since the battalion occasionally operated out of the air base, the battalion Tactical Operations Center (TOC) always maintained some type of headquarters on the base, which was used as the battalion's primary command post (CP) whenever the Red Devils operated in and around Kirkuk. This area was also used as a storage, rest, and refit area for battalion CP personnel anytime the Red Devils operated in forward areas.

Companies established patrol bases whenever operating away from the air base. These patrol bases were generally located in populated areas and housed in permanent structures such as houses or walled compounds. Only occasionally would a company occupy an unimproved area as a patrol base, and then only for short periods. At a patrol base fields of fire were cleared, the surrounding area was routinely patrolled, and the buildings were guarded and sandbagged. These small outposts were changed frequently, every few weeks, either as a force protection measure or because the battalion was employed elsewhere.

The battalion headquarters established an Operational Support Base (OSB) whenever the bulk of the battalion was employed away from Kirkuk. An OSB usually consisted of the battalion CP, the battalion scout platoon, the battalion mortar platoon, and a support element that varied in size based upon the mission and frequency of resupply. The OSB was

very mobile and because it was smaller with less defensive capability than an average rifle company it relied on an integrated defensive plan among the various headquarters elements. Patrol bases and an OSB could be defended by relatively small groups for short periods when a company, or the battalion, went on a mission. Furthermore, since company and battalion trains always remained on the air base, forward-positioned patrol bases and OSBs could be abandoned quickly if the battalion was ordered, on short notice, to move elsewhere.

Other areas of concern regarding force protection included measures to protect the health of the force, and conducting training that integrated replacements and updated combat tactics, techniques, and procedures. In general, soldiers were ordered to limit the amount and type of local foods eaten. Battalion medical personnel also conducted frequent preventative health inspections of the battalion area. Fruits with non-edible skins such as watermelon were sometimes purchased on the economy and, if personnel did eat locally prepared food, they were warned to stay away from consuming uncooked foods, fruits with edible skin, seafood, and water from unapproved sources. Watching out for the types of local foods consumed, along with frequent inspection of the battalion's food preparation areas (they were closed and cleaned if found unacceptable), and unit latrine areas—which required frequent cleaning and the use of fly bait and other insecticides—helped curb potential outbreaks of illness in the battalion.

Battalion units frequently conducted live-fire training while deployed. Squad leaders were required to routinely re-certify their soldiers on weapons handling procedures and individual movement techniques throughout the deployment; this was an important component of the battalion's risk management strategy to reduce negligent weapon discharges before live-fire training and during combat operations. The battalion established firing ranges in nearly every area it was deployed. Company commanders had the authority to establish static ranges as needed to test fire weapons or conduct other types of non-maneuver weapons firing.

Company commanders also developed training plans for team, squad, or convoy maneuver live-fire exercises. The battalion commander certified maneuver ranges, and authorized any waivers necessary if a commander's live-fire plan included unusual procedures learned during combat operations. The battalion tactical command post (TAC), company commanders, battalion scout platoon, and company and battalion mortars conducted a battalion live-fire Fire Coordination Exercise with artillery and attack

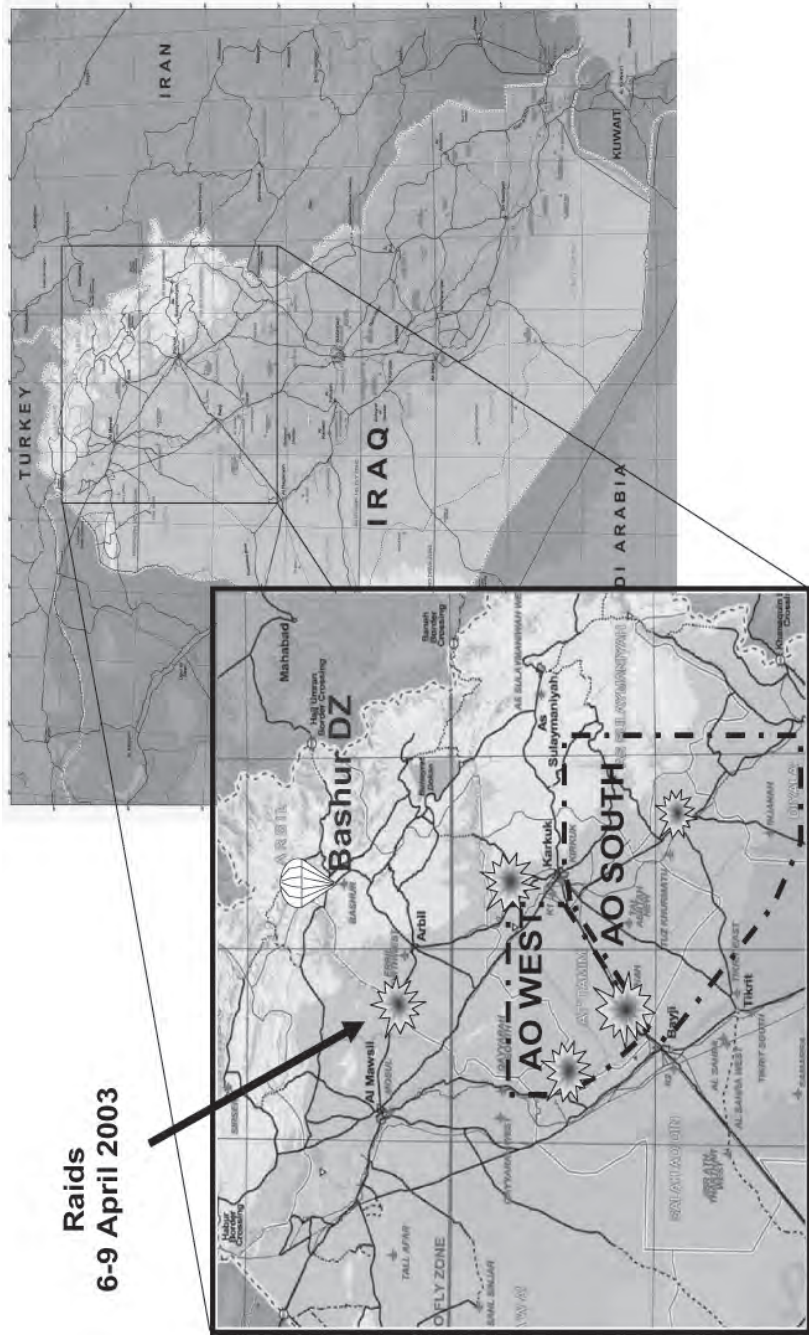
aviation (AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopters) to improve understanding of the aircraft's capability throughout the battalion, and to learn how to integrate attack aviation into a battalion fire plan.

Some of the simple procedures that improved performance during combat were to conduct a leader's reconnaissance by ground or air whenever possible. Communications reconnaissance to determine potential areas where FM radio communications might not work, and where a retransmission station (which extends the range of a unit's tactical FM radio communication network) would facilitate reliable communication were essential. Procedures for having patrols check-in and check-out so the general location of patrols were known in case they needed reinforcement, but were unable to request it, were implemented. The battalion CP also monitored road and trail networks, and restricted movement for a period of time if a particular road was being used too much and might become an inviting target for enemy ambush. Weapons control procedures helped ensure that friendly units were not accidentally fired upon, and that a change in status of whether or not a weapon was supposed to be loaded could be easily directed.

Throughout the deployment the battalion had interpreters attached. Interpreters that deployed with the battalion from Italy came with uniforms and equipment; however, those hired locally did not have special equipment. As the battalion matured in experience, leaders realized that it was appropriate to provide interpreters who accompanied patrols with body armor and hydration systems such as a Camelbak. The battalion headquarters also requested that interpreters who accompanied patrols receive extra pay as an incentive for performing this hazardous duty. It was important to keep as many interpreters as possible with platoons and companies because they were essential to helping units interact with the civilian community, local governments, and local law enforcement. Their understanding of Arab and Kurdish customs helped lessen the potential for ethnic and religious tension resulting from a lack of cultural understanding on the part of US Forces.

## **Lessons**

In this particular part of Iraq, we recognized early on that consolidating the companies into a battalion base camp might give the enemy an advantage because large areas are easier to accurately attack with stand-off systems such as mortars and rockets. Furthermore, since base camps are



Red Devil Operations (March – October 2003).

often built outside of civilian populated areas, it is easier for an enemy to conduct reconnaissance on units because there are fewer areas to watch, they can monitor patrols leaving and entering the base, and they can easily determine routes being used since roads in and out of bases are limited. The enemy has greater freedom of maneuver whenever large areas are relinquished to him by a lack of sustained coalition presence. We also learned that bases that are separate from population centers might make it more difficult for walk-in sources to approach coalition forces and provide information. Many potential sources might be hesitant to approach because it is so easy for an enemy to observe their entry and exit from the base.

Current rations are designed to support short duration contingency operations; consequently, there are not a wide variety of menus. Because of the poor ration cycle and repetitive menu choices people would not consume three meals a day even though they were available. When soldiers do not get the proper caloric intake for the amount of work they perform, or they eat food purchased locally to get a little variety this can promote an assortment of health problems, and impact readiness. Menu variety should be increased along with the number of veterinarians and water purification assets in a brigade. More potable water means that Mobile Kitchen Trailers (MKTs) can be used at forward locations. Veterinarians in brigades ensure that local food stuffs can be inspected and purchased for preparation in MKTs. These steps will increase selection and limit the number of resupply convoys bringing prepared food to forward locations which will lower the probability of ambush.

We eventually realized that properly equipped interpreters increase the effectiveness of a unit several-fold because they explain local customs and traditions, interpret graffiti, etc. Interpreters also explain the necessity for combat operations to local communities; highlight why certain people are detained; outline house search procedures to the occupants; ask local leaders to accompany searching units and report back to the community the professionalism of the unit's conduct; and request that certain people surrender themselves for questioning. We tried to keep interpreters at platoon level and available to accompany squads on patrol, and made sure that we had enough interpreters on-hand to be incorporated into a unit's



rest and rotation plan (five days on and two days off, etc.) without a loss of capability.

Before our employment we knew that continuing to train while deployed would be essential. Units must incorporate new tactics, techniques, and procedures that are learned as a result of combat operations, and new personnel must be integrated into squads and platoons. Live-fire exercises were a critical component of our training program. We kept maneuver live-fire exercises simple ensuring a unit could accomplish its training goals in an austere, dangerous and, at the same time, complex environment. We found that we had to modify normal procedures in order to conduct training safely, and to do so under severe time constraints. Modifications were deliberate and not haphazard; a formal waiver signed by the battalion commander outlined waived procedures and new measures implemented to compensate for the loss of a particular training or safety process. If another unit was live-firing for training, or to synchronize their weapons systems (attack helicopters, artillery, etc.) we did not waste the opportunity; we combined our training goals with theirs and developed a Fire Coordination Exercise.

We tried to deploy with many of the necessary materials to conduct training. We also established a standard for range control procedures in the combat area. We established blocking positions to provide force protection for the training unit, and to ensure that civilians did not enter the range during live-fire periods. Units should prepare for this at home station by writing scenarios that require gate guards and other administrative personnel to act (and be equipped) as if they are performing the same tasks during a combat deployment.

### **Notes**

1. Department of the Army, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Permanent Orders 141-15 awarding assault landing credit to the 173d Airborne Brigade for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, dated 20 May 2004.
2. Kevan Kipp (TSgt, USAF), Unclassified Extract to Northern Airdrop (Operation NORTHERN DELAY), e-mail to author 6 January 2005.





## **Chapter 3**

### **Jumping In and Getting Started**

On 26 March 2003 at 1700 hours Zulu, Red Devils began parachuting onto Bashur DZ as part of the 173d Airborne Brigade's airborne assault into northern Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Special Operations Forces were already in the area operating with Kurdish paramilitary forces. These units secured key terrain off of the drop zone, and facilitated the airborne deployment of the brigade. The Red Devils were the brigade's main effort and principally responsible for securing the landing strip. There were a few challenges during the initial phases of the airborne operation. Even though the pilots and air crews of the C-17s performed superbly; the battalion was scattered during the air drop. Furthermore, the ground was extremely muddy, in some places paratroopers would wade through mud over their knees which made assembly of personnel and recovery of equipment more difficult than normal. Despite these impediments, the Red Devils accomplished all of their critical tasks and the airfield was ready to receive the follow-on echelons by airlift as scheduled.

Eventually the battalion—minus three rifle platoons—moved to the city of Irbil and conducted a reconnaissance in force which culminated in offensive operations against Iraqi conventional military forces. The battalion, organized as Task Force Red Devil with attached artillery, conducted two raids against the enemy during 6-9 April 2003. The raids were in areas where tactical responsibility belonged to US Special Forces units operating with Kurdish allies. Task Force Red Devil had a small cell of Special Forces soldiers who conducted liaison work between the task force and Special Forces units responsible for the areas to be raided.

Detailed coordination was essential. The task force had to ensure that the routes in and out of the objective areas were understood; locations of friendly units were known; and responsibility for specific tactical activities like observation of enemy targets and calls for fire were decided. The attached Special Forces soldiers were the best suited to conduct these types of coordination because they remained with the Red Devil headquarters throughout the raids and were familiar with Special Forces operations and procedures; they also brought special equipment necessary to communicate with the Special Forces units in the area.

The two raids followed the same general pattern:

- a battalion operations order was issued
- a leader reconnaissance was made of the objective
- a reconnaissance was conducted by the firing battery commander of tentative artillery positions
- the battalion was loaded on a mix of Humvees and 5-ton trucks and marshaled
- final rehearsals were conducted
- a retransmission station emplaced
- the raiding force moved to an assault position
- leaders received a final update from Special Forces personnel who had maintained observation on the objective
- blocking positions were established
- artillery emplaced
- the attack conducted
- the raiding force withdrawn
- the route security force withdrawn
- and finally the retransmission station was withdrawn

The Special Forces unit responsible for the area then resumed control of all operations in the area and could continue to attack the objective with aerial fires if they desired.

The first raid was an artillery raid in which the battalion task force moved from its assembly area in Irbil to firing positions near the Greater Zab River and attacked dug-in Iraqi infantry positions with 105mm artillery fires. The second raid was a combined arms raid on another Iraqi infantry trench and bunker complex. This raid was much more multifaceted and difficult than the first and required A Company to establish a blocking position below the “Green Line”—the line of separation between the semi-autonomous Kurdish area and the remainder of Iraq. As the task force approached its final assault positions, battalion leaders were briefed that the enemy would be able to observe A Company—led by Captain Ned Ritzmann—and Captain Christopher Lambesis’s artillerymen from D Battery, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment as they pulled into their initial firing positions.

The enemy had a series of observation posts (OPs) that had accurately directed indirect fires onto Special Forces operating in the area earlier; it was natural to assume that the enemy could observe the raiding force dur-

ing its final maneuver into position. Consequently, the task force plan was modified on the spot, and the battalion mortar platoon emplaced so that it could suppress the enemy OPs while task force elements occupied their positions and began to attack the enemy trench and bunker complex.

Both raids were successes, destroying several enemy positions. Cooperation with Special Forces improved every time, and there were no friendly casualties, even though the task force had been subjected to enemy direct and indirect fires. The Special Forces unit that conducted the calls for fire during the first raid had identified a valuable lesson learned. They proposed that they infiltrate fire support personnel from Task Force Red Devil and have them control the artillery fires. This, they believed, would make the fire missions go much faster and smoother. The suggestion made sense, and Staff Sergeant David Cannon from the battalion's Fire Support Element was ordered to establish the appropriate OPs. Cannon infiltrated with artillery forward observer teams and established two OPs. The teams expertly controlled the task force's indirect fires, and Cannon also adjusted heavy machinegun and grenade machinegun fires onto enemy forces with a handheld laser designator. Staff Sergeant Cannon received the Bronze Star for valor due to his leadership, performance of duty and heroism while under direct and indirect fire, becoming the first member of the brigade to receive such recognition.

## **Lessons**

Whenever possible, we conducted a leader's reconnaissance early. This included the battalion commander, company commanders, and other selected leaders. We had to be careful to ensure that none of the battalion's key leaders was in a position to be hurt or killed on the same mission which required staggering the reconnaissance, or having a company executive officer in lieu of a company commander on certain events. A personal reconnaissance by commanders ensures that inappropriate expectations of what units can accomplish, or how long it might take to complete the mission are avoided. We also tried to define clearly the limits of any leader's reconnaissance so the patrol would not move too close to the objective and compromise the impending mission.

With the rapidly evolving and easily available communications technology, we noticed during training in Europe that there was a tendency to try to take advantage of new commercial systems. We found that new technology was fine to augment communications, but was not available in

enough quantity to replace traditional systems. We made sure that Red Devils knew how to use their assigned communications equipment before they deployed. During combat, Red Devil units routinely communicated distances in excess of 110 kilometers via FM radio. If we relied on the communications architecture designed by the brigade—which employed several non-standard measures—then platoons in contact would have had limited FM radio range and lacked the capability to communicate with their company or the battalion headquarters. We felt that brigades and battalions must be able to communicate with FM radios throughout the entirety of their battlespace. It is appropriate to take advantage of new technology, but units must still be experts with whatever the Army currently uses.

### **Notes**

1. Permanent Orders 141-15

## **Chapter 4**

### **In and Around Kirkuk**

Upon the conclusion of the raids, Task Force Red Devil was ordered to Altun Kupri. During the motor march, a fragmentary order to continue further south to the large northern city of Kirkuk was received. The original plan called for the battalion to be prepared to attack and destroy enemy forces in Altun Kupri. Red Devils would have had to attack through mine fields, and seize a major fortification to secure this important crossroads area which led to Kirkuk. During the approach march to Altun Kupri, the battalion learned that the Iraqis had abandoned their positions, or had been driven out by Kurdish paramilitary forces—the reports varied. In any case, the enemy positions were empty and the battalion continued its mounted movement to Kirkuk where Iraqi forces were, with a great deal of alacrity, deserting their positions in the city and surrounding areas.

Task Force Red Devil arrived in Kirkuk on 11 April 2003 along with the majority of the 173d Airborne Brigade. Once in Kirkuk, the task force reconfigured into its traditional battalion formation and began to secure an assigned sector of the city as part of the overall brigade operation. The battalion performed a variety of missions in Kirkuk and the surrounding area. The battalion CP, Headquarters and Headquarters Company (initially commanded by Captain Kyle Hadlock), and one rifle company provided most of the air base perimeter security and the brigade's quick reaction force (QRF). The remaining two rifle companies occupied company patrol bases in Kirkuk, and operated in and around the city.

The brigade focused on stability operations once it reached Kirkuk in order to restore, and then maintain civil order. Iraqi forces had departed in disarray leaving a vacuum in the region and the possibility of that void being filled by lawlessness and other counterproductive behavior. There were a variety of competing entities looking to take advantage of the political and law enforcement void to include political parties, armed groups, and criminal gangs. Furthermore, a major risk of looting and a general breakdown in services needed to sustain a minimum standard of living existed. Even though there were clearly instances of violence, civil disobedience, looting (primarily of military, political, or government infrastructure abandoned by the old regime), and other problems, for a city of nearly one

million people, the problems were remarkably kept well-in-check by the brigade's efforts.

Red Devil responsibilities during stability operations ranged from maintaining the brigade QRF, securing the city's major hospital, establishing deliberate and hasty traffic control points (TCP), and conducting mounted and dismounted small unit patrols. Orders were also received for the battalion to guard a small part of the region's oil infrastructure. In addition to these tasks, the battalion conducted non-traditional missions such as establishing water points and distributing water to the civilian community; inoculating children and assisting with a variety of medical and civil affairs programs; recovering or destroying abandoned enemy military equipment; and developing a leadership camp for local police. Other units in the brigade performed similar missions in their own areas, plus their own brand of non-traditional labors such as establishing major systems of governance. Throughout this period, there were a few task organization changes resulting in the battalion usually operating with just two of its three rifle companies. Typically, C Company, commanded by Captain William "Jake" Jacobs, was often under the operational control of another battalion.

Designing, setting up, and running the basic leadership camp for Iraqi law enforcement personnel was a unique job. The camp was initially a week, and expanded later on to two or three weeks. The reason that it was a "leadership camp" rather than a police academy was that the instruction focused on trying to develop quickly a basic sense of ethics, community responsibility, and safety in the candidates before returning them to their police duties. Accordingly, classes included ethics instruction as well as first aid and basic weapons safety. The camp also maintained a leadership emphasis because an infantry battalion obviously does not have the resident expertise to train police investigative techniques. While in Kirkuk, the battalion used a form of the "Red-Amber-Green" time management system—red was the detail, QRF, and retransmission station security force, amber the live-fire training unit, and green conducted the larger combat missions. The red company normally ran the training for the police. The camp began in earnest after battalion members designed the initial training program, and provided the instructors and interpreted classroom instruction. Eventually the Iraqi police conducted most of the training while US personnel observed and coached as necessary. The battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company was the last unit to run the camp before

responsibility for it was handed off to another unit in the brigade subsequently ending the Red Devils tenure in the police leadership business.

Occasionally, the battalion was ordered to conduct operations outside of the city, and key leaders conducted several reconnaissances to identify probable sites for future operations. If there were significant problems in the surrounding villages such as indiscriminate weapons firing, or assaults on the civilian community by armed persons, the battalion would search the villages and seize unauthorized weapons and other materials. The size of operations varied; four missions during May 2003 are illustrative of the types of activities, in addition to patrolling, that the battalion carried out.

On 28 April 2003, battalion key leaders conducted a reconnaissance of Daquq, a village south of Kirkuk. A Special Forces A-Team was operating in and around Daquq and reported there were routine instances of small arms and Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) firings in the northeast quadrant of the village. They were not sure of the origin of the engagements; some, they surmised, could be related to political or ethnic rivalry as groups tried to gain dominance in the area, and some could be related to criminal activity or acts of intimidation. In any case, the A-Team's efforts to calm the situation were meeting with little success, and they believed that a cordon and search of the area by infantry might have some positive results.

The battalion scout platoon moved into Daquq and established OPs overlooking the planned area of the raid. One OP was established in the A-Team's "safe house," and the platoon manned several others in the general area. The scouts observed the area for a few days and assessed the type and amount of activity in the area. On 2 May 2003, the raiding force was positioned in a large field six kilometers away from the objective.

The force consisted of the battalion TAC, A Company, a section of the battalion mortars, medical, maintenance, and other types of support from the battalion headquarters. Once the Scouts reported weapons firing, the raiding force moved into the area and began the cordon and search operation. The Special Forces team and their interpreters linked up with the battalion on the objective and helped conduct the search operation. The operation went well; there was one engagement, a few people were detained, and several weapons were captured. The raid had the desired effect and the area remained generally quiet until the brigade was able to expand



its operations and secure Daquq as part of its plan to control outlying areas away from Kirkuk.

During May 2003, Captain Ryan Dillon's B Company was serving as the brigade's QRF. The general procedure was for the brigade headquarters to alert the QRF for a particular mission somewhere in the brigade's AO. Upon notification, Dillon would organize his force as needed and conduct the mission (missions usually required just a platoon-sized element). The company commander went along on missions and took other assets such as his company mortars whenever he thought appropriate.

One of the first missions was to protect a radio station in the area. The station had been threatened several times by groups that wanted to steal the valuable broadcasting equipment, and was important to coalition forces because it was a means to provide public information to the indigenous community. The QRF consisting of the commander, a rifle platoon, and company mortars mounted in a variety of military vehicles was ordered to secure the radio facility. The QRF quickly moved to the radio station and began occupation of the facility. There was an engagement as a small group of assailants outside of the station fired on the QRF. The paratroopers returned fire and continued to occupy the station. The station was successfully secured and elements of B Company remained on site until other arrangements to guarantee the continued protection and use of the station could be made.

Another incident involved reports about the establishment of an illegal TCP by a group of unknown persons. The illegal TCP was supposedly operating near a small Arab village, and was reportedly extorting money or other valuables from people who traveled along this particular stretch of road. Early in the evening of 5 May 2003, the QRF was ordered to force the illegal TCP to disband. The QRF, organized in the same general configuration as the radio station mission, quickly moved to the area and began to establish a series of security positions before moving to disband the TCP.

As one section was moving into position, they came under small arms fire by a few people firing from a rooftop in the Arab village. The patrol returned fire and the rest of the QRF cordoned off the village and began a search operation that lasted throughout the morning. The village was sympathetic to the Hussein regime and the man that the patrol killed during the firefight was a member of the Ba'ath Party who had worked as a customs

official. The patrol detained the man's son (who also fired on the patrol) and a few others who attempted to hide the enemy weapons used during the firefight. There was not an illegal TCP established that night, insofar as the QRF could determine, and no one quite understood why the Arabs engaged the security position. Some may think that the men were trying to protect their house—which may have been their original intent—but it is pretty difficult to confuse paratroopers in full combat equipment with paramilitary forces, irregulars, or bandits who are lightly armed and do not wear helmets, body armor, and have Humvee trucks with machineguns mounted on them.

Late in the evening of 12 May 2003, the battalion was alerted that there may be several important targets in Al Huwayjah, a large village about 50 kilometers west of Kirkuk. There was little information on the village and the suspected targets so it would be necessary to cordon off most of the village in order to prevent any persons of interest from escaping. The battalion conducted several types of reconnaissance before the raid. The principal battalion leaders conducted an aerial reconnaissance from a Blackhawk helicopter. Scouts and soldiers from the battalion communications section conducted a route and communications reconnaissance of the infiltration route to assess trafficability, ascertain any “dead spots” from which FM radios would be ineffective, and to determine if a retransmission station was necessary in order to ensure reliable communications.

During the middle of May 2003 the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry (with C Company under its operational control) had a running firefight throughout Kirkuk. There were rumors that the enemy fighters originated from the Al Huwayjah area. Because of this activity, the brigade commander at the last minute decided to enlarge the raiding force. Task Force 1-63, led by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Riddle, was added and the brigade headquarters would command and control the operation. From 18-20 May 2003, Red Devils conducted final rehearsals and executed the raid. The route to the objective was to the south around the targeted village and the battalion attacked from west to east to include searches of two smaller communities a few kilometers west of Al Huwayjah. The brigade headquarters and Task Force 1-63 struck from the east along a more direct route from Kirkuk and secured the village outskirts.

The battalion's infiltration was generally without incident, although there were a few problems moving so many Humvees and 5-ton trucks—enough to move 508 people—along unimproved dirt roads and through restric-

tive terrain in small villages. The battalion approached the nearby targets without being compromised and conducted the searches. As the battalion approached Al Huwayjah proper, B Company secured the perimeter of the village while A and C Companies moved toward their target areas near the center and southern part of the village. The battalion TAC moved with C Company, the battalion main effort. The raiding force logistics element, called "Team Support," consisted of part of the battalion combat trains with maintenance, medics, and the battalion's "hasty detention facility." Team Support was led by the Battalion executive officer, Major Michael Shinnery, and remained on the outskirts of Al Huwayjah until the village was secured. Command Sergeant Major Willie Peoples, the battalion's senior enlisted paratrooper, always had a wide-ranging charter to circulate to the various companies during battalion operations and act as another set of eyes for the commander who remained with the battalion's main effort.

There were several engagements during the raid. Task Force 1-63, approaching from the east, had a firefight roughly 15-20 kilometers outside of the village a couple of hours before the Red Devils skirmished with the enemy. All of the engagements throughout the brigade's area were concluded by the early part of the morning and the village was secured by mid-morning. After brigade operations were complete a few elements from Riddle's task force were placed under the operational control of the Red Devils. The battalion then assumed responsibility for the entire area and completed processing captured and detained personnel and equipment while the brigade TAC and Task Force 1-63 returned to Kirkuk. Red Devils continued to conduct searches and security patrols throughout the local area until relieved by infantry from the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized). The entire operation—concluded within about 72 hours or less—was the brigade's introduction to the Al Huwayjah area, an area that would repeatedly require investment from the Red Devils and other units in the brigade.

The Red Devils spent the remainder of May and June 2003 conducting operations in Kirkuk and its immediate environs to maintain security in the area. During this time frame the Red Devils were briefly given an even larger sector of Kirkuk when the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry deployed for a ground and air assault mission to the south in support of the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized). Meanwhile, enemy activity in Al Huwayjah and its immediate environs continued to increase. By early July 2003, the situation had deteriorated to such a degree that the battalion was alerted and deployed once again to the Al Huwayjah area.

## Lessons

It seemed that Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) was more often than not “bottom-up” driven. We felt that tactical schemes of maneuver should reflect information developed or refined during an IPB process, with a significant amount of the analysis starting at the headquarters of the organization directing the mission—in our case the brigade. Without adequate IPB we were forced to conduct movements to contact to find the enemy and develop combat information. Individual human intelligence (HUMIT) reports were also seemingly treated as a final IPB product and issued directly to us independent of any analysis. Raw, unevaluated reports sent straight to a battalion are of limited value. At our level, we focused on doing a better job of identifying and tracking single-source reporting. If different agencies are getting information from the same source, and it is not recognized as such, then the reports may seem more credible than they really are because receiving units believe more than one source is verifying the information. As we improved at this we were able to check the reliability—to our own satisfaction—of the HUMIT reports that were sent to us.

Whenever we conducted raids or operated with extended lines of communication, we needed the means to secure and interrogate captured and detained personnel for short periods of time. It seemed to us that the brigade headquarters already had its hands full and could not realistically offer much assistance. It was not resourced to maintain detainees for extended periods, and it had to establish its own ad hoc procedures for a facility, the rules for detaining people, and the criteria for their release. Even though we, like most battalions, did not have the training and expertise to establish an enemy prisoner of war holding cage, we knew how to conduct non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO). The establishment of a control cell to search, inspect, and process NEO evacuees parallels some of the functions necessary to control detainees. During combat operations we modified the NEO task and the Headquarters and Headquarters Company established an area (with concertina, guards, etc.) that was used to sort out detainees. This arrangement was called the battalion’s “hasty detention facility.” Once we realized that the NEO techniques, tactics, and procedures were similar enough to what we needed, our hasty detention operations transpired rather smoothly and we never had any problems of note.

We normally kept the hasty detention facility at the OSB and brought it forward during raids. In the middle of an operation, a company simply

turned detainees over to the battalion facility and continued fighting. During extended operations, the facility was established near the battalion CP and trained military intelligence personnel conducted field interrogations. This process allowed battalion leaders to determine which suspects should be immediately released because they were of no intelligence value (they were in the wrong place at the wrong time), who should be held briefly (curfew violation, etc.), and who was of intelligence value and should be sent to a higher echelon for further exploitation. The Headquarters and Headquarters Company also kept records so the battalion could determine if a detainee was a repeat offender. Unfortunately, we soon lost access to any useful information the further up the detention chain a suspect would climb because there were not any feedback loops to update us with information from subsequent interrogations. Realizing that this type of information is perishable, the results of the initial interrogations at the higher level would still have been useful.

## Chapter 5

### Operating in AO WEST

This time the battalion would assume responsibility for a wide-ranging AO that ran from just to the east of Al Huwayjah all the way west to the Tigris River. The boundary then extended north across the Little Zab River to a boundary with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Once across the river the battalion's area, known as AO WEST, extended back to the east across a ridgeline to Altun Kupri, a village approximately 35 kilometers northwest of Kirkuk. There were several focuses of battalion operations in the AO. The battalion, most of the time, organized as if conducting an infantry battalion search and attack. Companies were assigned areas to patrol and as the situation stabilized in an area the companies leap-frogged ahead to different areas and repeated operations. The battalion designated units to continue to patrol in the remaining areas, or the brigade reassigned the area to another unit because the emphasis—as the battalion moved farther west—clearly became to conduct saturation patrols and raids in the new areas. The reference that the battalion began to rely on from May 2003 onward was the US Army's Field Manual FM 90-8, *Counterterrorism Operations* (which is still current doctrine as of this writing).

The battalion CP was initially established in Al Huwayjah village and moved farther west as battalion operations progressed across the Little Zab River. The Red Devils operated with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company and three organic rifle companies much of the time (B Company was sometimes task organized with another battalion-sized task force). A Bradley company from the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry was under the operational control of the battalion for the initial period of time spent in AO WEST and, in early August 2003, the battalion received additional assets such as Military Intelligence teams and Civil Affairs personnel.

Also in early August 2003, the battalion received authorization to approve independently indirect fires throughout AO WEST. Independent approval was essential and should have happened much earlier. This simple delegation of approval from the brigade commander in Kirkuk to the battalion commander, improved the battalion's ability to respond to a variety of situations with non-lethal and lethal fires. It allowed the approval, in seconds or minutes, of company and battalion mortar illumination fire missions whenever a patrol needed them while crossing certain danger areas

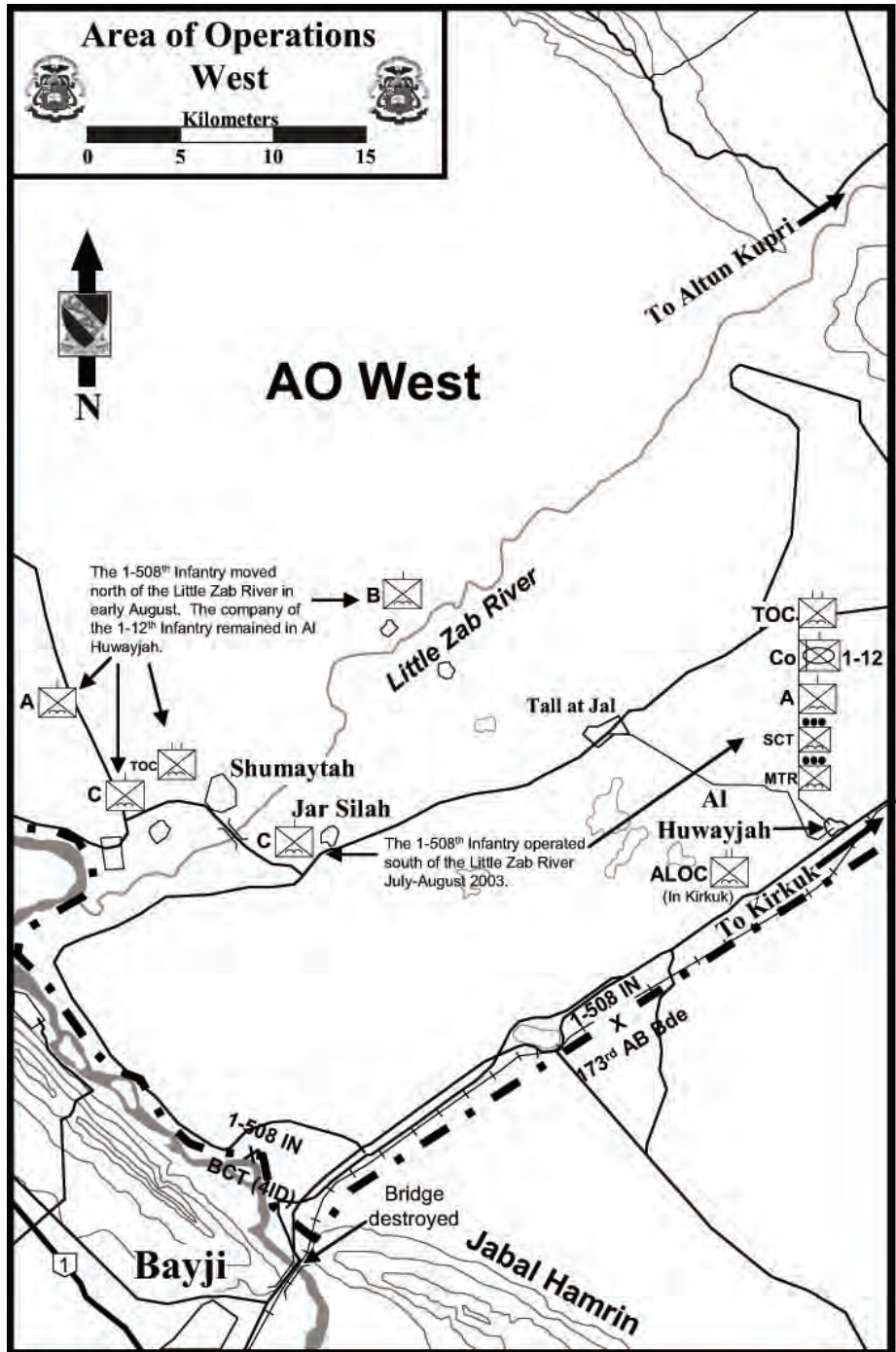
or chokepoints. Pre-planned fires were now easily approved and modified and it speeded up responses to all types of enemy attacks, especially indirect fire ones since anyone who fired a few mortar rounds at a company patrol base might—quite unexpectedly from their point of view—receive mortar fire, as they were trying to break down their own weapon.

There were many situations that required a blend of military responses throughout the brigade's area of responsibility. Stability operations may have been appropriate for Kirkuk but counterinsurgency operations were at the same time required for difficult outlying areas such as Al Huwayjah. In this area there were plenty of opportunities for the enemy to organize, plan, resource, and conduct operations due to a lack of a sustained US presence. The area included not only Al Huwayjah, but also a sizeable surrounding area with great "lines of drift" forming excellent land and water lines of communication for the enemy along the Tigris and Little Zab Rivers. The area was largely Sunni Arab and did not suffer the level of oppression under Saddam Hussein that the minority areas of Iraq did. In fact there was a significant amount of support for the old regime, and that was a contributing factor to how insurgents were able to freely transit through the area between places such as Fallujah and Mosul and establish safe havens locally, or harass US forces operating in or near the area. As it became more obvious that an insurgency was coalescing, an increased US presence in the area was required.

Because the Red Devils were clearly fighting an insurgency, there were a few important differences between traditional maneuver operations and the added focus needed to defeat insurgents. The battalion concentrated on operations that related to population and resources control, and offensive information operations (IO). Army doctrine at the time stated that offensive IO degrades an enemy's will to resist and ability to fight, while denying to them friendly force information. Population and resources control required the battalion to provide security for the populace, detect and defeat insurgents, and sever any relationships between insurgents and the local populace. Part of this approach occasionally required enacting a restriction on the local population such as curfews, or routinely conducting what are traditionally non-military operations such as joint patrols with local police, or coordinating various activities with local governments.

Another aspect critical to long term success was to make the AO safe enough for other agencies to move into it. These new groups would ideally have the capability to provide services and develop the necessary infra-





AO WEST: the Red Devils operated in this area from July – September 2003.



structure for improving the quality of life for the inhabitants, and subsequently winning them over from the enemy. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), rather than military forces, frequently offered the best expertise and capability to do this, all they needed was an area secure enough for them to work. During operations in this part of Iraq the Red Devil mission was to conduct offensive IO to defeat enemy forces and make the area secure enough for NGOs to operate. Of course, the initial phase of offensive IO relied mainly on traditional maneuver operations to attack and destroy or capture enemy forces, and anyone who supplied, recruited, or trained these forces.

The most routine types of tasks that focused on security of the populace and detecting and defeating insurgents included saturation patrolling throughout the area, raids on known and suspected enemy locations, and coordination with local officials and community leaders (mayors, city council members, sheikhs, etc.) Civil affairs activities, psychological operations, shows of force, and joint operations with local law enforcement supported the battalion's offensive IO plan. The IO plan was designed to turn support for the insurgency into, at a minimum, passive support for coalition forces by severing relationships between the insurgents and the locals. The battalion's overall measure of effectiveness—to know when offensive IO had been successful—was quite simply when NGOs felt safe enough to move around and operate in AO WEST with just a minimal coalition military presence remaining in the area.

The Red Devils conducted a variety of tactical operations which occasionally included shows of force to demonstrate to a local population that the battalion could control as much of the area as it wanted—at any time. For example, intelligence indicated that insurgents were going to ambush US forces as they patrolled through the village market in Al Huwayjah. The report seemed plausible since the village was a constant problem for coalition forces having already engaged in enemy actions that included mortar attacks, RPG ambushes, and small arms engagements. At first light, one morning during the middle of July 2003, the battalion conducted a powerful show of force that included multiple companies conducting mounted and dismounted patrols, fighter aircraft flying low over the village, and sniper positions and infantry patrols on building rooftops over watching the market and other selected areas.

Successful operations in Al Huwayjah forced the enemy to move his activity to the less developed areas of AO WEST. Much of the area south of

the Little Zab River was rural with a poorly developed road infrastructure, but a reasonable irrigation system composed of large concrete ditches and some unimproved ditches. The sparse road and trail network and widespread irrigation system inhibited one's ability to travel in a tactical formation quickly while mounted. At the same time, the terrain afforded the enemy ample locations from which to establish ambushes using covered and concealed positions. There was only one bridge over the Little Zab River which soon became an obvious chokepoint. Across the river, there were several small villages suspected of harboring enemy personnel; so the battalion frequently crossed the river to conduct raids and a variety of operations. The missions included squad and platoon sized patrols, and company and battalion sized raids. There were several engagements in the vicinity of the bridge as the battalion began to suppress insurgent activity in the area. Eventually, as the area south of the river became more stable, the Red Devils moved across the river.

One of the early battalion raids occurred on the night of 16 July 2003, while the battalion was still operating from patrol bases and a battalion OSB south of the Little Zab River. The majority of the battalion moved across the river and conducted searches and detailed clearance operations of several villages. The raid netted nine key enemy personnel—out of fifteen targeted—identified as leaders, recruiters, or financiers of insurgent operations in the area. Most battalion and company raids relied on detailed intelligence, or a system of informants who were willing to accompany the raiding force and identify suspects. These types of operations did occasionally include direct combat, for example, C Company's patrol base was attacked with indirect fire as the company marshaled for a battalion raid; and A Company raids encountered various attacks during their operations.

The cordon and search phase of the raids were usually accomplished without incident, especially as the battalion's proficiency in these operations improved, and cooperation with community leaders got better. In fact, one of the local leaders recommended that during raids or cordons a unit should get the "Mukhtar"—a traditional leader responsible for a particular aspect of community life—to accompany any searching units and explain what was happening to the inhabitants. This idea entailed little risk of compromising the overall operation since the Mukhtar was not picked up at his home until after the desired area was cordoned off. The battalion added this idea to its procedures and it worked well throughout operations in AO WEST. The head of the household also accompanied searchers

from room to room and each company had digital cameras to photograph searches that might be controversial. The photos successfully quelled complaints about search procedures. The raids significantly attrited the enemy leadership and thus degraded their capability so much in AO WEST that by 20 September 2003, the battalion entered what it reported to the brigade headquarters as the “sustainment phase of operations.”

Even though most of these types of missions were planned, or the informant accompanied the raiding force, an occasional short notice mission was required. An example of one such event happened on 19 July 2003. The information was from a walk-in source in Kirkuk who was not available to the raiding force. The battalion was alerted over the FM radio at 2:00 a.m. that a theater-designated “High Value Target” was hiding in a farming community across the Little Zab River. Within three hours a battalion task force consisting of the battalion TAC, two rifle companies, battalion mortars, AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopters, and a support element (with medical, maintenance, and the hasty detention facility) were across the river and in position ready to assault. Unfortunately, the information turned out to be bogus as the farming community did not exist.

The task force nonetheless remained in the area for several hours and searched a variety of sites that might have been confused with the suspected hiding spot. As part of the operation, several TCPs were set up to search vehicles. One of the TCPs captured a local senior insurgent leader; a person who would have merited the conduct of a battalion operation to capture in his own right. Company size raids were also used to capture enemy, or seize and search locations of suspected insurgent activity. These raids were under the control of a company commander unless he expected to detain a large number of people, then a small battalion CP and the hasty detention facility accompanied the raiding force. The battalion assets relieved the company of the requirement to process large numbers of people during an operation, which in turn allowed the company commander the freedom to focus on his unit’s maneuver.

In addition to improving the chances of positively identifying subjects, having an informant accompany a raiding force puts pressure on the source to be truthful and not lead the unit into an ambush. They were also usually able to direct the unit to the proper location, which was far more reliable than trying to have an Iraqi civilian read a military map; or describe a complicated route or location through an interpreter to people unfamiliar with the area. Before a raid, sources were questioned about their motiva-

tion for informing, and when payment was authorized, they were not paid until the end of the mission. Prospective sources were warned about the consequences—such as detention—associated with lying. An example of a great judgment call about the veracity of an informant is from A Company. The company (-) patrol was ambushed while enroute to a village to pick up a reported insurgent leader. A Company finished the engagement and patrolled the area, but could not pick up the object of the raid. They believed that it was just a chance contact at an obvious chokepoint, and the informant was being forthright with them when he said that he had nothing to do with the ambush—he even volunteered to go back later. The company commander decided to keep the informant at the patrol base throughout the following day. The next night, Ritzmann and the company successfully completed their mission finding the insurgent right where the informant indicated. In this case the company commander clearly displayed sound intuition not to assume the worst after the ambush.

The enemy attacked using a variety of techniques with IEDs, small arms, RPGs, and mortar attacks being fairly common in AO WEST at the beginning of the battalion's operations in the area. Initially, the standing operating procedure during an ambush was to return fire while driving through the ambush to a rally point; treat and evacuate any casualties; and then return to the suspected enemy location to try to find the attackers. Two instances prompted changes in procedures for the battalion. On 19 July 2003, an RPG team ambushed one of C Company's mounted patrols by conducting a volley fire of two rounds. The patrol returned fire directly at the point of origin of the RPG fire, detained four suspects, and recovered a cache of six RPG rounds of ammunition. On 27 July 2003, insurgents ambushed an A Company mounted patrol by firing RPGs and small arms. The patrol suffered three casualties, one of which required further evacuation out of Iraq. The paratroopers returned fire from their vehicles as the patrol proceeded to its rally point, treated the wounded, and then returned to search for the attackers.

The battalion's pre-Iraq training was not adequate for reacting to ambushes and an increasing number of the direct fire engagements were just that. Procedures that fixed an enemy in position, and limited his opportunity for escape became more appropriate. The "Kosovo" mentality of operating in a low threat environment in which soldiers returned fire in a very limited manner was also not working. Red Devil procedures were unhesitatingly modified to reflect a more traditional infantry approach in which known, likely, and suspected enemy locations were immediately

suppressed, and the patrol would turn into the ambush, dismount, and fight to fix the enemy while at the same time radioing for reinforcement. As the procedures took root throughout the battalion, the number of killed and wounded enemy increased as a result; and terrorists in the AO became reluctant to engage Red Devils with direct fire systems.

There were other battalion procedures regarding vehicle use that were changed, and modifications made to the vehicles themselves, in order to improve survivability in an ambush. For instance, only military vehicles could be used on patrol because captured or civilian leased vehicles were difficult to shoot from since they had doors, and machineguns could not be reliably mounted on them. Red Devil infantry patrol vehicles (usually cargo Humvees with pedestal mounted machineguns) had locally fabricated center-line seats installed so paratroopers could face out and immediately return fire when ambushed. The side-lighting on Humvees was taped over to disguise the American origin of vehicles—Iraqi civilian vehicles did not drive with parking lights illuminated at night so any vehicle with side-lighting on was obviously American. The positioning of Kevlar blankets was uniquely modified for the patrol vehicles. Rather than placing the blankets on the truck bed as they were intended, they were hung from the rails of the cargo compartment. This provided more protection to the paratroopers riding in a Humvee's exposed cargo area. These modifications, suggested by several soldiers, were quickly standardized and implemented throughout the battalion.

Even though small isolated bases provide an inviting target and are seemingly at greater risk, establishing company patrol bases in villages proved beneficial during counterinsurgency operations in AO WEST. C Company's initial patrol base south of the Little Zab River at Jar Silah underwent multiple attacks. The company continued to conduct operations in the area day and night, and there were at least three battalion (-) operations conducted in the village and surrounding area which helped suppress local enemy activity. Finding caches and detaining suspects forced people to move their hidden weapons away from their own property in the village to the periphery of the agricultural community—improving a patrol's chance of catching them in the act. For instance, on 24 July 2003 a C Company patrol recovered a cache of eight AK-47s, one shotgun, six RPG rounds of ammunition, and one RPG launcher. An adult male and two children were in the process of burying the cache, and ran as soon as they saw the patrol approach. The cache group abandoned a tractor and trailer, and the company kept a stay behind ambush on the tractor and trailer, but this was

without result. Following up with the owner of the vehicles was not particularly satisfactory either. However, continuous company and battalion operations did eventually force insurgent activity to move away from the community. Because of this, C Company was able to increase its efforts to work with local leaders to improve the quality of life of the general population.

Platoons and squads had the most frequent contact with the enemy, especially during saturation patrolling. It was during one of these small unit patrols that the battalion suffered its first killed in action. An airborne artilleryman attached to C Company, Specialist Justin Hebert, was killed during a combat patrol that was conducted on the night of 31 July 2003 (and into the early morning of 1 August 2003). The patrol—led by Sergeant First Class Frankie Castro who was one of three wounded that evening—was ambushed as it crossed the bridge over the Little Zab River. The enemy initiated the ambush with an RPG that killed Hebert as he was driving one of the patrol Humvees. The patrol quickly returned fire, and a relief force from C Company responded, secured the area, and evacuated the casualties. Castro, in spite of his wounds, continued to provide excellent leadership in a tough situation. The location where the insurgents lay in wait was discovered, and debris from the attackers located, but the small enemy team escaped before the relief force arrived. Specialist Hebert was 20 years old.

On 13 August 2003, Second Lieutenant Andrew Klutman and Sergeant First Class James Litchford led 3d Platoon, A Company on an ambush patrol. The platoon set up on one of the roads near the company patrol base on the northern side of the Little Zab River (the battalion moved north of the river in early August 2003). During the early morning hours a 3-man enemy RPG team packed up from its own ambush position and walked down the road into the platoon's planned kill zone. The paratroopers engaged the RPG-team killing one outright and wounding another (who died of his wounds later on). The platoon also captured three RPG launchers (two were loaded and ready to fire), six additional rounds of RPG ammunition, and one AK-47. Subsequent intelligence reports indicated that the insurgent killed outright in Klutman's ambush was the "RPG-man" for the team that attacked Specialist Hebert's patrol. It was unfortunate that the report could not be definitively verified because there was no ability to process the evidence collected at the enemy's ambush hide position and match it to the dead terrorist.

At the end of the month, on 30 August 2003, the support platoon, led by First Lieutenant Jason Hansen and the Platoon Sergeant, Staff Sergeant Mark Ehresman, was conducting a daylight resupply of the battalion. As the support platoon was traveling through another battalion's zone of operation about 30 kilometers east of Al Huwayjah they were ambushed by insurgents armed with IEDs, RPGs, and small arms. The new Headquarters and Headquarters Company Commander, Captain Jay Smith, had recently completed a company training period on how to react whenever ambushed, which included live-fire exercises. The well-rehearsed support platoon was confident and prepared with newly learned tactics, techniques, and procedures for just such a contingency.

The battalion communications section had done a detailed survey of potential problems throughout the battalion's AO and selected a number of sites for semi-permanent retransmission stations. These sites ensured reliable communication between the battalion and brigade headquarters as well as all over the Red Devil AO. Because of the communications section's magnificent work, the support platoon—even though out of normal FM radio range—was able to render a “contact report” to the battalion CP, which was at least 60 kilometers away, describing the initial engagement. Captain John “Jack” Kilbride—the C Company Commander who had recently changed command with Jacobs—heard the contact report, organized a large patrol, and requested and received permission to assist the support platoon. The battalion CP coordinated assistance from the battalion in whose area the support platoon was fighting, and coordinated attack aviation support through the brigade headquarters, which was 100 kilometers or so distant from the battalion CP.

The insurgents initiated the ambush with a “daisy chain” of four IEDs, and engaged a 5-ton fuel truck with RPG fires hitting the truck and wounding Specialist Aaron Coates and Private First Class Miguel Ralda. The remaining 5-ton supply trucks followed platoon procedures and continued to drive through the kill zone of the ambush at a pre-designated speed to a rally point. The rest of the platoon mounted in several vehicles—one armed with a heavy machinegun—turned into the ambush to suppress the enemy and assault through the ambushers. By the time other units arrived to provide assistance, the support platoon had already killed, wounded, or captured nearly every terrorist. As an attack helicopter arrived on station, it was oriented on the last known attacker by members of the support platoon and completed the engagement by killing the fleeing insurgent. The battalion normally responsible for the area took charge of the site and C



Company's patrol arrived in time to help reorganize the support platoon and escort them to the battalion's forward location near the confluence of the Tigris and Little Zab rivers. Several instances of heroism were acknowledged by awards after this firefight. In particular, the superb leadership of Staff Sergeant Ehresman and the outstanding shooting of Sergeant First Class Kevin Oakes were recognized with Bronze Star Medals for valor.

While operating in AO WEST, the battalion organized an S-5 section to coordinate and synchronize civil-military operations (CMO) throughout the battalion AO. The S-5 section consisted of a captain and an NCO who worked closely with Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations personnel, and the many formal and informal leaders in each village. The S-5 coordinated the battalion staff's work and company activities so that individual organizations did not work at cross purposes to the overall battalion plan and the commander's guidance. The addition of an S-5 allowed the battalion commander to focus on combat activities, and have a single point of contact to issue guidance to, and through whom to allocate or reallocate resources, or to be the central point of contact for local community affairs.

The battalion staff developed an offensive IO matrix which was used to focus operations, and assess whether or not the offensive IO plan was working. The battalion commander and operations officer (S-3) treated any IO activity as a tactical operation, but the S-5 did have one of the major roles in its execution. Activities included conducting immunizations for children, helping reestablish schools, operating with local police, and coordinating activities with local community leaders. As operations in AO WEST were winding down, a local Mukhtar approached the battalion CP, and over tea with the Red Devil intelligence officer (S-2)—Captain Bryan Hooper—explained that he was initially angry about the US deployment to the area. However, he conceded, that American operations had resulted in a reduction of petty crime in his village and he was now happy with the coalition presence. This unexpected meeting reinforced the final assessment of AO WEST; that it was safe enough for NGOs to operate in freely during daylight hours as long as a minimal coalition presence was maintained in the area to prevent insurgents from re-establishing operations. The Red Devils had already begun to coordinate for NGOs to work in the area when the battalion departed AO WEST. The battalion was withdrawn sometime during late September 2003 and moved to AO SOUTH, which was a 4,200 square kilometer area south of Kirkuk.



Behavioral Effects	Turn support for insurgency into passive US support					
Accomplish Results	NGOs assess AO WEST as safe environment to conduct operations					
Category	HPTs	Priority	IO Effect	Tools	Method	Measures of Effectiveness
Personalities	City Council	1	Inform, influence, co-opt	Civil Affairs, Financial Support to Community Projects	Interpersonal Relationships, Meetings	(1) Provide reliable targetable information (2) Attacks against coalition forces stop
	Head of Household	3	Inform	PSYOPs, Children	Newspaper Articles, posters, school take-home items, quality of life projects, patrol leader interaction	(1) Provide coalition forces with information (2) Allows children to interact with coalition forces
	Children	1	Inform	Civil Affairs, PSYOPs, Company Leaders, School Administrators, Teachers	Handout information at school, DARE type program, medical screening, inoculations, build playgrounds	(1) Approach coalition forces in front of parents (2) Do not throw rocks at military vehicles

A small portion of the Offensive IO matrix used in AO WEST.

## Lessons

In order to exploit any combat information, units need to have counter-intelligence (CI) support to conduct interrogations in forward areas. We found that when walk-in sources showed up, CI personnel could immediately question them to determine what was usable information and act on the information within minutes or hours, rather than days or weeks. Our CI personnel also had the experience to establish procedures to re-contact sources and to make sure that a source was not compromised while helping us. The CI personnel were also useful to query the local population

during patrols. Finally, we learned that if we wanted to question certain members of the local community—but not detain them—then these people could present themselves to the battalion headquarters for questioning. The questioning was conducted in the forward battalion area rather than removing the subject back to the brigade rear for questioning, and the questioned person was immediately released back into their community. After this happened once, the locals understood that questioning was not adversarial and they became more willing to present, voluntarily, themselves for questioning.

In Kosovo and Hohenfels we learned that routine administrative vehicle movements, combat patrols, and major maneuver activity must be tracked. During combat, this was reinforced after the first contact. We needed to ensure that leaders knew where all of the moving pieces were in case fires needed to be cleared, a QRF needed to be sent to a unit in contact, air support or medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) assets needed to be requested, or relief was required from an adjacent unit. We established procedures in the TOC similar to a Movement Control Center (MCC) to track all battle-field movements. The TOC also informed units of routes that were closed due to enemy activity, provided operational updates, and coordinated with adjacent units when the route went through their area. Even though MCC activities are normally a logistics function and hence performed by logistics or administrative CPs, we found that it did not work well at battalion-level. Even with an MCC we occasionally re-learned hard lessons such as the necessity to vary routes, to plan indirect fires along routes, or to take at least one mortar and crew on convoys. However, the use of an MCC system definitely limited our mistakes and the frequency of these “hard lessons.”

Like many other units in Iraq, we found ourselves planning, organizing, and conducting CMO in conjunction with combat operations. We were not manned to do this even though Army doctrine makes provision for an S-5. Consequently, some tactical commanders might be inclined to focus more on CMO than direct combat. It was counterproductive for a commander to get too immersed in non-combat activity because their personal lack of focus might allow the tactical situation to deteriorate enough to compromise security throughout an AO. We had an ad hoc S-5 section composed of an Infantry Career Course graduate and a Staff Sergeant. A Career Course graduate awaiting company command—Captain Joshua Segraves—was handpicked for the job so we could capitalize on his maturity, experience, and training. The Army should man the S-5 position in all battalion and larger units.

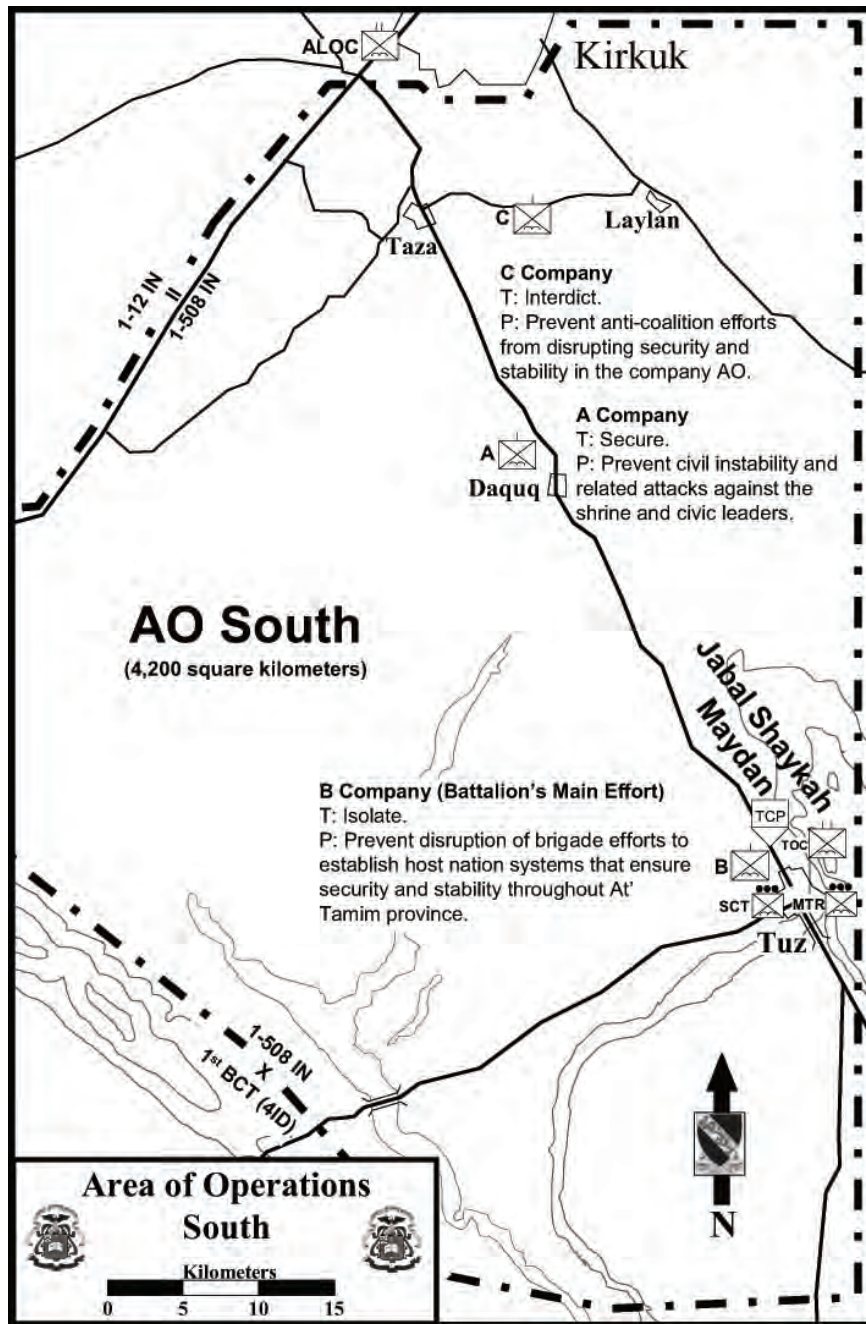


## **Chapter 6**

### **The Last Area of Operation**

The battalion ultimately moved into AO SOUTH which extended south from the outskirts of Kirkuk. During this period the battalion was organized with its Headquarters and Headquarters Company, three rifle companies, and a few attachments. The battalion also included the major police departments and interpreters in its task organization which included Taza (126 police), Laylan (110 police), Daquq (169 police), Tuz (170 police), and 24 interpreters. The Red Devil's purpose in AO SOUTH was to establish long-term host nation security and stability mechanisms, and strengthen local government systems. The battalion would accomplish this by defeating criminal activity; separating insurgents from their support base; training Iraqi Civil Defense Corps forces; improving police capability; certifying host nation systems and procedures; and maintaining appropriate levels of force protection. AO SOUTH was an area that had a mixed population of Arab, Kurd, and Turkmen along with a variety of secular and religious political groups competing for power and influence—the area had the potential for ethnic and religious tension.

Upon arriving in AO SOUTH the battalion conducted air and ground reconnaissance to familiarize leaders with the new area. The Red Devils established company patrol bases and a battalion OSB; made contact with local leaders in each community; performed reconnaissance of areas of suspected enemy activity; initiated saturation patrolling; set up and manned TCPs; continued civil projects started by the previous task force, and began new ones in support of the battalion's offensive IO plan. The battalion also performed out of sector missions whenever required by the brigade headquarters. On 2 October 2003, the battalion was ordered back to an area of AO WEST near the Tigris River. Walk-in sources in Kirkuk reported that a terrorist meeting was going to be conducted in the area. Brigade headquarters was also concerned about insurgent foot traffic into the area across the disabled bridge from Bayji, and reports of cache sites along the Jabal Hamrin Ridge. The battalion searched several small villages near the river, established TCPs near the bridge to search vehicle and personnel traffic, and searched for the suspected cache sites on the high ground. There was no significant enemy activity noted.



AO SOUTH: the Task (T) each company was to perform and the Purpose (P) of the task is shown. Main Effort is the battalion's major emphasis in the AO.

	A Co	B Co	C Co	Scouts	HHC	BN Control
C2	Co CP	Co CP	Co CP		FTCP	TOC CTCP
MVR	1 x Motorized PLT 2 x Rifle PLTs	1 x Motorized PLT(-) 2 x Rifle PLTs	1 x Motorized PLT 1 x Rifle PLTs 1 x Rifle PLT(-)	3 x SCT/ Sniper TMs		1 x Gun Truck/ B Co for TAC security 1 x SQD with 1 vehicle/ C Co for RETRANS security
AVN						
FIRES	2 x 60mm Mortars	2 x 60mm Mortars	2 x 60mm Mortars			4 x 81mm Mortars (4 x 120mm Mortars)
ADA						
M/CW/S						
CML						
MI						THT, LLVI
MP						
SIG						1 x RETRANS
CSS	Co Medics 1 x ATLS TM 1 x FLA (2 medics)	Co Medics 1 x FLA (2 medics)	Co Medics 1 x FLA (2 medics)			BAS(-) 1 x MCT
SOF						TPT
H.N. Police	169 (Daquq)	170 (Tuz)	126 (Taza) / 110 (Laylan)			
Other			16 x Interpreters	4 x Interpreters		4 x Interpreters

Red Devil Task Organization in AO SOUTH.



## Epilogue

On 11 October 2003, the author's patrol was ambushed just south of Tuz, Iraq. After dismounting, Lieutenant Colonel Tunnell was shot through the leg during the ensuing firefight. The battalion Scout Platoon—led by First Lieutenant Robert Przybylski—and other elements of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, observed the start of the ambush and without a second thought moved to the area. The Scout Platoon Sergeant—Sergeant First Class William Stanton—flanked the enemy with one element while Przybylski assaulted with the rest of the platoon through the kill zone, and successfully relieved their fellow paratroopers in contact. While the Scouts were attacking through the ambush, Sergeant Jeremy Baggett and Specialist John Meredith pulled the wounded battalion commander to a ditch as Private First Class Ralph Berry provided continuous covering fire.

A Blackhawk MEDEVAC helicopter airlifted Lieutenant Colonel Tunnell to the brigade's main base at Kirkuk. Upon arrival at the base, a medical team operated and prepared Tunnell for further movement. He was subsequently evacuated via an Air Force aeromedical airlift aircraft to an Army hospital in Landstuhl, Germany where he underwent additional surgeries. A week later Tunnell was flown to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. where surgery continued. During his recovery, he attended the National War College and had his final surgery while a student during September 2004, once again at Walter Reed. Lieutenant Colonel Tunnell is expected to return to full duty as an infantry officer due to, he reports, "the efforts of several incredibly brave soldiers on the battlefield and the splendid medical professionals in Iraq, Germany, and here in the United States."

The Red Devils, meanwhile, continued to operate in AO SOUTH. 24 year old First Lieutenant David Bernstein and 20 year old Private First Class John Hart, both from C Company, were killed in action by enemy direct fire during a combat patrol that was conducting a QRF mission near Taza, Iraq on 18 October 2003. Bernstein, while mortally wounded and still under enemy fire, recovered his driver, Specialist Joshua Sams, who was pinned under the Humvee after an RPG hit the vehicle. For his gallantry in action, Bernstein earned the Silver Star medal.



Lieutenant Colonel Timothy McGuire, already stationed in Italy in anticipation of assuming command of the battalion that summer, was brought forward and took command in Iraq during the first week of November 2003. McGuire successfully led the Red Devils through the remainder of their service in Iraq which included further combat operations, training Iraqi Civil Defense Corps units, establishing a Forward Operating Base at Tuz Khurmatu Airfield (named after Lieutenant Bernstein), and redeploying the battalion to its home station in Vicenza, Italy.



SPC Clinton Tarzia, US Army

Soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade's 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment, stand in formation during a ceremony dedicating Forward Operating Base Bernstein in Tuz, Iraq.

## **Appendix A**

### **Some Final Impressions About Iraq**

The following “thoughts” were developed from ideas that matured throughout the deployment and do not fit into a typical “lessons learned” category of something identified during a specific mission or operation. Most of these opinions relate to the tactical level of war, the “how to” of an army’s business; however, a few of the concepts are operational in nature. The principal focus of the operational comments is how to communicate thoughts about warfighting to units executing operations, or to the American public who has so magnificently supported her sons and daughters in harm’s way.

Leadership by example is still essential to the warrior ethos. There is often a divergence between leading and commanding and controlling that can be difficult to reconcile. Because counterinsurgency and counterterrorism activities frequently rely on decentralized operations by small groups, it may appear inappropriate for commanders to spend time with units since that seemingly indicates a lack of trust in their subordinates. This could not be further from the truth. Commanders must be forward and “present and under fire” with their young soldiers. If this means accompanying squad and platoon patrols, or locating the primary CP in a forward location—even though technology may enhance one’s ability to command and control from a more secure location—tactical commanders must find a way to be forward. The value to an organization of their leader’s personal presence on the battlefield cannot be measured, and presence cannot be replaced by technology. Soldiers will notice and comment on their leader’s absence. All tactical commanders, regardless of rank, should find a way to accompany their soldiers during tactical operations.

Commanders who forward position themselves also reduce the need for frequent meetings in their CP. It can be unnecessarily dangerous for subordinate unit leaders to travel daily or weekly to a rear CP for a meeting. We used a daily FM radio Battle Update Brief or “BUB” most of the time. Additionally, once a week commanders and specialty platoon leaders met in person to conduct the BUB over the radio. The location for this weekly meeting rotated between each company CP. The battalion’s S-3, Fire Support Officer, and S-2 accompanied the battalion commander to the meetings. This allowed battalion leaders to meet face-to-face and trade

information and newly learned tactics, techniques, and procedures, as well as check out another company area and get an update in person from the battalion's key staff. The BUB was still conducted over the radio so that anyone with access to the battalion net, such as the retransmission station teams, or a Red Devil unit under the operational control of another battalion, could still maintain their situational awareness about activities in the Red Devil AO.

Several aspects of force protection are not easily quantifiable. Our informal motto was that the best way to protect the force was to have "smart, hard, disciplined paratroopers." Continual training in theater such as live-fire exercises, or the internal battalion "EDRE" program that evaluated platoons on deliberate and hasty TCPs, cordon and searches, and area reconnaissance were designed to reinforce this notion. CPs should also find time to train on "battle drills": MEDEVAC, QRF, clearance of fires, and actions when a unit is in contact were the primary procedures practiced in the Red Devil TOC. Easy to internalize concepts such as "always, always overwatch" was another aspect of force protection. We hammered home the point that overwatch was essential during any type of operation. Soldiers expect to provide overwatch during tactical missions; but we also wanted them to do the same even when conducting CMO tasks such as immunizations where you might want part of the detachment to be approached by, or interact with children and other civilians.

Acting quickly and decisively as an aspect of force protection was important because we wanted the enemy to understand that if they encountered a Red Devil patrol the paratroopers would never hesitate to apply force whenever appropriate. Once the enemy in AO WEST understood that we would not be timid, they became more reluctant to engage and moved their operations out of the AO. While this tactic did not destroy all terrorist cells, it certainly disrupted their operations in our AO and allowed us to shift our efforts to CMO—but we could never take our "eye off of the ball" of tactical operations and allow the enemy to re-infiltrate the area.

Force protection also included unit appearance. How soldiers look is another way that an enemy sizes up an opponent, and we always endeavored to maintain a professional appearance. We took this to the extent of applying camouflage face paint for certain missions such as the battalion raid on Al Huwayjah. This simple non-verbal cue intimidated the local population—at least initially—and allowed us to gain easier compliance from them. Looking professional (and different from other units) can achieve

an IO effect that compels people to behave in a way that meets the goals of your organization.

There are law enforcement tactics, techniques, procedures, and equipment that we should consider using, because there is so much cross-over between terrorist and criminal activity. Terrorist and insurgent groups coordinate with criminals for support and resources, or they carry out what are traditionally criminal acts to get money, weapons, etc. We found that in Iraq, criminal gangs were sometimes well enough armed, that neutralization of them required a military rather than police response. The IPB process must be updated to include analysis of criminal activity that supports terrorism, or requires a military response. Since civilian law enforcement regularly deals with criminal behavior, some of their procedures should be included in our military IPB process.

Battalions and brigades should have the most modern equipment on hand to help them collect information. Terrorists, insurgents, and criminals frequently use cell phones, hand-held radios, and other commercially available equipment to communicate. We should have access to scanners and other modern equipment that monitors commonly used local frequencies and cell phones.

Civilian law enforcement has a variety of equipment and procedures to conduct traffic stops and vehicle pursuits. For example, police use "Stop Sticks" which can be deployed by one person; a wheeled vehicle is disabled when it runs over the Stop Stick. We used concertina, HESCO barriers, etc. to achieve this effect which is fine for semi-permanent checkpoints, but another method such as Stop Sticks is needed for hasty checkpoints. The driver's training program should include how to conduct a vehicle pursuit, and drivers need to incorporate police techniques to place the vehicle so that troops can safely dismount and fight. Military drivers are taught to "seek cover" first. This might not be realistic on a restrictive route in built-up areas, or on major roads where there is little or no cover. Police place the vehicle between themselves and the hostile force and use the vehicle for cover. A hardened military vehicle will provide some level of protection if emplaced between friendly and enemy forces properly.

We need to employ techniques to identify terrorists who have been involved in more than one incident; and our soldiers need a rudimentary understanding of evidence collection. Determining the incidents in which a particular terrorist has been involved makes it simpler to track how, and

when, a specific cell is destroyed. Units should be able to fingerprint captured and killed enemy personnel. Captured weapons should have selected parts dusted for fingerprints. Units should look for refuse such as food and drink containers, cigarettes, etc. left by terrorists at the scene of an attack. Every company should have a fingerprint kit and gun residue kit (to determine if a detainee has fired a weapon recently). Biometric technology can scan fingerprints and store them in a database; brigades and divisions should be able to develop a database of pictures and fingerprints that can link an insurgent to an incident site because of the fingerprints left on captured items.

Since battalions and brigades frequently manage short-term detention facilities, soldiers need additional training and equipment to make sure people are detained correctly and that suspects are protected. We should have had available non-lethal methods such as pepper spray, bean bag shot gun ammunition, etc. wherever we had to detain people. There should be a regional or national photo ID card system for civilians. ID cards are important because they can help units identify people who are not from the local area. This can help identify suspects for further questioning or possible detention.

The Army has become imprecise in the use of its own special language. Administrative terms have been used to describe tactical operations, and General Purpose Forces have adopted the language of Special Operations Forces without understanding what the terms mean. It may be necessary to develop new terms to describe changes in the way the Army operates today; however, corrupting standard terminology is not the way ahead. The poor use of language is often confusing, misleading, and can imply a lower level of threat or combat than actually exists. For example, a company commander who is told to establish a “safe house” rather than a patrol base; typically “safe houses” are used by small units such as a Special Forces team. The security of a safe house may rely on its clandestine nature rather than the security positions on the perimeter, patrols, and other activities that infantry companies and platoons perform to protect patrol bases. We tried to adhere to doctrinal terms for situations that fit the doctrine: patrol bases, saturation patrolling (see FM 90-8), OSBs (see FM 90-8), etc.

A new favorite in the military lexicon is “transfer of authority.” Transfers of authority (or similar terms) describe administrative transitions between units that occur in low threat environments such as the Balkans. There is

nothing administrative or low threat about Iraq. Units in combat conduct a “relief in place.” Reliefs in place require exchanges of tactical information, gathering of intelligence specifically focused on the relief, reconnaissance patrols by an incoming unit to develop situational awareness, and a host of other tactical activities.

Kinetic and non-kinetic are terms without any military meaning, usefulness, or purpose. Army units conduct some form of maneuver, they attack or they defend. If a leader wants to restrict his unit’s authority to attack an objective with fires then the leader should describe what he expects. Lethal or non-lethal fires, maneuver, assault, etc. are terms that we routinely use and are in doctrine. “Kinetic” sounds sophisticated but means absolutely nothing to a sergeant, lieutenant, or lieutenant colonel for that matter. Do not tell a subordinate to “go kinetic” or “don’t go kinetic,” tell them to conduct some type of maneuver. Be understandable and straightforward—if you expect your unit to make direct-fire contact with an enemy force then say so; if you do not want them to engage an enemy for a particular reason then simply tell them not to shoot and why.

Forward Operating Base or “FOB,” is another term used inappropriately. An FOB is a base positioned to support units operating in (or improve access to) hostile or denied areas. FOBs in Iraq, on the other hand, are often large semi-permanent bases that Army units design and build to improve soldier quality of life. While it is true that long-term operations in Iraq require fixed facilities to sustain and house units, they are not FOBs—they are merely bases, camps, posts, or garrisons. Units conducting counterinsurgency operations can leave a fixed facility and establish OSBs which are temporary bases to support battalion and brigade tactical operations. These bases are manned only as long as necessary to support combat operations, or until indigenous military or police forces can assume responsibility for military and paramilitary activities in the area.

We, as a military, are not effectively using the campaign designation. Campaigns are a series of coordinated tactical actions designed to achieve an operational purpose which in turn supports the national strategy. They provide focus to planning and identify transitional periods. For example, the phase of “major combat operations” could have been designated as a campaign and then a transition to stability, security, or counterinsurgency operations might have been identified. Campaign designations allow commanders to identify that there may be a variety of military operations occurring in different areas of the country simultaneously, e.g., stability

and support operations in one region and counterinsurgency operations in another.

The designation of campaigns, and the frequent public use of terms such as “Theater of Operation” can clarify any public discourse about military operations during wartime. Today, civilians in government and the media often refer to “The war in Iraq,” “The war in Afghanistan,” and “The Global War on Terrorism” as if they are three separate wars rather than two different theaters of operation in the nation’s Global War on Terrorism. The constant and unfortunate identification of Afghanistan and Iraq as separate and unconnected wars also hides the fact that there are other campaigns and theaters important to fighting the overall Global War on Terrorism.

Rather than designate campaigns, the military insists on using naming conventions closely associated with the bygone era of short duration contingency operations. The names “Operation ENDURING FREEDOM,” “Operation IRAQI FREEDOM,” and “Operation NOBEL EAGLE” are representative of this way of thinking. The use of these terms does not adequately convey transitions in combat, national security, homeland defense activity, or show progress in a particular theater—it demonstrates the status quo. In the future, use the term, “Operation,” to identify specific events associated with a particular campaign. The military is the source of some of the confusion in the national debate about the war because of the poor use of its own unique vocabulary—terminology that is supposed to be precise and standardize how dissimilar audiences discuss the same activities.

Concepts of how to fight in Iraq at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war are not the same. The nation’s strategic leaders have outlined an aggressive strategy to fight terrorism in the National Security Strategy, National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, and the Strategy for Victory in Iraq. In Iraq, many operational level leaders, and this includes those who are traditionally tactical leaders but circumstances require that they frequently operate at the operational level, tended to employ a “social scientist” approach to fighting an insurgency. They concentrated on the development of infrastructure, political systems, etc., which quickly consumed all of their attention and the bulk of their resources. IPB and combat operations, consequently, could quickly become unsynchronized throughout a large area, or an economy of force effort. While in tactical operations, the enemy “still gets a vote” and tactical leaders therefore should



continue to focus a large part of their efforts on destroying the enemy, or denying him resources. The difference is that the initial operational art in Iraq promoted activities more akin to stabilization and reconstruction operations, while tactical leaders were consumed with counterinsurgency or counterinsurgency operations, which are still offensive even though they may take some time to set up, execute, and assess the results. Stabilization and reconstruction operations, and counterinsurgency operations share similar characteristics but they are not the same at all.

We tend to ignore our Army's extensive and successful experience fighting insurgencies. General Washington ordered a devastating campaign against the Six Nations during the Revolutionary War. General Anthony "Mad Anthony" Wayne demonstrated a standard of excellence in counterinsurgency with his 1794 Fallen Timbers campaign and subsequent political negotiations with the Indians. The litany of victory goes through the Philippine War (1899-1902); through US support to Philippine counterinsurgency efforts in the mid-twentieth century; and now through our support in the present day. El Salvador and other experiences offer additional perspective. One of the essential lessons that we should take from Viet Nam is that victory eluded us there in part because we ignored so many lessons from our earlier successes. Political correctness dictates that we cannot talk about the oppressive measures employed during successful counterinsurgency campaigns; and in any case our ethics dictate that we could not apply those same measures in the twenty-first century. The question therefore is an "effects based" one—how do we achieve those same effects that have proven successful, while maintaining our professional standard of ethics?

Military leaders must stay focused on the destruction of the enemy. It is virtually impossible to convince any committed terrorist who hates America to change his or her point of view—they simply must be attacked relentlessly. CMO and stabilization operations are important; commanders should use these activities to help define the operating environment, and gain knowledge about an adversary. It is appropriate for military units to develop goals that include appreciating local culture, improving quality of life for the populace, and promoting good governance whenever these concepts improve access to the enemy. However, if the pursuit of them does not advance one's knowledge of threats and a unit's capability to maintain the offensive, then they are of little practical value as tactical or operational objectives. Destruction of the enemy force must remain



the most important step to defeating terrorists and insurgents—everything else supports this goal but is not a substitute for it.

There must never be an aegis under which the enemy can hide. Fortunately, Americans are a determined and resourceful people. No one represents this resilience and reliability more readily than the military personnel and Department of Defense civilians who have adapted so quickly to being a nation at war. The conduct of America's men and women in combat clearly demonstrates that American soldiers will always perform superbly no matter how challenging the mission or how hostile the environment. That is the great tradition of American Arms, and the aspect of America's history that her enemies seem to most often overlook.

Red Devils, Airborne!



## **About the Author**

Lieutenant Colonel Harry D. Tunnell IV is a 1984 graduate of the United States Military Academy and was commissioned in Infantry. In 1997, he received an M.A. in professional communication studies from Purdue University, in 1998 an M.M.A.S. in military history from the USACGSC, and in 2005 an M.S. in National Security Strategy from the National War College. He has served in a variety positions in mechanized, light, Ranger, air assault, and airborne infantry units, and he commanded the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade during combat operations in Iraq as part of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. His other campaigns include Operation JUST CAUSE (Panama) and Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY (Haiti). He is currently assigned to the National Defense University Center for Strategic Communication, located on Fort McNair in Washington, D.C. He is the author of *To Compel with Armed Force: A Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Tippecanoe*.

