

COMMAND CHRONOLOGY

BATTALION LANDING TEAM 1/4
11TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT (SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE)
1 JULY 2004 TO 31 DECEMBER 2004

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SECTION 1

ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

1. Unit Designation

a. From 1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004: Battalion Landing Team 1/4, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Marine Forces Pacific.

b. Reporting Unit Code: 11120

c. Table of Organization: 1037F Infantry Battalion

Period Covered and Location: 1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004, An Najaf, Iraq.

2. Personnel Information

a. Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel John L. Mayer
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

b. Executive Officer Major David P. Holahan
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

c. Subordinate Commanders

Headquarters and Service Company Captain Benjamin J. Pappas
1 July 2004 to 31 November 2004

First Lieutenant Tobin C. Flinn
1 December 2004 to 31 December 2004

Weapons Company Captain Steven O. Wallace
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

Company A Captain Robert B. Sotire
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

2004

Captain Sean M. Roche
27 December 2004 to 31 December

Company B Captain Samuel H. Carrasco
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

Company C Captain Matthew T. Morrissey
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

Battery R, 5/11 Captain Theodore A. Cisowski
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

3d Plt, Co E, 3d AABn First Lieutenant Erick G. Koob
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

2d Plt, Co A, 1st CEB Captain Nicholas M. Kalt
1 July 2004 to 28 November 2004

First Lieutenant Matthew J. Codner
10 December 2004 to 31 December

2004

3rd Plt, Co D, 1st Tank Bn First Lieutenant Russel L. Thomas
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

3d Plt, Co C, 1st LAR Bn First Lieutenant John F. MacDonald
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

2d Plt, Co A, 1st Recon Bn Captain Stephen A. Kintzley
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

d. Principal Staff Officers

Adjutant/S-1 First Lieutenant Ethan R. Astor
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

S-2 Captain Michael S. Wilbur
1 July 2004 to 31 December

2004

S-3 Major Coby M. Moran
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

S-4 Captain Duane C. Forsberg
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

S-6 First Lieutenant Paul S. Hahn
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

Supply Officer First Lieutenant Jason T. Howard
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

Motor Transport Officer Gunnery Sergeant Roger Borst
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

Medical Officers Lieutenant Michael B. Humble
1 July 2004 to 21 September 2004

Lieutenant Napoleon B. Magpantay
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

Chaplain Lieutenant Richard H. Wiese
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

e. Staff Historian Captain Peter M. Gibbons
1 July 2004 to 20 September 2004

Captain Randy J. Staab
21 September 2004 to 31 December

2004

f. Battalion Gunner Chief Warrant Officer 4 Roy Montoya
1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

g. Sergeant Major Sergeant Major Jayme F. Winders

1 July 2004 to 31 December 2004

3. Average Monthly Strength

	USMC	USN
	<u>O/E</u>	<u>O/E</u>
July	58/1071	4/64
August	58/1064	4/64
September	60/1066	5/63
October	60/1067	4/63
November	61/1069	3/60
December	60/1072	3/60

4. Equipment

TAMCN	NOMENCLATURE	#
<u>POSSESS</u>		
A1530	RABFAC BEACON SET, AN/PPN-19(V)2	2
A1935	RADIO SET, AN/MRC-138	3
A1957	RADIO SET, AN/MRC-145	5
A2042	RADIO SET, AN/PRC-138	3
A2065	RADIO SET, AN/PRC-104	7
A2069	RADIO SET, AN/PRC-113(V)3	5
A2070	RADIO SET, AN/PRC-119A	36
A2074	RADIO SET, AN/VRC-88D	16
A2075	RADIO SET, AN/VRC-89D	2
A2078	RADIO SET, AN/VRC-92D	6
A2079	RADIO SET, AN/PRC-119F	36
A2164	RADIO SET, AN/VRC-83(V)2	3
A2167	RADIO SET, AN/VRC-88A	8
A2168	RADIO SET, AN/VRC-89A	2
A2169	RADIO SET, AN/VRC-90A	2
A2505	SWITCHBOARD, TELEPHONE, SB3614/TT	1
A8100	CONTROL GROUP, RADIO, OK648/U	17
B0730	MEP-16B, GENERATOR	2
B1291	LIGHTWEIGHT DECON UNIT	3
D1002	M1035, AMBULANCE, SOFT TOP, HMMWV	2
D1125	M1045/M1046, TRUCK, TOW HMMWV	8
D1158	M998/M1038/M123, SOFT TOP, HMMWV	39
D1159	M1043/M1044, TRUCK, HMG HMMWV	11
E0180	M2A2, AIMING CIRCLE	4
E0330	EQUIP SET, NIGHT VISION, AN/UAS-12A/C	8
E0915	SMAW	18
E0935	M220E4, LAUNCHER, TOW	8
E0980	M2, .50 CAL MG	6
E0989	M240G, 7.62MM MG	29
E0994	MK-19, 40MM	11
E1045	AN/PAQ-3, MULE	2
E1065	M224, 60MM MORTAR	9
E1095	M252, 81MM MORTAR	8
E1145	MUSSELE VELOCITY SYSTEM, M94	2
E1159	NIGHT VISION SIGHT, CREW SERVED	18
E1460	M40A1, SNIPER RIFLE	8

E1475	SNIPER RIFLE, .50 CAL	2
E1911	TEST SET, MISSILE GUIDED, AN/TSM-1522	2
E1912	FIELD TEST SET, TOW	2

SECTION 2

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Command, Operations, and Training

Battalion Landing Team 1/4 proved themselves as one of the most effective and well-disciplined fighting forces in history through the months of July to December of 2004. They did much more than defeat a resolute and elusive enemy. They influenced the lives of the citizens of Iraq, aided in enabling the development of the nation's burgeoning democracy, and assisted the reconstruction and development of the country and its infrastructure.

The month of July for Company A consisted of their movement north from Camp Virginia, Kuwait, to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Echo in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq. After the Alpha Raiders arrived in Ad Diwaniyah, the company immediately began training the 404th Iraqi National Guard (ING) Battalion. The training of the battalion consisted of a rotation of one Marine platoon per ING company, and training focusing primarily on room clearing, traffic control points, marksmanship, small unit leadership, and physical training. Alpha Company also conducted some joint patrols with the ING units in order to observe their procedures and identify the unit's strengths and weaknesses.

During the first week of July, the Marines and Sailors of Bravo Company filled the days with long hours spent preparing to offload the USS Denver into Kuwait. The offload occurred between 5 and 8 July, with the company moving in several serials to Camp Virginia, Kuwait. After a day of acclimatization, they transitioned to reverse-cycle and began training for full-spectrum operations. The training included long mechanized movements to and from ranges, as well as Stability And Security Operations (SASO) training provided by the 13th MEU, Division Schools, and the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab. Company B began its movement to Iraq with the quartering party leaving on 16 July, and the last part of the company departing on 21 July. Everyone was situated at Forward Operating Base Hotel in An Najaf, Iraq by 24 July.

Immediately after arrival at FOB Hotel, they began working with Company B, 1-14 Infantry, 25th Infantry Division of the United States Army for the transfer of authority of the battlespace. Bravo Company of BLT 1/4 assumed their positions in the Agriculture Center, guarding the Provincial Governor of An Najaf, and assumed the mission of regional Quick Reaction Force (QRF). The QRF consisted of a reinforced rifle platoon, a section of Assault Amphibious Vehicles (AAVs), and a tank platoon. The defensive posture at the Agriculture Center was completely revamped as soon as the Marines had the responsibility for the security of the compound and they immediately established a reasonable guard rotation with the platoons. The transfer of authority was complete on 31 July 2004, when BLT 1/4 took control of the Najaf and Qadisiyah Provinces in Iraq from 1-14 Infantry.

The beginning of July was a rushed, expectant time for Charlie Company. Debarkation loomed as the battalion celebrated the 4th of July without the usual fanfare of fireworks and barbeques. For most of the Marines in Charlie Company, this was the second 4th of July in as many years spent away from the United States. Even with a celebration onboard the USS Belleau Wood, the Marines continued to prepare their gear for the SASO operations to come.

On the 6th of July Charlie Company debarked the USS Belleau Wood on a combination of LCUs and LCACs. The heat of Kuwait combined with the easy sway of the LCUs hit a few Marines hard and more than one lost his 4th of July dinner into the Persian Gulf. But here they were, boots on deck, for another tour of duty in a foreign land. You could see on the faces of the new Marines an excited outlook for the coming months.

The movement to the LSA at Camp Virginia, Kuwait took most of the night and by the time the Marines settled into their tents they easily fell asleep. Knowing that the heat of the day would inhibit training, Charlie Company decided to work on a reverse cycle, meaning that training would primarily be conducted at night. For ten days in Kuwait, the Marines rehearsed SASO operations such as patrolling and Traffic Control Points (TCPs). Three days prior to the movement North into Iraq, convoy operations commenced where serial commanders could review battle drills for their respective elements. Live-fire ranges at Udairi Range allowed the Marines to fire everything from their M16s to 155mm artillery. The most realistic range was the Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) range conducted without the use of illumination, relying solely on Night Vision Goggles (NVGs). No one at that time could fully appreciate how much this range would come into good use in Iraq.

Late on the 16th of July, Charlie Company set out with the advance party for the 11th MEU. The first stop was the NAVSTAR check-in station at the Kuwait/Iraq border. After that, the only scheduled stop en route to Ad Diwaniyah was a refueling point. Driving through the night, Charlie Company's convoy found itself two hours out of Ad Diwaniyah at the break of day. The three serials pulled into Ad Diwaniyah with 6 vehicles being towed, a testament to the weight and bulk of the gear needed for SASO operations. After a few hours of rest at FOB Echo, the convoys set out again for FOB Duke and FOB Hotel in An Najaf.

After three more hours of driving, Company C pulled into FOB Duke at around 0200 on the 18th. The next twelve days were dedicated to a Relief In Place (RIP) with the Army unit holding An Najaf. On a daily basis, Charlie Company would link up with Company A, 1-14, an infantry unit based out of Hawaii, and conduct joint familiarization patrols through An Najaf. During the RIP process, one of the convoys drove through a roadblock constructed by Muqtada Al-Sadr and his bodyguards. As the convoy innocently passed by waving, the bodyguards shouted and brandished their weapons. This was Charlie Company's first indication that the SASO operations in An Najaf might turn sour and escalate into combat operations.

With the turnover complete, Charlie Company's Marines settled in at FOB Duke to provide force protection and prepare themselves for the

training of the Iraqi National Guard. July 31st was the official battle-handover from the United States Army to the 11th MEU and only days later would the Marines fully appreciate the "battle" part of that transaction.

Weapons Company began the month with a rather uneventful week. The 81mm Mortar Platoon (81s) conducted physical training and weapons manipulation on a daily basis. Classes included Arab culture familiarization, Arabic language, Rules Of Engagement (ROE) training, Improvised Explosive Device (IED) training and EPW handling. The 81mm mortar platoon provided five Marines to role-play as detainees for the Marines who were training to be EPW guards once they reached FOB Duke in Iraq. The platoon began to pack their vehicles and personal belongings in preparation for offload in Kuwait.

During the ensuing fortnight, the company occupied the "Pad 7" living area in Camp Virginia, Kuwait. The Second Section of the 81mm mortar platoon remained at the Kuwait Naval Base to provide security for the BLT's offloaded logistical equipment. They rejoined Weapons Company 10 July. In Camp Virginia and on Udari Range, the company conducted SASO and live-fire training, and prepared for the movement North into Iraq. Live-fire training highlights included firing 81mm mortars, TOWs and machine guns, MOUT room clearing, and weapons and optics BZO. Non live-fire training included, convoy classes, urban patrolling, MOUT training, a combat drivers course, and night motorized operations.

On July 21st, Weapons Company moved from Kuwait to Iraq. The battalion was split into seven different convoys for the movement North. CAAT A and LAR were sent as advance party to scout out the route and to ensure that no ambushes were emplaced. CAAT B, 81s and Headquarters Platoon moved north in separate convoys. The seven-hour trip took twenty-four hours to complete due to a severe dust storm, vehicle accidents in the convoys preceding us, and delays at coalition checkpoints and refueling points. On the movement North, six individuals, presumed to be thieves, ambushed CAAT A. CAAT A maneuvered on the Iraqi's and captured four of them. No damage or injuries were sustained to vehicles or personnel.

CAAT A, CAAT B and 81s conducted a turnover and left seat/right seat rides with their counterparts in the 1/14 Infantry in An Najaf for CAAT A and Ad Diwaniyah for CAAT B and 81s. All units conducted vehicle and dismounted patrols, route reconnaissance of the areas of operation, and liaison with the local police and Iraqi National Guard forces.

On July 29th, the 81mm mortar platoon was ambushed while escorting a convoy to the SCANIA transport center. Approximately one mile from the transportation center, the Platoon Commander and Platoon Sergeant's vehicles tires blew out from road spike strips emplaced in the road. The rest of the convoy pushed ahead to the convoy center and the two disabled vehicles pulled over to the side of the road. After the convoy pushed ahead, the Platoon Sgt's vehicle received AK-47 fire from it's right flank at a range of 300m. The incoming fire was brief and not well aimed. There was no return fire as the Marines were not able to positively identify a target and suppressive fires would have hit

noncombatant farmers working in the fields directly adjacent to the road.

Battery R began the month of July on the USS Comstock. On the 6th and 7th, the battery came ashore at the Kuwait Naval Base, and moved to Camp Virginia in the Kuwaiti desert. Several days were spent at Camp Virginia conducting training. On the 10th, the battery conducted a live-fire MOUT course. From the evening of the 11th through the morning of the 12th, the battery participated in a course of instruction regarding convoys and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). At 1700 on the 12th Romeo Battery began an artillery shoot. The entire evening was devoted to transiting to the firing point and preparing to fire. Firing began in the early morning of the 13th. The shoot was concluded by midmorning that day and the battery began its movement back to Camp Virginia. The next several days were devoted to final preparations for the movement north, including several convoy rehearsals for immediate reaction to ambush. At 1700 on the 18th, the battery began its long journey to FOB Hotel. The night of the 19th was spent at FOB Echo in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq. Romeo Battery then moved on to FOB Hotel in An Najaf the next day, arriving in the early morning of the 21st. They arrived safely without any hostile actions against the convoy. Romeo Battery assumed its artillery support mission on the 25th of July.

On 6 July, the Engineer Platoon arrived at Kuwait Naval Base. During debarkation, the clutch on the SEE tractor became inoperable and the vehicle was towed ashore. The platoon immediately transited to Camp Virginia, adjacent to Udari Range, Kuwait. Between 7 and 16 July, the combat engineers conducted live-fire and SASO training with the supported units to which they were attached. On 18 July, they convoyed from Kuwait to Iraq.

The platoon dissolved itself into its separate squads once in Iraq. 1st squad remained with Company A at FOB Echo in Ad Diwaniyah. 2nd squad stayed with Company B and operated at both the Agricultural Center and FOB Hotel in An Najaf. 3rd squad remained with Company C and based its operations from FOB Hotel and FOB Duke in An Najaf. 4th squad maintained its presence with the platoon headquarters at FOB Hotel with the BLT Forward. The combat engineers then conducted a turnover with the 1-14 Army Engineers during the end of the month. The platoon was now ready to conduct operations as outlined by the engineer priority of work established during the turnover and based on commander's intent.

Tank platoon loaded the LCAC (Landing Craft, Air Cushioned) for their final ship to shore landing on July 5th. The following morning they were off the ship and onto the Kuwaiti shoreline. Once all of the platoon's equipment was ashore and the vehicles were staged in their sticks, the convoy to Camp Virginia began. The weather was expected, but nothing can truly prepare oneself for the change from the 100-degree temperatures of the ship to the 130+ degrees of the Kuwaiti desert. Once at Camp Virginia the platoon made preparations for a trip to Udhari range. Udhari range training from 14 to 16 July allowed the M1A1 tanks a chance to stretch their legs and allowed the tankers to work the controls. Several rounds of ammunition were fired as the tank crews bore sighted and zeroed their main guns and supplementary weapons in preparation for the impending battle in Iraq. Once back at Camp Virginia, the platoon took a moment to pose for the camera as they took their picture for the cruise book. After a couple of pre-convoy

practices, the platoon departed for FOB Hotel in An Najaf, Iraq on 18 July.

While some of the members of the platoon arrived at FOB Hotel on 21 July, the tanks and the M88 recovery vehicle didn't arrive until the 26th due to the Heavy Equipment Transport System's (HETS) slow rate of travel. Once everyone was settled in their billeting, the platoon began its leader's recon and route familiarization patrols with the Army unit located there. On July 30th, tank platoon along with AAV platoon, departed on a patrol to the outer boundaries of the Wadi al-Salaam cemetery. Tank platoon continued to patrol the streets and keep the peace while waiting for the Army to conduct its relief in place on August 1st and leave the BLT in charge of An Najaf and Al Kufa.

In support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II (OIF II), the Reconnaissance Platoon attached to Battalion Landing Team 1/4, 11th MEU(SOC) arrived in Kuwait on July 6th. The platoon conducted two weeks of training and combat preparations in Camp Virginia and Udari Range before heading across the Iraqi border in a convoy to the city of Ad Diwaniyah and then on to An Najaf.

During the final leg of the trip, the convoy lead element came under small arms fire at a location south of An Najaf. The Reconnaissance Platoon dismounted, cleared the house that the fires emanated from, and captured the three men who fired at the convoy. At the end of the month, except for a few specific reconnaissance missions, the platoon was generally employed as a provisional rifle platoon and as a motorized platoon. These missions proved that the Marines in the platoon were able to adapt to the needs of the Battalion Landing Team.

An amphibious landing was conducted at the Kuwait Naval Base (KNB) on 6 July by the Assault Amphibious Vehicle (AAV) Platoon while debarking from the USS Denver. Once at KNB, the platoon waited for the Heavy Equipment Transports (HETs) to arrive. Upon arrival, the Assault Amphibious Vehicles were loaded onto the HETs and transported to Camp Virginia. The AAV platoon commander acted as the convoy commander for this movement.

After becoming established at Camp Virginia, the platoon traveled to Udari Range on the 12th to conduct live-fire training. All of the platoon's weapons were tested and half of the platoon was able to BZO. They fired 8000 .50 caliber machine gun rounds from both turret and ground mounted weapons. During their stay in Camp Virginia, they continued the endless maintenance required on the vehicles as well as prepared for Stability And Security Operations (SASO). Each AAV section attended classes, gaining a lot of useful information and some practical application. The AAV platoon was now capable of transitioning from their AAVs to HMMWVs as a motorized platoon.

On July 21st the AAVs were once again loaded aboard HETs for movement into Iraq with 1st Lt Koob as the convoy commander. Leaving Camp Virginia the convoy arrived at NavStar, their first stop. Once they were cleared for further movement into Iraq, their next stop was Cedar II where they spent the night. Early the following morning they continued their movement to FOB Echo in Ad Diwaniyah. The platoon remained at FOB Echo overnight and coordinated further movement to FOB

Hotel. On July 24th the convoy finally arrived at FOB Hotel, An Najaf, Iraq.

At the end of the month, the platoon was reorganized into three sections in order to best support Battalion Landing Team 1/4. The AAV platoon was tasked with providing a section for a Quick Reaction Force (QRF), a section to support the Bravo Company guard force at the Agricultural Building, and a section to provide FOB security at the Entry Control Point (ECP). Each section rotated their duties every week. The QRF trained with each infantry platoon in Company B and conducted several rehearsals and out-postings. Each time the QRF was activated, either the platoon commander or platoon sergeant embarked aboard an AAV as a coordinator between the AAV section and the infantry platoon.

The Scout Sniper Platoon began the month by preparing for their July 7th debarkation date at the Kuwait Naval Base (KNB). After debarking, the platoon spent a fortnight conducting SASO and weapons training at the Udhari Training Ranges in Kuwait. On the 21st of July, they flew into Iraq, landing at FOB Duke. The following day was spent transiting from FOB Duke to FOB Echo in Ad Diwaniyah. The month concluded for the Scout Snipers with them conducting area familiarization and patrols in the vicinity of FOB Echo.

The month of August began with hostilities escalating towards Iraqi security forces and U.S. military forces in An Najaf. On August 5th, Company A was tasked to drive west from Ad Diwaniyah to An Najaf and attack Muqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Militia, located in the cemetery north of the famed Imam Ali Mosque, who had begun fighting Iraqi and U.S. forces. That day marked the beginning of a period of continuous combat operations for the battalion and the company, which lasted until 27 August.

The first battle that the Alpha Raiders took part in was a two and a half day attack through the Wadi al-Salaam (WAS) cemetery in An Najaf. Though the enemy opposition was fierce, Alpha Company continued to push west through the cemetery with the aid of their Forward Air Controller (FAC), Captain Randy Staab, who provided approximately twenty-five sorties of rotary wing Close Air Support (CAS). After successfully clearing over 1200 meters of enemy occupied catacombs and tombs and inflicting numerous casualties on enemy fighters, the company retrograded to FOB Baker in An Najaf for follow-on missions.

On August 9th, the Alpha Raiders conducted coordinated raids on suspected enemy positions at two schools in An Najaf. While returning to FOB Baker after the raid, the Raiders were ambushed on a main road by enemy small arms, machine gun, and Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) fire. The company bravely fought its way out of the kill zone and suffered only one minor casualty.

Alpha company conducted a raid on a series of buildings in the Old City of An Najaf on the 16th. The Alpha Raiders were the first unit to close in to a position only 600 meters away from the Imam Ali Mosque in the Old City. After finding numerous weapons caches and detaining nineteen enemy personnel, the Raiders established a defense in a six-story hotel building overlooking the Old City. Upon sunrise, the Raiders began taking a heavy amount of accurate enemy sniper fire. The

Raiders eventually departed the building in the late afternoon, but not before several enemies were killed. The objective buildings were turned over to 2-7 Cavalry who used them as a base for follow-on operations.

In the town of Al Kufa, just a few minutes northeast of An Najaf, a former Iraqi Police Station had fallen into the control of militants. On August 21st, Company A conducted a raid on this occupied police station that marked the first time the Raiders had operated with AAVs during this deployment. Immediately upon dismounting from the armored vehicles to begin the cordon of the objective, the Raiders began taking heavy enemy fire from all directions. Once again, the Alpha Raiders relied on their FAC to neutralize the enemy positions. Providing CAS through an AC-130U gunship, Captain Staab was able to target and eliminate dozens of enemy personnel that were maneuvering against the Raiders, thus stopping the enemy's counterattack. After the Raiders had cordoned the objective, Third Platoon attacked the building, killing several enemy fighters and taking twenty-nine enemy detainees. Lance Corporal W.D. Stevens was shot in the foot during the raid and was evacuated.

After a few days of uneventful patrols, Company A was again called into action in Old City, An Najaf for the battalion's decisive attack. During the initial attack that began on August 25th, Alpha Company seized two objectives on the battalion's left flank. Throughout the ensuing two days of fighting, and until a peace resolution was finally reached, the company suffered several casualties to include two Marines from First Platoon being Killed In Action (KIA). Lance Corporal Alexander Arrendondo was shot and killed on August 25th by an enemy sniper. Private First Class Nick Skinner was shot the following day by an enemy sniper and died later that same day. At 1000 on August 27th the enemy fighters agreed to lay down their weapons and peacefully exit the Old City of An Najaf. The Raiders spent the next few days at FOB Baker in An Najaf before finally returning back to FOB Echo in Ad Diwaniyah.

The collective heroism of the Alpha Raiders was displayed throughout the combat intensive month of August. During this time the Raiders distinguished themselves in battle at the Wadi al-Salaam cemetery, and in the Old City of An Najaf. They further demonstrated their prowess as they fought out of the kill zones of two enemy ambushes, prosecuted five separate raids on suspected and known enemy positions, conducted dozens of mounted and dismounted patrols, and killed hundreds of Mahdi Militiamen and enemy insurgents. The total casualties suffered by the company were two KIA and twenty-eight Wounded In Action (WIA).

The Marines and Sailors of Company B found that events in An Najaf, Iraq picked up quickly once BLT 1/4 assumed responsibility for the area of operation. On August 2nd, Combined Anti-Armour Team (CAAT) A came into contact with Mahdi Militia forces in front of Moqtada al-Sadr's house in downtown Najaf. The Quick Reaction Force (QRF), consisting of Bravo Company's 1st Platoon (reinforced, motorized) raced downtown to reinforce the engaged CAAT platoon. Upon arrival at the scene, the QRF came under heavy small arms, RPG, and mortar fire. 1st Platoon returned fire until they received the order to break contact, at which point they followed CAAT back to FOB Hotel. Things were tense

for a few days, while the company waited for a reaction to this engagement from the Mahdi Militia, and finally the situation erupted on August 5th.

The militia had attacked an Iraqi Police station, and continued to attack when BLT elements arrived to reinforce the IPs. Other BLT units were dispatched to contain them when an UH-1N Iroquois Gunship of HMM-166(REIN) was downed by enemy gunfire near the cemetery. Again the QRF of Bravo Company's 1st Platoon was launched. They secured the scene of the crash for several hours until the helicopter was recovered, at which point the QRF was disbanded. 1st Platoon was attached to Company C for the push into the cemetery. Within approximately thirty minutes of beginning the assault, a mortar round landed in 1st Platoon's position, wounding the platoon commander, one of the corporals, and the radio operator. They were quickly evacuated, and the attack continued. Late the following morning (August 6th) as the platoon sergeant was checking the platoon's positions with his new radio operator, a sniper hit the radio operator, causing a sucking chest wound. He too was evacuated, and the platoon maintained their defensive positions within the cemetery. That night, another mortar round impacted amongst the platoon, wounding the platoon's other corporal, another radio operator, and a squad leader. After they were evacuated, the platoon changed their position to avoid further mortar fire. The following morning (August 7th) Bravo Company withdrew from the cemetery.

Bravo Company's 3rd Platoon (Reinforced) was attached to "Mad Dog" Troop, 1-5 Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division on August 17th as they screened the northern flank of the cemetery. Throughout the night and the following morning, the platoon took regular mortar fire and accurate sniper fire, but due to aggressive leadership, endured the night without any casualties. They withdrew in the morning under heavy mortar fire to be relieved by a platoon from Company C, BLT 1/4. That platoon was relieved on the night of August 18th by Bravo Company's 2nd Platoon (Reinforced), who was attached to "Commando" Troop, 1-5 Cavalry, with the same mission. Immediately upon arriving, 2nd Platoon began taking accurate mortar and small arms fire. Through the Army's fire support officer, 2nd Platoon called for artillery fire, which destroyed one of the sniper's positions. At about 0100 on August 19th, a mortar round landed directly on top of one of 2nd Platoon's positions, wounding one Marine. One of the Army's Bradley Fighting Vehicles saw the point of origin of the mortar, and called for artillery or Close Air Support (CAS), but was denied due to the proximity to the Imam Ali Mosque. Several minutes later, another round from the same mortar tube impacted in 2nd Platoon's area, killing Sergeant Parkerson, the assault section leader. After evacuating Sergeant Parkerson to FOB Hotel, 2nd Platoon adjusted their lines, as their position was obviously registered by the enemy mortar. The rest of the night was mostly quiet, but at about 0830 on the 19th, 2nd Platoon along with the "Commandos," began pushing south through the cemetery. About 300 meters into the movement, 2nd Platoon and one of the Army platoons came under accurate sniper fire. 2nd Platoon engaged the position with M203 grenade launcher fire while the Army platoon engaged with 25mm from their Bradley. After about an hour, everyone withdrew in order to conduct a relief in place from yet another Army unit.

In the early morning of August 19th, Task Force Blackhorse, consisting of Company B (-), LAR Platoon, a section of CAAT A, a

section of the 81mm mortar platoon, one of the battalion's sniper teams, an Army PsyOps unit, and an Army THT, conducted a destruction raid on the Kufa Technical College, a known enemy staging area. Immediately upon arriving at the attack-by-fire position across the Euphrates River from Al Kufa, the task force came under medium-machinegun fire. LAR quickly returned fire, establishing fire superiority with their 25mm cannon. 3rd Platoon of Bravo Company established their lines, and engaged the buildings with accurate small arms and rocket fire, while the snipers engaged targets as they presented themselves. Task Force Blackhorse relied on their FAC Captain Carl Lowe to control an AC-130U gunship that was on station. Captain Lowe was able to provide effective CAS and engaged targets in the Technical College with the gunship's precision weapons. The CAAT section also engaged with TOW missiles, .50 caliber machine guns and Mk19 automatic grenade launchers. The battle damage assessment (confirmed by at least two sources) was 70 enemies killed and 100 wounded, 30 of which were Sunni Islamic Extremists.

That same raid was repeated on a smaller scale in the early morning of August 21st, with the same attachments, but only one platoon from Company B. Artillery was fired at the Technical College when a section of AH-64D Apache gunships took fire from the vicinity of the enemy stronghold.

The night of August 22nd, Task Force Blackhorse was prepared to conduct an attack on possible enemy weapons caches, but the mission was postponed until the following night. Bravo Company executed the cordon and search mission on the night of August 23rd, which resulted in one Mahdi Militiaman detained by 1st Platoon. The mission of 23 August was executed on a key road that the BLT would use for its decisive attack into the "Old City" of An Najaf on 24 August. He was captured with an AK-47 and a 9mm pistol, a large supply of ammunition, and posters of Moqtada al-Sadr.

August began quickly for Company C. August 1st was the official transfer of authority from the Army's Cavalry to the 11th MEU(SOC), and on the 5th, two platoons from Charlie Company were called to FOB Hotel as a Quick Reaction Force (QRF). Iraqi Government sources were reporting that the Muqtada Militia was beginning to attack the main Iraqi Police (IP) station in An Najaf. At approximately 0500, 1st and 3rd Platoons traveled to An Najaf with CAAT A. After arriving at Revolutionary Circle, the dismounted troops had mortars, RPGs, and sniper fire erupt around them. 1st Platoon quickly occupied positions directly south of revolutionary circle and fired at enemy militia on the rooftops to their direct front. 3rd Platoon used this position as a screen and occupied the IP station further to the south. Over the next eight hours, the Marines of Charlie Company sustained six casualties from fragmentation as they fought to hold their positions in Revolutionary Circle.

Later that day, at approximately 1600, Charlie Company received an order to move north and attack west into the cemetery north of the Imam Ali Mosque. With two platoons from Company C, a platoon from Company B that had just arrived, and the 81mm mortar platoon, the attack commenced to clear the cemetery of enemy militia. Through the initial 400 meters they encountered no resistance, but as the unit moved further in, mortars fell all along the line, RPGs whizzed

overhead, and sniper fire was all around them. The supporting tank platoon's main gun rounds destroyed some enemy mortar positions and 40mm grenades were fired at others. The enemy continued to fire from every direction. Because of the numerous catacombs and tombs, the Marines began to lose mutual support with the units beside them. In some areas, the fighting was as close as fifteen meters and hand grenades were used to kill enemy fighters.

As dusk fell that day, the Marines regrouped at a consolidated position on Diagonal Road and established a defensive position for the night. The next morning (August 6th), mortar fire woke the Marines at 0430 and Charlie Company again continued their attack into the cemetery. Throughout the next two days, while huddled under tombstones and catacombs, the Marines endured mortars, RPGs, and constant sniper fire. While the infantry Marines were seeking concealment and taking cover, their FAC, Captain Peter Gibbons, was busy providing twenty sorties of CAS. Through the effective use of these precision air strikes, combined with artillery fire, the Marines continued to attrite the enemy militia. On the 6th, Charlie Company lost its first Marine to sniper fire. Lance Corporal Larry Wells was carried out of the cemetery by his fellow Marines; he is still sorely missed.

Following the withdrawal of Charlie Company from the cemetery, the U.S. Army sent two armored Cavalry squadrons, equipped with Bradley Fighting Vehicles and M1A2 Tanks to assist in the fight for An Najaf. Over the next twenty-one days, Army and Marine units continued to press the attack into An Najaf. On August 12th, Charlie Company raided the primary residence and school of Muqtada Al-Sadr. Iraqi National Guard (ING) troops and U.S. Special Forces were also involved in the attack. Company C sustained three casualties but successfully forced all of the militiamen out of the area.

On the 24th of August, Charlie Company was tasked with securing a foothold for a final assault into the Old City of An Najaf. Under the cover of darkness, AAVs pulled up to a hotel on the northwestern side of the city and began the assault. As second platoon entered their building, they encountered enemy resistance from the floors above and below ground level. Private First Class Ryan Cullenward killed one of the enemy combatants in a hand to hand fight while others were killed by hand grenades and M16 fire. Enemy mortars pounded the hotel for the next two days as the FAC, Captain Peter Gibbons, provided CAS and called in air strike after air strike on enemy positions. In total, twenty-seven sorties of CAS were used. By the time August 27th arrived, the enemy had endured enough devastation and Al-Sistani came in to broker a peace deal. U.S. forces withdrew from the Old City of An Najaf on the morning of the 27th to set up Traffic Control Points (TCPs) in other locations around the city. These TCPs were intended to prevent weapons from leaving the combat zone in the hands of enemy militia as they tried to flee the city.

Weapons Company was constantly employed during August through both attached and independent platoons. CAAT A conducted a joint patrol on August 2nd with the ING and radio recon team to assess the security posture of ten sites around downtown An Najaf, including several gas stations, police stations, power plants, and hospitals. On their list of sites was a Women's Hospital; when they arrived the ING pointed out armed men scurrying about in the compound of another

private hospital across the street. The men were carrying RPGs and 82mm mortar tubes. As CAAT A was assembling a dismounted force to investigate, the gunmen opened fire on CAAT A with AK-47s. CAAT A returned to their vehicles and maneuvered to surround the compound so they could isolate the objective and thus prevent escape or reinforcement. The compound had an estimated platoon-sized element located within. After the enemy combatants were surrounded and realized escape was not an option they began to volley RPGs and fire direct lay 82mm mortars. The Mahdi Militiamen (MM) fired approximately twenty mortars and fifteen RPGs in addition to a heavy volume of AK-47 and RPK fire. CAAT A fired over 600 MK-19 grenades, two AT-4s, 400 .50 caliber machine gun rounds, twenty 40mm M203 grenades, as well as hundreds of rounds of 5.56mm ball/link and 7.62mm link.

Elements of the CAAT platoon established firing positions on the south side of the objective. Sergeant Clayton lead a dismounted team consisting of Lance Corporals Johnson, Sweetman, and Esquivel who suppressed a fire-team sized element in a dug-in position, allowing Gunnery Sergeant Godfredson's element to maneuver into a firing position. From there his gunner, Lance Corporal Barker, used the M240G mounted on the vehicle to suppress the 4-man mortar position. When he eventually had to reload, Corporal Boden moved his truck into the engaged position under heavy machine gun and RPG fire. Corporal Boden's gunner, Lance Corporal Burns, continued to suppress the area with 40mm grenades from his MK-19. Using his M16, Lance Corporal Johnson killed two militiamen that were attempting to shoot RPGs from atop a bus inside the compound. Lance Corporal Sweetman fired an AT-4 at a berm that an RPG team was using for cover; enemy fire was no longer received from that area. Corporal Weaver's element was responsible for rear security to the south. His gunner, Private First Class Roacho, suppressed an enemy sniper in a nearby building with his .50 caliber machine gun. Corporal Weaver killed one militiaman with his M16 as he was trying to flank his position. He then ran back and forth between positions, exposing himself to heavy enemy fire, to establish the ING forces and encourage them to fight. Through his outstanding leadership the ING helped provide rear security, allowing the Marines to focus elsewhere. Sergeant Nieymeyer and Corporal AguayoSierras had their elements provide a base of fire, enabling First Lieutenant Borneo and Corporal Maksymowski to maneuver their elements past the front of the building to occupy positions in a soccer field on the north side of the compound. Lance Corporal Herman and Sergeant Contreras engaged multiple MM, suppressing a fire-team sized enemy and killing two others. Once established, CAAT A began to receive sniper fire from the surrounding buildings to the west. Lance Corporal Kidder neutralized two different firing positions by employing deadly accurate M203 fire. Lance Corporal Abner killed one sniper from 150 meters with his M16. CAAT A also observed two individuals carrying AK-47s running for cover under a fuel tanker. Lance Corporal Shaw engaged the tanker with his MK-19 from a range of 400 meters setting it on fire and killing the two individuals. Private First Class Jackalone killed an RPG team that was hiding behind a dirt berm with an AT-4 shot from 200 meters.

CAAT A called for the quick reaction force (QRF) when they received mortar fire. They continued to suppress the objective and destroy targets as they waited for the QRF to arrive and clear the area that CAAT A had cordoned. The hospital, full of insurgents that CAAT A

had effectively cordoned was, however, located across the street from Muqtada Al Sadr's residence. Due to the political sensitivity of the area CAAT A was ordered to withdraw. As they were consolidating on the north side of the hospital the QRF arrived. The QRF commanders, 1stLt Jones and 1stLt Lewis from Company B, did an outstanding job of quickly finding the on-scene commander and acquiring the tactical picture. Within minutes of arriving they had their force on the deck and effectively suppressing the enemy with overwhelming fire superiority, facilitating CAAT A's safe withdrawal. Rotary wing aviation also arrived as CAAT A was leaving, but they were unable to be employed. CAAT A had fourteen MM confirmed killed with an unknown number of wounded. The only friendly casualty was Lance Corporal Johnson whose right arm was lacerated by RPG fragmentation. This firefight was the catalyst for a month of potentially the most intense urban fighting since Hue City, Vietnam, ultimately resulting in the surrender of the MM and the return of the Imam Ali and Kufa Mosques into the hands of the people of An Najaf. The 81mm mortar platoon and LAR platoon were required from FOB Echo, Ad Diwaniyah as reinforcements and began to conduct combat patrols throughout the city of An Najaf that night.

At 0200 on August 5th, the Mahdi Militia attacked the main Iraqi Police (IP) station in An Najaf. At 0730, a BLT task force consisting of CAAT A, 81mm Mortar Platoon (81s), LAR Platoon and Charlie Company (-) was sent to reinforce the main Iraqi Police station and to secure the Revolutionary Traffic Circle (RTC) intersection adjacent to the cemetery north of the Imam Ali Mosque. CAAT A and 81s were tasked with securing the North and East sides of the RTC. Company C's task was securing South of the RTC and the IP station itself while LAR would be securing the West of the circle. At approximately 0900, the Task Force proceeded towards the main IP station, driving south on route Miami to the RTC. CAAT A and LAR established positions around the circle. They had been there for ten minutes when a mortar impacted in the middle of the circle followed by a barrage of mortars, RPGs, and machinegun fire from within the cemetery to their west. CAAT A moved out of the circle because the enemy seemed to have their position registered, and established firing positions on the eastern wall of the cemetery along routes Miami and Hartford. The cemetery was a swarm of activity and they could see a platoon-sized element firing at them with small arms, RPGs, and mortars. The Marines fired at the rapid rate for the first five minutes gaining fire superiority and suppressing the enemy. At the same time, 81s received fire from four insurgents on top of a hotel building across the street and directly North of the IP station. The platoon returned fire with small arms and medium machineguns. Corporal AlvarezGarcia sustained gunshot wounds to the abdomen, leg, and groin during the engagement. 81s' 2nd section was then directed by the platoon commander to ground evacuate Corporal AlvarezGarcia to FOB Hotel for medical attention. 1st section remained at the traffic circle to act as security with CAAT A and LAR. At this point the traffic circle began receiving renewed massed mortar, RPG and machine gun fire from the cemetery. All Marine units in the area returned fire into the cemetery and surrounding buildings. LAR's chief scout Corporal O'Neil had a mortar impact less than five feet from his position. He was thrown from his feet but was unhurt. All LAR vehicles immediately dismounted their scouts for security and began suppressing the enemy. Section A of LAR maintained their position in the traffic circle despite increasingly accurate mortar fire while Section B moved north on Miami to gain a better firing position. LAR

began to suppress with 25mm as the scouts engaged point targets with small arms fire. Section A's designated marksman, Lance Corporal Ball, killed three enemy soldiers as they moved through the cemetery at a range of 400m.

The 81mm mortar platoon was then directed to picket a warehouse facility 200m north of the Revolutionary Traffic Circle. As 1st section moved to the picket site, a Marine Corps UH-1N Iroquois Gunship was shot down and crashed about 400 meters to the north. Half of 1st section moved to secure the crash site; the other half moved to the picket site and secured the intersection just south of the crash site. A section of CAAT A, 1st Lieutenant Borneo with his wingman Corporal Maksymowski, along with a section of LAR, 1st Lieutenant MacDonald and Sergeant Allen, raced to the crash site to conduct a Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP) mission.

CAAT A and LAR were the first vehicles on scene. The aircraft had crash-landed near a storage lot that was a known enemy stronghold. As they were approaching from the south, they could see the enemy engaging the helicopter from inside the storage lot. When they arrived at the downed chopper, the enemy started engaging their vehicles and Marines. 1st Lieutenant Borneo killed one MM preparing to fire an RPG at his vehicle from a range of 75 meters with his M16. Lance Corporals Smith, Abner, and Kidder killed a fire-team that was moving towards the adjacent aid station where the helicopter crew had moved. 1st Lieutenant Borneo, the Battalion Air Officer - Captain Lowe, and Lance Corporal Abner searched the helicopter only to find it empty. After shouting for the crew, the helicopter crew chief yelled that they were in the aid station 100 meters to the northwest. The pilot was the only injured Marine; he had a large cut over his eye that the aircrew had already bandaged. 1st Lieutenant Borneo commandeered an Iraqi ambulance that was in the aid station to use for the ground medevac back to FOB Hotel. Lance Corporals Kidder and Smith provided security in the ambulance and Lance Corporal Jackalone drove it. After checking with the crew chief to see if there was anything that needed to be recovered out of the helicopter, CAAT A departed for FOB Hotel.

Before CAAT A departed for FOB Hotel, the PSD and 81mm mortar platoon arrived and helped them secure the site. A section from CAAT A escorted the ambulance back to FOB Hotel and dropped off the pilot. They left the ambulance at the FOB and returned to their positions along the wall. Sergeant Nieymeyer took Lance Corporals Jackalone and Smith and moved to the roof of a five story building on the eastern side of Miami. From this position they were able to better spot targets and relay corrections down to Corporal Nerva, and Lance Corporals Allen and Shaw. They were also using their M16s with scopes to engage targets of opportunity in the cemetery. Lance Corporals Smith and Kidder climbed atop the roof of a shop on the western side of Miami and engaged in the same activity as Sergeant Nieymeyer's team. During this long day of combat, CAAT A destroyed two mortar positions, a fortified machine gun bunker, and at least four RPG teams. They not only had sections firing from the wall bordering the cemetery, but also screened to the south and east preventing enemy reinforcement from the Al Kufa area. That afternoon as the infantry companies prepared to start clearing through the cemetery, CAAT A's mission changed to screening route Miami from RTC in the south to route Farve/Dodge in the north. CAAT A's 2nd section took up the firing positions that 1st section had been using, and 1st section distributed themselves along the

northern part of the route. At nightfall they conducted a relief in place with LAR who had been securing RTC all day. The evening was quiet for the infantrymen, but the night sky was quite active with the constant humming of an AC-130U gunship's propellers. The battalion Air Officer seemed to neither sleep nor tire as he spent the entire night and early morning effectively engaging targets in and around the cemetery.

After the crash site was secured, 81s 2nd section had linked back up with 1st section, and the platoon had returned to help secure the north side of the RTC from attacks originating from within the cemetery. Two gun-squads took positions on top of the buildings next to the intersection and began engaging point targets within the cemetery. Corporal Mercado, LAR's 2nd team leader, moved his scout team to the roof of a building east of the RTC to provide over-watch. They continued to engage point targets and killed at least four more enemy soldiers. Corporal Mercado's scout team took a direct hit from an RPG, severely wounding him and Lance Corporal Taylor. Lance Corporal Ball, despite taking fragmentation in the leg, exposed himself to enemy fire in order to provide first aid to the injured Marines. Corporal Mercado and Lance Corporal Taylor had both sustained femoral arterial bleeding and were evacuated with the assistance of Lance Corporal Ball and Sergeant Reynoso from 81s. Navy Corpsmen Garcia and Wallenburg provided excellent medical care as Sergeant Vital's section of LAR evacuated the Marines back to FOB Hotel.

Section B of LAR continued to engage targets in the cemetery with 25mm cannons, killing at least ten enemy soldiers. Staff Sergeant Smith noticed a signature from an enemy 82mm mortar tube, but due its defiladed position was unable to engage it. Staff Sergeant Smith deployed his scouts and talked his M203 gunner, Lance Corporal Brown, onto the target. Lance Corporal Brown fired eight 40mm grenade rounds directly onto the target and neutralized the mortar position.

On order from the LAR platoon commander, the 4th section leader deployed his sniper team to find a rooftop to provide over-watch. During the subsequent forty-five minutes, Lance Corporals Miller and Bendett had three kills each with their Special Application Scoped Rifle (SASR).

At approximately 1100 on August 5th, the remainder of Weapons Company, CAAT B and Weapons Company Headquarters, was ordered to leave FOB ECHO in Ad Diwaniyah in order to reinforce the attack in the vicinity of the IP station and cemetery. Upon their arrival in An Najaf, and seconds after linking up with the BLT's tanks on route Miami, CAAT B, commanded by 1st Lieutenant Scott Cuomo, and the Weapons Company Headquarters, commanded by Captain Steve Wallace, began receiving a heavy volume of small arms fire from the three and four story buildings on the western side of the road. Corporal Stoffers' section of CAAT B was the lead vehicle in the convoy. His rapid decision-making skills while under fire enabled the entire convoy to maneuver around multiple obstacles and out of the ambush's kill zone unscathed. Corporal Mazzola, 1st Lieutenant Cuomo's gunner, and Lance Corporal Carlsen, Corporal Stoffers' gunner, silenced at least four enemy positions with .50-caliber machine gun fire during this initial engagement. By now it was approximately 1330. 2nd section of CAAT B conducted a relief-in-place (RIP) with the BLT's tanks and was tasked

with denying the militia access to route Miami from routes Christy to Hartford. CAAT B's 3rd section conducted a RIP with 3rd Platoon, Company C who had been reinforcing the Iraqi Police in defense of the main IP station. The main IP station contained all of An Najaf's historical records. CAAT B's 1st section continued on route Miami to the Revolutionary Traffic Circle, where four CAAT vehicles conducted a RIP with the LAR and 81mm mortar platoons. The RTC was a critical piece of terrain because it controlled East-West access to the Imam Ali and Kufa Mosques, was in the middle of the BLT's casualty evacuation and re-supply route, and provided an ideal over-watch position of the cemetery. Once 1st section arrived at the RTC, the enemy launched multiple 60mm and 82mm mortar barrages; these barrages continued intermittently over the next sixty hours. 1st section also began receiving steady sniper fire and sporadic RPG fire. Lance Corporal Hill and Corporal Cater located one of the sniper's positions and Lance Corporal Hill destroyed the target with a TOW missile while Corporal Cater provided suppression with an M249. Throughout the next few hours, Lance Corporal Carlsen and Corporal Mazzola destroyed at least six enemy firing positions that were located in the cemetery. While 1st section was destroying the militia in the vicinity of the RTC, 2nd and 3rd sections were in continuous battles with militia fighters located west of route Miami. From atop the IP station, Private First Class Ritchie destroyed a militia RPG and sniper position with a few bursts fired from a Mk-19 automatic grenade launcher. HN SanchezOlmos was wounded at the IP station when a 60mm mortar round detonated inches from his foot as he was moving from position to position in order to check on the Marines. Despite numerous pieces of shrapnel in his upper arm and shoulder and blood soaking his arm, HN SanchezOlmos refused to be evacuated. He went to the Battalion Aid Station three days later, after the initial fighting had subsided. As 3rd section was fighting the militia from the IP station, 2nd section took up firing positions along route Miami, killing at least a squad of militia fighters that popped out of the alleyways to fire RPGs and Ak-47s. Sergeant Stegall, 2nd section leader, received a timely birthday present when an RPG impacted less than ten meters in front of his vehicle, failed to detonate, then skipped directly over his head and bounced down the road past the entire line of Weapons Company positions. Meanwhile, Gunnery Sergeant Collins, CAAT B's platoon sergeant who was collocated with 2nd section, coordinated a passage of lines with Company A while both Company A and CAAT B were under intense fire. Captain Wallace was directed to secure Main Supply Route (MSR) Miami from FOB Hotel to south of the RTC while the BLT made preparations to assault through the cemetery. All of CAAT B's sections, reinforced by the headquarters gun truck, remained in place, denying the enemy militia critical terrain and protecting the BLT's eastern and southern flanks. Additionally, LAR screened the MSR and CAAT A maintained its firing positions in the vicinity of what was to be known as the "Diagonal Road" to the north. Weapons Company stayed in these positions throughout the night.

At approximately 1630, 1st Lieutenant Breshears and his 81mm mortar platoon were ordered to clear a sector of the cemetery. His platoon was to be the center unit of the Battalion Landing Team's westward offensive through the cemetery while Company C attacked on his south and Company A attacked on his north. 1st Lieutenant Breshears rapidly restructured his mortar unit into a provisional rifle platoon consisting of two sections. Each section was reinforced with a medium-machinegun squad, was issued orders, and moved into position for the

assault. Time of Attack (TOA) was 1830. Upon arriving at the Line Of Departure (LOD) at 1800, 1st Lieutenant Breshears observed Company C beginning their assault. He immediately commenced his attack in order to protect Company C's northern flank, knowing that his own flank would be exposed due to the distance between himself and Company A as well as numerous intervening buildings. This action allowed Company C to focus all its combat power against the enemy to its front.

The assault gained momentum as 1st Lieutenant Breshears maneuvered his platoon through the broken terrain of tombs and mausoleums past the "Diagonal Road". Once the platoon crossed the "Diagonal Road", they began to receive sporadic small arms fire that increased in intensity and was joined by coordinated RPG and machinegun fire as the platoon penetrated deeper into the cemetery. After pushing approximately 150 meters past the "Diagonal Road", the platoon encountered over thirty insurgents in a well-prepared defensive position. 1st Lieutenant Breshears advanced his platoon against the enemy and his Marines quickly closed to within ten meters of the enemy, where they traded taunts, insults, and hand grenades with the insurgents. The enemy was soon scattered by the focused, accurate effects of the small arms, medium machine guns, hand grenades, and rockets directed against them. It was later determined that this unit was the northernmost enemy platoon in a mutually supporting enemy company defensive line. By removing this linchpin in the enemy's defenses, Company C was able to achieve their limit of advance with only intermittent resistance to their northern flank.

The CAAT sections and LAR continued to engage point targets within the city and provided security along MSR Miami and the rest of the city. Section A of LAR held their position in the RTC despite repeated RPG and mortar fire. LAR's platoon commander, 1st Lieutenant MacDonald, was hit by sniper fire and sustained fragmentation wounds in the shoulder. As the BLT began to assault into the cemetery, 1st Lieutenant MacDonald's gunner, Lance Corporal Novak, observed enemy reinforcements crossing route Hartford into the cemetery. Lance Corporal Novak engaged with the vehicle's 25mm cannon and killed several of the enemy reinforcements. Over the next three hours Lance Corporal Novak continued to engage the enemy as they attempted to infiltrate into the cemetery in three-man to five-man teams, killing fifteen to twenty enemy soldiers in the process.

As nightfall approached, the 81mm mortar platoon was ordered to fall back to the "Diagonal Road", tie in with Company C, and set up defensive positions oriented to the west while the enemy completed reinforcing and reconstituting some of its units. 1st Lieutenant Breshears ordered his second section to begin its withdrawal and then he began to move to his first section to pass the word to them. By the time he was able to reach his first section, due to the distance between the sections and the intensity of enemy fire, Company C had begun their retrograde, leaving the 81mm mortar platoon exposed to enemy fire from both flanks. First section was quickly pinned down and had one of its squad leaders, Sergeant Yadir Reynoso, killed by machine gun fire. First section formed a circular perimeter and began to return fire in all directions. Upon seeing that Sergeant Reynoso was KIA, Staff Sergeant Bonnell, first section leader, gave the command to, "Push forward under fire to retrieve the body, once fire superiority is achieved". Due to the volume of enemy fire, Lance Corporal Vaughn was

unable to hear the second half of the command, and despite direct enemy fire on his position and without regard for his own safety, exposed himself by rushing forward fifteen meters to retrieve his fallen comrade. With machine gun and small arms rounds impacting directly on his position, Lance Corporal Vaughn stripped Sergeant Reynoso of his flack jacket, helmet, deuce gear and weapon, put Sergeant Reynoso's body in a fireman's carry, and ran across fifteen meters of rough terrain back to his section's position. Lance Corporal Vaughn placed Sergeant Reynoso's body on the ground, and without hesitation or order from his NCOs, sprinted back to retrieve Sergeant Reynoso's gear and weapon so that it would not fall into enemy hands. After retrieving Sergeant Reynoso's gear, Lance Corporal Vaughn picked up Sergeant Reynoso, and while still under direct enemy machine gun and small arms fire, proceeded to carry his body to the platoon rally point. Lance Corporal Vaughn carried Sergeant Reynoso's body through the rough cemetery terrain for 150 meters until he collapsed from heat exhaustion and was unable to proceed any further. The platoon commander had called in an artillery mission in an attempt to relieve 1st section, but the mission was denied because it was politically insensitive to fire into the cemetery, and thus put the entire 1st section in danger of being overrun by a numerically superior enemy. The remainder of the platoon, which had formed on "Diagonal Road", prepared to re-attack into the cemetery to retrieve first section. After retrieving the body of Sergeant Reynoso, and under the cover of darkness, 1st section was able to fight its way out of the cemetery to Diagonal Road where they linked up with second section. 81s then crossed the road, tied in with Company A and Company C, and set up a picket line. The platoon then suffered two more casualties, Sergeant Sperry from heat exhaustion, and Lance Corporal Rentiria from shell shock. The 81mm mortar platoon confirmed twenty-eight enemy KIA in the engagement.

While the 81mm mortar platoon was battling in the cemetery, CAAT B and Weapons Company Headquarters consolidated their forces and established a strongpoint in a three-story school that dominated the Revolutionary Traffic Circle. The machine gun and sniper positions that were established in the building provided fire support for the BLT units in the cemetery over the next forty-eight hours. Additionally, Sergeant David Stegall and Corporal Welch established an observation post on the roof of the building that provided early warning on militia forces that attempted to attack the eastern flank of the BLT.

At 0430 on August 6th, the 81mm platoon was hit by a barrage of 82mm mortar fire that was adjusted to within fifteen meters of the picket line. No casualties were sustained. At 0530, 81mm platoon, in support of Company C, moved south on "Diagonal Road" to attack to clear the southern sector of the cemetery and the surrounding buildings. The platoon received sporadic small arms fire during the movement, but nothing that impeded their attack. The platoon, in conjunction with Charlie Company, formed a picket line in the cemetery facing west towards the Old City of An Najaf and the Imam Ali Shrine. The tank section in support of the attack was unable to advance past Diagonal Road due to intense RPG, mortar and small arms fire. After establishing defensive positions, Charlie Company and 81s began receiving sustained heavy machinegun, RPG and mortar fire throughout the day from the buildings within the city and surrounding the cemetery. Company C and the 81mm mortar platoon returned fire with all available assets to include air and artillery strikes on the major

structures overlooking the cemetery and on their defensive lines. Later, at approximately 1300, the Charlie Company Commander, Captain Matt Morrissey, oriented 1st Lieutenant Cuomo onto the four-story hotel where the vast majority of the enemy's fire was originating. 1st Lieutenant Cuomo then coordinated and directed the destruction of two fortified machine gun bunkers and countless sniper hides with his CAAT platoon using three M2 .50 caliber machine guns and two TOW systems. Corporal Mazzola and Lance Corporal Carlsen silenced the majority of the sniper positions. Corporal Cater, who had only minutes early been shot in the shoulder by an enemy sniper, destroyed the two machine gun bunkers with two deadly accurate TOW shots. The firepower of Weapons Company immediately shut down the heavy machine gun, RPG, and small arms fire that Charlie Company and the 81mm mortar platoon were receiving from the hotel. During the late afternoon, enemy 82mm mortars adjusted onto the 81mm mortar platoon's defensive line and accurately fired repeated barrages into the platoon for several hours. The platoon suffered five casualties. Corporal Abad was KIA by a direct mortar hit to his defensive position. A mortar that landed less than ten feet from his position concussed Corporal Cueva and he was evacuated. Lance Corporal Kinney suffered multiple shrapnel wounds to the legs and abdomen. Sergeant McManus was evacuated for a slipped disk in his spine. Lance Corporal Rock was evacuated for heat exhaustion and a high body core temperature. The 81mm mortar platoon was able to observe where the enemy mortars were originating. The Platoon Commander had visual contact with the enemy mortar position and called in a "polar coordinate" artillery mission on the enemy position. The mission was denied because it was politically insensitive to fire at a position so close to the Imam Ali Shrine.

CAAT A, CAAT B, Weapons Company Headquarters and LAR continued to support the actions in the cemetery by engaging targets with TOW missiles, 40mm grenade fire, .50 caliber machinegun fire, 25mm cannon and 7.62mm machine gun fire on targets within the city as they fired on Company C and the 81mm mortar platoon. The CAAT platoons also escorted casualty evacuations to FOB Hotel, ensured that the battalion lines of communication along the MSR's remained open and free of enemy interference, and continued to support the IPs in their defense of the main IP station.

Throughout the day CAAT A acquired ice from a street vendor that deserted his store and tactically delivered ice and water to the majority of the battalion including Alpha Company's Command Post inside the cemetery. CAAT A adjusted artillery and marked for aviation assets on suspected enemy positions and continued to engage targets that arose. Lance Corporal Barker shot a TOW missile at a range of 1500 meters into a tower from which an enemy Forward Observer was adjusting mortar fire. He killed two MM with the missile and subsequently the mortar fire ceased. He then shot another missile into a building on the eastern edge of the "Old City" where a sniper was firing. This sniper was preventing Charlie Company's advance in the cemetery. Once Lance Corporal Barker destroyed the sniper, Company C was able to continue its forward progress.

At 0700 on August 7th, the 81mm Mortar Platoon retrograded from the cemetery. Weapons Company, consisting of CAAT A, CAAT B, and LAR, was tasked with covering the withdrawal of BLT units from the cemetery. In addition, Weapons Company was tasked to continue supporting the IPs

until approximately 100 Iraqi National Guard soldiers and Fast Reaction Unit police officers arrived. CAAT A was the last unit to pull back to FOB Hotel. All Weapons Company units had returned to FOB Hotel by 1500. Upon returning, Captain Wallace was tasked with establishing the BLT Fire Support Coordination Center (FSCC) and to begin his planning as the BLT Fire Support Coordinator (FSC). The platoons of Weapons Company were placed in general support of the BLT and CAAT A and LAR were tasked with conducting Traffic Control Points (TCPs) on the east side of the Euphrates River in an effort to catch anyone trying to flee An Najaf with weapons. The TCPs were occupied from 1500 that day until 1000 the following morning. The TCPs netted one AK-47.

CAAT A and LAR were tasked with providing escort for Brigadier General Hajlek, DCG, I MEF, from FOB Duke to the An Najaf Governor's compound on August 8th. While at the compound, they were ordered to inspect Revolutionary Traffic Circle because the Joint Coordination Center (JCC) reported that the Iraqi Police (IP) at the main An Najaf station were again under attack. When CAAT A and LAR arrived at RTC, IPs were shooting toward the west and were pointing at the cemetery. CAAT A and LAR took up firing positions along the wall between the cemetery and route Miami and began scanning the area. They quickly spotted a 82mm mortar position manned by four MM, 300 meters into the cemetery. Corporal Nerva and Corporal Barret engaged it with their .50 caliber and M240G machineguns respectively, killing two of the insurgents. Lance Corporal Shaw felled one of the mortar men with his Mk-19; the other individual ran to a nearby tomb, so Sergeant Nieymeyer ordered Private First Class Jackalone to take an AT-4 shot. The rocket impacted on the door, but CAAT A couldn't tell if the man had been hit. Regardless, they did not see him again. With his .50 caliber machine gun, Corporal Weaver eliminated one member of a two-man RPG team that was fleeing back into the cemetery. Sergeant Holloway, Lance Corporal Smith, and Lance Corporal Abner spotted another two-man RPG team 100 meters from the wall they occupied and killed them with their M16s. LAR marked enemy positions with 25mm tracer fire so that the 11th MEU(SOC) Assistant Air Officer, Captain Budde, could prosecute targets with aviation assets. Captain Budde utilized a section of Marine Corps AH-1W Super Cobras to suppress and destroy targets, and then called in an artillery mission on another mortar position. The assistance to the IPs was taking much longer than expected, and CAAT A was ordered back to the Governor's Compound. After CAAT A escorted the General back to FOB Duke, they were directed to return to the cemetery to get a Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) from the artillery mission. When CAAT A arrived they spotted another mortar position 2000 meters into the cemetery. Sergeant Nieymeyer generated a "polar coordinate" artillery Call-For-Fire (CFF) but the twenty-six minutes it took between the first and second adjusting rounds was too long and rendered the mission ineffective so CAAT A ended the mission and returned to FOB Hotel. CAAT A killed at least six MM and destroyed two RPG teams and a mortar position while receiving no friendly casualties.

As CAAT A was returning on August 9th from a cancelled mission to raid the Salah Mosque near Al Kufa in support of Company C, they were re-tasked to investigate the Kharara neighborhood to the east of FOB Hotel. An Army convoy had reported receiving small arms fire from that area. Towards the end of CAAT A's patrol an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded between the first and second vehicles of the convoy. This happened while the platoon was on the western edge of the

neighborhood adjacent to an agricultural area. The area was extremely dark and they were driving "blacked out". When the lead vehicle drove by a street perpendicular to their route, they were silhouetted by a streetlight, tipping the triggerman to their location. The IED was a command detonated 82mm mortar attached to a MoPed battery that was located 150 meters away. The mortar was hidden in a pile of trash one meter off the road. Ample dispersion and light discipline were the only things that prevented CAAT A from taking casualties. CAAT A was unable to spot the triggermen as they fled, but they did find their hideout; within it they discovered two pairs of sandals, the battery, and a spool of wire. Two dismounted teams led by Sergeant Clayton and Lance Corporal Kidder scoured the area and searched surrounding farmhouses. CAAT A took three Iraqis into custody and brought them back for questioning. The detainees disclosed that they had seen a group of men moving about their neighborhood, but did not know where they fled to or who they were.

Meanwhile, CAAT B and LAR were in support of Company A in a raid against a suspected militia "rat line" along route Brady on the south end of An Najaf. During the raid a dismounted squad from CAAT B, led by Corporal Jaococco, conducted a search of a suspected militia hideout and found nothing. As the raid force was departing the area, the militia launched a simultaneous "L" shaped ambush. The enemy was immediately overwhelmed by the fire superiority of CAAT B and LAR. CAAT B's Lance Corporal Barton killed one militia fighter with a burst from his M240G at a range of less than twenty meters. Corporal Mazzola, Lance Corporal Carlsen, and Private First Class Ritchie killed an undetermined number of enemies that were positioned behind berms in an open field using .50-caliber and Mk-19 fire. Hospitalmen Third Class Bourland received shrapnel to his hand during the engagement. LAR and CAAT B held their positions in the kill zone and suppressed enemy positions in order to allow Company A to break contact.

Again on August 10th, LAR and CAAT A supported Company A as they "cleared in zone" through a neighborhood north of route Brady. LAR assumed Battle Positions (BPs) at the intersection of routes Brady and Kubaic, oriented north and west. After Alpha Company began moving north into the neighborhood, LAR's third section saw fifteen to twenty enemy reinforcements crossing the road to attack the rear flank of the Alpha Raiders. Sergeant Payne led the third and fourth sections of LAR and engaged the enemy with their main guns, killing five to ten enemy combatants.

LAR, CAAT A, and the 81mm mortar platoon conducted a raid on the Al Salah mosque in Al Kufa on August 11th. As the raid force passed by FOB Baker on their way to the raid site, they began to receive small arms fire from the vicinity of the Iraqi National Guard (ING) compound. CAAT A returned fire and the ING, thinking that they were under attack from militia, fired back with RPGs and machinegun fire. The El Salvadorians, who were guarding FOB Baker, saw the firefight between CAAT A and the ING, and began firing on the 81mm mortar platoon with mortars, machine guns and small arms. LAR, CAAT A, and 81s egressed the area as quickly as possible and returned to FOB Hotel. There were no injuries in any of the units involved. CAAT A, LAR and 81s suffered multiple flat tires.

August 12th was a busy day for CAAT A; they were tasked with supporting Company C and the ING as they conducted a raid on the Al Amer Hospital, Maternity Hospital, and Sadr's House in central An Najaf. CAAT A was tasked with being the cordon force on the objective. As first section cordoned to the south, they started receiving small arms fire while driving to the objective. When they occupied their position, they observed four armed men running from a four-story building toward the Al Amer Hospital. Two of them stopped to fire at the platoon commander's vehicle. Lance Corporal Shaw killed them both with his MK-19. The other two MM continued to run, and tried to hide under a fuel tanker. Lance Corporal Shaw engaged the tanker, setting it on fire and killing the other two MM. Another group of MM ran from the same building and fled into a parking lot to the west. CAAT then started receiving small-arms fire from that area. Although they could not see the individuals, they were able to suppress the area by searching and traversing the lot with 40mm grenades. This allowed C Company and the ING to close with the enemy unmolested. Company C began receiving fire from a school to their north. CAAT A suppressed the second story of the school with 40mm grenades and .50caliber machineguns until the advance of the friendly forward line of troops necessitated a cease-fire. Next, they displaced and moved to a parking lot adjacent to route Elway from which they could further support Charlie Company's advance into the maternity hospital. Private First Class Jackalone informed his vehicle commander, Sergeant Neimeyer, that he spotted two MM armed with AK-47s and a RPG moving around in the hospital compound. They were unable to engage from their location so they radioed the platoon commander and requested to engage with the MK-19. Although they were unable to see the effects of their rounds due to the wall surrounding the compound, Charlie Company received no fire from that location as they crossed the road and entered their breach. The CAAT platoon then moved to an alleyway that overlooked the eastern wall of the hospital compound. Company C was clearing from west to east so the CAAT was essentially closing off the enemy's escape route. As Company C cleared the hospital, Corporal Nevra spotted a man observing the Marines with binoculars from 500 meters to the north. 1stLt Borneo thought the man's action was suspicious so he took his vehicle and his lead vehicle to try and apprehend the man for questioning. As they approached from a side street to avoid being spotted, the two vehicles separated with one coming from the south and the other from the east to try and surround the corner where the man was seen. As 1st Lieutenant Borneo approached, he spotted a man who started running upon seeing the CAAT vehicles. Lance Corporals Abner and Smith captured the man and took him back to the hospital to be interrogated. With that incidental mission complete, they proceeded west and approached the corner where the man with the binoculars had been. There was no sign of the man, but as they turned the corner someone unleashed a machinegun and multiple RPGs on them. Lance Corporal Shaw suppressed the building as the vehicles broke contact. They returned to the hospital and interrogated the man they had apprehended. The Human-intelligence Exploitation Team (HET) deemed him to have no significant information so he was released. CAAT A assigned a section to investigate the area where they were ambushed, but before they could begin, they were directed to move and support the ING that were taking heavy casualties from a nearby school. They arrived just in time to observe a Maverick Missile impact the school.

Second section was tasked with cordoning the northern flank of the objective area. They occupied the same position in that soccer field that was used in the August 2nd encounter. No enemy was seen from their position, but they were receiving a lot of small arms fire from an unknown location. Corporal Weaver maneuvered his vehicle to get a better view of the fight, but was unable to engage with his weapons due to the location of friendly units. After Company C had cleared through the Maternity Hospital, second section was moved south to an over-watch position on Sadr's House. As the raid force prepared to retrograde, CAAT A was tasked with moving to FOB Golf to link-up with, and escort the M-88 Tank Recovery Vehicle back to the objective area. The M-88 recovered an ING vehicle that was deserted by the Iraqis and towed it to FOB Golf. The CAAT platoon also recovered the body of a civilian that was killed in his vehicle. They took the body to the hospital and turned it over to the Iraqi authorities.

LAR and CAAT B supported a raid on August 13th at the Salah Mosque along with MSPF, ODA and the 36th Commando Battalion. LAR took point on the movement up and established battle positions approximately fifty meters from the mosque. The 36th Commando took a wrong turn going into the objective and was delayed thirty minutes. LAR maintained their position and observed thirty personnel crossing the road in the vicinity of the Al Kufa hospital; they held their fire to avoid compromising the raid. Once the other elements of the raid force arrived at the objective, the raid was executed as planned. Three enemies were killed and eight were captured.

The 81mm mortar platoon emplaced their mortars on August 16th in an amusement park north of the cemetery. They were assigned to relieve 1-5 Cavalry's 120mm mortar platoon. The mortar position was in support of Company C, 1-5 Cavalry and 2nd Platoon of Company B, BLT 1/4 as they attacked through the cemetery to set up a screen line around the northern edge of the Old City of An Najaf. At 0200 the following morning, 81s came under machine gun fire from the mosque located approximately 150 meters to the left flank of the gun line. No injuries were sustained. At 1600 that same day, the 81mm mortar platoon egressed back to FOB Hotel.

Beginning on August 18th and lasting through the following day, CAAT A, CAAT B, LAR, 81s and Company B conducted a destruction raid in Al Kufa. The target was a Technical College that overlooked the bridge crossing into downtown Al Kufa. The militia were using the college as a barracks, and using it to control access across the bridge. CAAT B was tasked to support BLT Recon snipers who attempted to insert themselves into the urban area 800 meters southeast of the Kufa Mosque. CAAT B was also tasked in setting up a blocking position (BP) to the south of Al Kufa in order to capture/interdict any militia who were trying to escape the city. CAAT A, LAR, and Company B established attack-by-fire positions on the Technical College located on the far side of the river. 81mm mortar platoon emplaced a six-gun firing line approximately one thousand meters to the rear of LAR and CAAT A. CAAT B and BLT Recon received a barrage of enemy 120mm mortars less than one minute after arriving at the insert point. The enemy placed burning tires along route Sapp that provided illumination and enabled them to adjust their mortars at night. BLT Recon's decision to execute a pullback was appropriate after their position was compromised. At 0200 on the 19th, LAR and CAAT A occupied positions on the eastern shore of

the Euphrates River. Within five minutes after their arrival, they began to receive small arms fire from the Technical College on the western side of the river. 1st Lieutenant Borneo was the Officer In Charge (OIC) of the attack-by-fire position and ordered LAR plus two CAAT vehicles (both with MK-19s) to engage the enemy stronghold. Corporal AguayoSierras had his gunner Corporal Barret fire two TOW missiles at a window that the platoon was receiving RPG fire from. LAR's 25mm cannon, combined with the MK-19s, were producing devastating effects on the enemy and destroyed three separate machinegun positions. 1st Lieutenant Stahl from Bravo Company linked his platoon to CAAT A's lines and continued to suppress the objective. 81mm and 60mm mortars fired throughout the engagement with both illumination and High Explosive (HE) munitions. As the Marines were retrograding they began receiving small-arms fire from the east side of the river. Lance Corporal Barnette had his gunner suppress the enemy with his Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) to cover the raid force's egress. The attack-by-fire lasted approximately one hour. The resulting Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) was 73 confirmed enemies KIA and 102 enemies WIA, including Wahabis from Saudi Arabia. Simultaneous to the attack-by-fire raid, second section of CAAT A was attached to Company A and tasked with cordoning off a school and a hospital in the northwest part of Al Kufa. They received no contact.

CAAT B conducted a route reconnaissance on August 20th of an area that was less than 600 meters west of the Kufa Mosque. Their mission was to determine the enemy's disposition and to take pictures of multiple schools that the BLT suspected to be MM hideouts. This was an extremely difficult and dangerous mission because the BLT had very little intelligence information concerning this area. Also, if the patrol came in contact from the eastern side of the objective, the Marines were not authorized to return fire because the area around the mosque had been designated a No Fire Area (NFA). As his vehicle approached an intersection, Gunnery Sergeant Collins observed a white pickup truck that was establishing a mortar position along route Irving. He did not allow his gunner to engage because of the NFA, but he did, however, order his driver to quickly close with the vehicle. Once in sight of the Kufa Mosque, First Section immediately came under extremely accurate sniper fire from multiple positions that were located on the mosque's minarets and from small arms fire from the field next to the mosque. The gunner shields on First Section's CAAT vehicles stopped five enemy rounds. Despite the intense sniper and small arms fire, the platoon sergeant still moved his vehicle into position to take pictures of the schools. Moments later, five 120mm mortar rounds impacted all around the platoon's vehicles and a suspected IED detonated less than twenty meters in front of his vehicle. Not having the authorization to return fire at this point, the platoon retrograded.

While patrolling through central An Najaf en route to FOB Hotel, the platoon came under small arms fire from a squad-sized element in a small building located inside an industrial complex at the intersection of routes Brady and Elway. After not having authorization to engage the MM in vicinity of the Kufa Mosque, the platoon refused to let this enemy force survive. Gunnery Sergeant Collins ordered the platoon to halt in place and proceeded to direct the platoon's heavy and medium machine guns in destroying the enemy. Gunnery Sergeant Collins ordered the platoon to cease-fire after the enemy firing positions were in

flames. As the platoon departed the area ten minutes later, the Iraqis that lived in the houses next to the industrial complex applauded the Marines because the MM fighters in the buildings had been engaging the IPs at the hospital throughout the day.

Upon returning to FOB Hotel, the intelligence gained from the route reconnaissance allowed the BLT Commander to refine his plan for the raid being conducted that evening. Prior to receiving the route reconnaissance information, Company C was scheduled to conduct a dismounted raid directly into the kill zone in vicinity of the mosque where the CAAT platoon received heavy contact. The new plan called for the BLT's tanks to attempt to draw out MM fighters from the school and the nearby field so that an AC-130U gunship could destroy them (the NFA was reduced in size after the route reconnaissance). The new plan worked perfectly; that evening an AC-130U gunship confirmed thirteen enemy KIA and one mortar position destroyed. The BLT's tanks killed an additional fourteen MM. The BLT tanks took heavy RPG fire from the vicinity of the buildings near the Kufa Mosque and were ordered to withdraw. From his LAR vehicle, Sergeant Allen observed the enemy fire and reported that he was able to mark the target for engagement with aviation assets. On order, his gunner, Lance Corporal Brandfass, engaged the target with precision 25mm fire at a range of 1800m. His 25mm fire provided an excellent mark and a section of AH-1W Super Cobras destroyed the target with AGM-114 Hellfire Missiles and Rockets.

Elsewhere, CAAT A conducted its daily security patrols. While second section was executing their 0000-0400 patrol, they received contact from the neighborhood to the south of FOB Hotel. As they headed west off of route Miami, their lead vehicle received small-arms and RPG fire. They pushed through the engagement area while Corporal Barret suppressed the enemy with his M240G. The enemy broke contact and was unable to be relocated. No enemy or friendly casualties were confirmed.

Again on August 21st, CAAT A, LAR, Company B(-) and 81s occupied an attack by fire position on the east side of the Euphrates River overlooking the Technical College and Kufa Bridge. Their mission was to allow Company A to clear an erstwhile Iraqi Police station in Al Kufa that had been claimed by insurgents. Upon their initial arrival, things were quite. They conducted an artillery mission on the college and then began receiving small-arms and RPG fire. CAAT A returned fire with their MK-19s and a M240G. They continued to suppress the area with artillery and 60mm/81mm mortars.

The following day, CAAT A, CAAT B, LAR and the 81mm mortar platoon took part in an attack to clear through the palm groves on the western edge of the Old City, An Najaf. CAAT B also conducted a route reconnaissance in order to locate route Apple, an alternate route into the Old City. During the reconnaissance, first section of CAAT B and the BLT FWD sustained at least five 82mm mortar barrages. The BLT attack through the palm groves was successful; however, there was only one enemy soldier in the objective area.

August 24th marked day one of the main attack into the Old City, An Najaf. CAAT A and LAR moved into the cemetery on the north side of the city and established suppressive fires from a Support By Fire (SBF) position on targets as they appeared. CAAT A was also tasked with

marking both route Oak and Elm so friendly units could easily find the routes at night in the labyrinth of the cemetery. Sergeant Niemyer and Private First Class Jackalone of CAAT A marked the routes from their starting points all the way to Ring Road with signs and Infrared (IR) chemlights before the area had been cleared. CAAT B led the main body, tanks, AAVs, Company C, and the combat trains into the RRP and then conducted a route reconnaissance and provided guides for the initial assault up route Ash. LAR and CAAT A supported the attack on the western side of the city and 81s emplaced a gun-line 3700 meters to the north of the city. After Company C established a foothold, Company A was established as the main effort of the attack. Throughout the attack, LAR was called upon to engage enemy positions with precision 25mm cannon fires. After Company A observed an enemy FO position east of their location, LAR was able to put multiple bursts of 25mm HE into the window of the building at a range of 1300m, destroying the FO position. Second section of CAAT A escorted the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit to the intersection of route Ash and Ring Road. The intersection was receiving heavy mortar fire at the time. Later, while patrolling the cemetery, CAAT A received contact from a building on Ring Road. They withdrew to a safe distance and then Gunnery Sergeant Godfredson relayed a call-for-fire mission to Lieutenant Borneo. The Army's 120mm mortar section executed the mission. The second adjust round was a direct hit and jolted two MM off the roof of the building, killing them both.

First Lieutenant Cuomo escorted a psychological operations (PsyOps) vehicle to the objective area and then controlled the traffic flow at the intersection of Ring Road and route Ash. While directing the AAVs transporting Company A, an enemy fighter launched an RPG that went directly over Lieutenant Cuomo's head. Throughout the duration of the night, a section of CAAT B remained at the intersection controlling the traffic flow, standing by to provide heavy gun support, and dodging numerous 120mm mortar barrages and continuous enemy sniping. On the morning of the 25th, Company A and Company C suffered numerous casualties. CAAT A provided security for the BLT's AAV ambulances as they proceeded to extract the wounded Marines from the objective area. The CAAT vehicles came under fire almost every time that they moved into the objective area. During one casualty evacuation, the enemy's fire became so intense that the BLT Commander ordered an M1A1 main battle tank out of its battle position in order to provide additional fire support and armored protection. Throughout the attack, CAAT B secured the MSR leading to the objective, escorted and evacuated twenty-eight casualties from the objective to the BLT Casualty Collection Point (CCP), and conducted multiple routes clearing and reconnaissance operations. After three days of fighting in the Old City, the militia agreed upon a truce and they lay down their arms and evacuated the city. CAAT A and LAR were then moved to the intersection of the Ring Road and Trans Am where they searched all vehicles coming into and going out of the Imam Ali Mosque area. They also searched several buildings in the surrounding area and found one RPG sight. After they eventually withdrew, they were tasked with conducting TCPs on the east side of the Euphrates River. In three days of fighting, the 81mm mortar platoon fired 250 HE rounds, and 16 illumination rounds. No casualties were sustained by any of the Weapons Company platoons.

August began quietly for Battery R; then the intense fighting in An Najaf began. On August 5th, Romeo Battery received several call-for-fire missions from Marines under fire, but Higher Headquarters denied all call-for-fire missions. Finally, at 1857 that evening, the battery fired its first rounds of the fight consisting of two guns each firing two High Explosive (HE) rounds with point detonating fuses on delay mode. Within a few days the Army's 2nd Battalion 7th Cavalry and 1st Battalion 5th Cavalry arrived as reinforcements to help fight the enemy forces in An Najaf. These cavalry battalions had no artillery assets, so Romeo Battery remained the only source of artillery support in the area and therefore fired in support of 1/5 Cavalry and 1/7 Cavalry as well as BLT 1/4. The battery fired for three weeks, completing its last mission on the morning of the 26th. During this time, Romeo Battery expended a total of 432 HE, 54 illumination, and 4 smoke rounds in a total of 79 fire missions. During the month of August the battery also continued its FOB Hotel security mission in addition to conducting its artillery missions.

The platoon of Combat Engineer Battalion (CEB) Marines continued to support the BLT throughout the month of August. 1st Squad continued to support Company A throughout combat operations. They conducted an assault through the Wadi al-Salam cemetery in An Najaf from August 5th to 7th. Additionally, they conducted numerous satellite patrols in the downtown An Najaf area from August 8th to 20th. They participated in the main assault through the Old City of An Najaf from August 25th to 27th.

2nd Squad continued to support Company B throughout combat operations. They conducted an assault through the Wadi al-Salam (WAS) cemetery in An Najaf from August 5th to 7th. Additionally, they conducted numerous satellite patrols in the downtown An Najaf area from August 8th to 20th. During this time they also acted as dismounted security in the WAS cemetery for the U.S. Army's 1-5 armored cavalry unit. They also participated in the raid on Kufa's Technical College. They further acted as the battalion reserve during the assault through the Old City of An Najaf from August 25th to 27th.

The engineer platoon's 3rd Squad continued to support Company C throughout combat operations. They supported the assault through the WAS cemetery in An Najaf from August 5th to 7th, along with the engineer platoon headquarters. Additionally, they conducted numerous satellite patrols in the downtown Najaf area from August 8th to 20th. During this time they also acted as dismounted security in the WAS cemetery for the U.S. Army's 1-5 armored cavalry unit. They also participated in the main assault through the Old City of An Najaf from August 25th to 27th.

The Marines of 4th Squad continued to support BLT 1/4 throughout combat operations. They supported the assault through the WAS cemetery in An Najaf from August 5th to 7th, recovered a downed UH-1N Iroquois Gunship in enemy territory, and provided continuous re-supply to Marines under fire. Corporal Cox operated a civilian crane in enemy territory, and recovered the downed helicopter amidst enemy small arms, machine gun, and mortar fire. Lance Corporal Byxbee and Lance Corporal Lopez operated the 7-ton trucks, expertly placing them for loading of heavy and awkward aircraft parts. Corporal Marin led the squad, task-organizing his fire-teams into search, crane, and driving teams for recovery operations. Additionally, the squad conducted numerous security missions for FOB Hotel from August 8th to 20th.

The squad prepared an assembly area/rapid re-supply point for the BLT's assault through the Old City of An Najaf. Corporal Cox and Lance Corporal Timmons operated their bulldozers under enemy sniper and mortar fire. Corporal Cox received shrapnel wounds during the operation but refused medical attention until he was finished working. The squad participated in the main assault through the Old City of An Najaf from August 25th to 27th, continually improving the BLT's assembly area and providing mobility support along routes Alder, Ash, and Apple to the west of the Old City. Lance Corporal Timmons operated his combat earthmover in the midst of enemy RPG and mortar fire, providing mobility along route Ash, the main friendly axis of advance.

The first few days of August were routine for the tank platoon. A tank stuck in a quagmire afforded the M88 crew the chance to display the strength of their recovery vehicle. Unfortunately, the peaceful routine was short-lived. On August 4th, Al Sadr and his Mahdi Militia made their initial attempt to control An Najaf. The tank platoon worked in sections. Alpha section with crews 3-1 and 3-2, and Bravo section with crews 3-3 and 3-4 were attached to Charlie Company. The sections alternated their battle periods, allowing themselves only three hours a day to cool down and re-hydrate.

At approximately 0930 on 4 August, the insurgents took a lucky shot with an RPK machine gun and brought down a UH-1N Iroquois Gunship. The pilot was badly injured and in need of a MedEvac. The copilot managed to escape the crash with only a sprained ankle. The M88 crew's expertise in recovery was called upon, and the vehicle accompanied the platoon corpsman into action. After about two hours of dodging stray rifle fire and through the diligent work of the M88 crew and corpsman, they managed to disassemble the helicopter for transport on two 7-ton trucks that were called in to remove the wreckage. Several different engagements between the tank platoon and insurgent force erupted over the next couple of days.

On the morning of the 5th, the tanks tried to push towards the mosque by way of " Diagonal Road." Unrelenting mortar, RPG, and small arms fire was volleyed around and sometimes came in contact with the tanks, forcing them to pull back then attempt to push forward again. On one of the advances, Lieutenant Russell Thomas, the tank platoon commander and commander of tank 3-1, was struck by an enemy 7.62mm round in the upper portion of his left triceps. Lieutenant Thomas' ammunition loader, Lance Corporal Jeremy Wiley quickly came to his aid and dressed the wound. The battalion staff learned of the injury and, although against his wishes, he was ordered to leave the engagement area to receive medical attention for his arm. It was checked by a nearby corpsmen, and the Lieutenant was able to resume fighting after the wound was cleaned and dressed. The heat was bearing down on the Marines of tank platoon and the day seemed to last forever. The platoon continuously retrograded back to FOB Hotel for a reprieve from the debilitating heat. Hospitalman third class Charles Skaggs, the platoon corpsman, administered IVs to the tankers as Corporal Andrew Keegan, the tank platoon communications technician, and Corporal Kent Medlin, the tank platoon motor transport noncommissioned officer, ensured there was hot chow on hand, along with cold water. They also constantly monitored the platoon and battalion radio nets from their HMMWV parked outside the billeting area.

The 6th was like the two previous days as militia relentlessly attacked the tanks with their mortars, RPGs, and small arms. Both Alpha and Bravo sections pooled their resources together and sent the most dehydrated and exhausted Marines to the rear of the FOB to convalesce while the others stayed and established a defensive position at the intersection of Hartford and Miami known as "Revolutionary Circle". That position was used to guard the nearby Iraqi Police (IP) station until the morning of the 7th when they were able to retrograde back to FOB Hotel for some much-needed rest. Over the next few weeks the platoon went out on several "Leader's Recon" patrols and assisted in a raid on the house of Al Sadr. During the raid the M88 crew and the platoon's motor transport NCO were called to remove a truck blocking the passage to the cleric's house and surrounding areas.

The tank platoon was called to Camp Baker on the 17th and was ordered to conduct a raid in Al Kufa that started at approximately 2200. The platoon encountered some resistance and engaged the enemy until the following morning. Things were calm for a few days until the night of the 23rd. As four tanks pushed up a hill on route Apple, they were hit with successive volleys of mortars and RPGs. The tanks fired a marking round, along with additional marking rounds sent by LAR, to make a clear and easily defined target for the assisting air support of the Army AH-64D Apache helicopters.

All hell broke loose the following day as the main offensive against Al Sadr's Mahdi Militia began. The tanks were pushed toward the Imam Ali shrine through route Thunder Run; later the tankers renamed it Tiger Run because of their multiple trips back and forth from the RRP to the battle zone. The engagements over the next few days at "Ring Road" were coffee-book stuff. The tanks received constant enemy fire in overwhelming proportions. The night of the 25th, the 3-2 tank crew was struck hard by a roadside IED (it was believed to be a 155mm artillery round) in its left side. The IED blast penetrated the tank's skirt and damaged a support roller causing a mobility deadline for the tank. This did not deter the crew or dissuade their dedication to duty as they rotated out with other crews (known as hot-seating) to get back into the fight. The heat was on average of 130+ degrees Fahrenheit during the days and not much cooler during the night because of the heat generated from the TIS (thermal imaging system)..

The tank crews provided two-tank engagements by continuously rotating sections. The section being relieved would return to the RRP (replenishment resupply point) for periods of cooling and re-hydrating. The platoon corpsman was busy administering IVs, sometimes two or three per tanker, to keep them in the fight. The crew of tank 3-3 had some bad luck on the 25th when an RPG hit the tank commander's .50 caliber machine gun in its feed tray and caused a jam that couldn't be easily fixed. The crew returned to the RRP, but even with the assistance of an armorer they were still unable to dislodge the enemy round. After several unsuccessful attempts to repair the weapon, the crew borrowed the .50 caliber machine gun from tank 3-2 and returned to the fight. The next two days were as intense as the previous two had been with the platoon expending approximately 135 main gun rounds, 20,000 coax 7.62 rounds, and 10,000 .50 caliber machine gun rounds. A cease-fire finally came when the grand Ayatollah Sustani, one of the most popular clerics in Iraq, and hundreds of his followers marched into the city

and caused Al Sadr to stop his attacks and disband his militia. The platoon returned to FOB Hotel on the 28th for much needed rest for the Marines and repairs for the tired, highly used tanks.

The BLT was reinforced with Bradleys from the U.S. Army's 1-5 Cavalry and for the advance into the Old City of An Najaf. The BLT's tank platoon, reinforced with a platoon of Bradleys, led the assault on enemy insurgents located in the hotels west of the Imam Ali Mosque. Using the its main gun and armored protection, the tank platoon inflicted substantial damage on the enemy, and endured hours of voluminous RPG and 120mm mortar attacks, and withstood several IED explosions. Their actions allowed Charlie Company to establish a crucial foothold in the Old City. For several days the tank platoon remained in a blocking position along routes Camaro and Corvette and severely impeded any enemy reinforcement moving north toward the battlefield. Once a cease-fire was eventually initiated, the tank platoon withdrew and returned to FOB Hotel.

Over a period of approximately forty days that encompassed the month of August, the Reconnaissance Platoon conducted over thirty patrols and attacks. The platoon conducted twelve area/zone reconnaissance missions (including counter-mortar patrols), eight route recon patrols, two counter-IED sweeps, two convoy security missions, three traffic control point missions, nine security patrols of key Iraqi infrastructure throughout An Najaf, one blocking position in support of offensive operations against Muqtada Militia in Al Kufah, and four dismounted attacks against enemy strongholds in An Najaf.

Reconnaissance Platoon was initially tasked with denying the enemy access to the BLT's northern flank during its attack through the An Najaf Cemetery on August 5th to 7th. After one day of fighting, the platoon proceeded into the cemetery, physically connected with Company A, and attacked through the cemetery along the right flank of the BLT. During the attack the platoon came under hostile enemy mortar, machine gun, and small arms fire. Close Air Support (CAS) was precisely employed on several occasions by the Alpha Company FAC to effectively assist in neutralizing the enemy. Once the platoon reached its limit of advance, it provided security to the west and north of the BLT along routes Favre and Alzado. While in a defensive posture, Sergeant Avak noticed a tube behind a wall. He shot and disabled what turned out to be an SPG-9 (74mm recoilless rifle). A few 40mm rounds were shot down range in an effort to destroy the enemy personnel in the area. The platoon then closed with and captured an enemy prisoner of war that was manning and attempting to fire the SPG-9 at the platoon.

On August 12th Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to Company C during an attack against key Muqtada Militia targets (Muqtada Al Sadr's house, Sadr's private hospital, and militia-held maternity hospital). Immediately upon arrival at the objective, the platoon came under enemy mortar and small arms fire, dismounted, and quickly closed with the enemy on the objectives. The platoon again cleared the right flank of the company and ensured that that flank was denied to the enemy. As the platoon neared the maternity hospital, it received enemy mortar fires from the vicinity of the Hospital. Sergeant Palafox observed militiaman firing mortars at friendly positions from behind a wall near the hospital. He then maneuvered his team to establish adequate fields of fire, and then directed his team to shoot 40mm rounds at the target,

neutralizing the threat. No other mortars were fired during the attack. Next, the platoon cleared the doctors/nurses quarters near the hospital. As the recon platoon moved over to assist another platoon that was encountering heavy enemy resistance around a nearby schoolhouse, enemy shots were fired from the top of a building to the platoon's flank. Again, Sergeant Palafox returned fire and directed Corporal Jarvis to fire his M203, killing the enemy shooter on the building. The platoon received word that the ODA team was in distress and in need of support. They, along with 3rd Platoon, Company C, went to assist the ODA Team who had just received two severe casualties from enemy fragmentation grenades. Recon then withdrew and a GBU-12 was dropped into the school, destroying the occupying enemy personnel. The enemy's weapons were subsequently found and captured along with numerous RPG rounds, a machine gun and thousands of rounds.

Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to Company A on August 16th in support of a deliberate attack against a suspected Muqtada Militia location (Objective Comanche) in the Old City of An Najaf. The platoon maneuvered quietly and deliberately through the streets and then helped to clear the 7-building objective with Company A. The platoon seized three detainees in the building during the clearing. Throughout the objective, a total of twenty-six detainees, numerous AK-47s with full magazines, three two-way radios, and a set of type II body armor were all captured. The platoon then moved from the objective to a seven-story hotel that Company A had occupied for follow-on attacks. Both units in the building received continuous sniper fire from multiple positions for nearly nine hours. Snipers from the recon platoon were employed to conduct counter-sniper operations. Corporal Collins observed one militiaman in a building from where some of the sniper fire had originated. Upon confirmation from his team leader, Corporal Collins shot and killed the enemy, which successfully shut off all fires from that area.

Recon's next assignment was received on August 19th. The platoon was tasked with establishing a Blocking Position (BP) to the south of Al Kufah in support of Company A's and Company C's attacks against Muqtada Militia strong points in the city. The purpose of the BP was to deny the enemy's ability to retrograde south out of the area. Once the attack began, numerous Iraqi civilian refugee families were escorted through the blocking position (foot/vehicle movement). One civilian vehicle was engaged, however, due to its excessive speed toward the platoon's position with no apparent intent to stop. Wounded civilians were immediately treated by Hospitalman Second Class Debrauwere and were evacuated via a helicopter that was summoned by Gunnery Sergeant Yarolem.

August 24th saw the Reconnaissance Platoon attached again to Company C. They were to reinforce the company in an attack against a Muqtada Militia stronghold approximately 500 meters from the Imam Ali Mosque in the Old City of An Najaf. The platoon was inserted onto the objective by an AAV and immediately began to assault the large enemy-held hotels while under intense mortar, RPG and small arms fire. The platoon moved directly to the center hotel upon receiving the call to reinforce Company C. The company in the building had not yet killed any enemy and had already suffered four casualties. The recon platoon then cleared the lower portion of the building, which was pitch-black and filled with dust from the impacting grenades. Under intense and

concentrated fires, Sergeant Cole encountered two armed Muqtada Militiamen positioned to fire their RPG in the basement. He maneuvered against them and killed them both with a quick reactive burst from his M249 SAW. While the platoon cleared the basement, Hospitalman Second Class Debrauwere assessed and treated Company C casualties who had received shrapnel during the fighting. After they were evacuated, Hospitalman Second Class Debrauwere pulled a Marine out from a dark elevator shaft after the Marine had fallen four stories and was now barely hanging by his gear. He assessed and treated the Marine for possible spinal injuries before the injured Marine was evacuated from the fighting. Once the building was clear, the platoon moved north to establish a defensive position and flank security to the north of Company C's location. For the next two days, the platoon received continuous enemy mortar fires with constant sniper fire and RPG fire coming from the northeast buildings. The platoon established three sniper positions to conduct counter-sniper fires and to eliminate any observed threat in the area. On the second night, Sergeant Avak killed the member of a RPG team that had been firing at the platoon's position and every armored vehicle and helicopter that came in the area. Also during this time, Corporal Scott received shrapnel to the arm, shoulder and tongue during a mortar fire-for-effect on the platoon's position. Hospitalman Second Class Debrauwere assessed and treated the Corporal Scott who was then evacuated. On August 26th, mortar fire continued to impact on the platoon's location. The Platoon Sergeant, Gunnery Sergeant Yarolem, received shrapnel to the leg a from 120mm mortar that landed fifteen meters away. Hospitalman Second Class Debrauwere again assessed, treated, and evacuated him out of area; once again he was under constant Mortar, RPG and sniper fire. Corporal Jarvis engaged another RPG team's position that had been firing numerous RPGs and small arms at the platoon's position and at maneuvering friendly units. His three consecutive High Explosive Dual Purpose (HEDP) rounds from his M203 immediately neutralized the threat. The recon platoon was then called back to Company C's position. Before departing the city, and after receiving approval from Higher Headquarters, a portion of the platoon helped to clear a large underground parking garage to the west of the Imam Ali Mosque.

The Assault Amphibious Vehicle (AAV) platoon began their busy month of August with a QRF mission. At approximately 0930 on August 5th, the armored QRF was activated to reinforce CAAT A, LAR, and 81s. En route to their objective, a UH-1N Iroquois Gunship was felled by enemy fire. Two tanks and two AAVs secured the scene for the recovery of the downed chopper. As soon as the vehicles were emplaced, they began to receive small arms and mortar fire. The mortar-fire directed at one of the AAVs became increasingly accurate and the AAV attempted to exchange its position with one of the tanks. As the AAV began to move, it received accurate automatic machine gun and small arms fire. Immediately, the AAV returned fire with its 40mm grenade launcher and .50 caliber machinegun. Another AAV secured route Favre to the west, and once they were established, they too received small arms fire from individuals and from vehicles carrying militia members. The AAV returned fire with its .50 caliber machinegun. Another section of AAVs proceeded south along MSR Miami to route Hartford with the other two tanks. They dismounted their embarked infantry once they were established at the intersection of the two routes. The AAV crew chiefs identified several individuals carrying weapons that were running into the cemetery and engaged them with their vehicle-mounted weapons. When

the call came to push into the cemetery, the two AAVs repositioned themselves to best support the infantry. Once the embarked Marines of Company B linked up with Company C and began to advance through the cemetery, the two AAVs, along with another, proceeded approximately 100 meters into the cemetery to establish a supporting position. As the dense terrain restricted the AAVs' movement, they assumed an over-watch role for the infantry. During the infantry's push into the cemetery, the AAVs were unable to use their crew-served weapons without a substantial risk of fratricide to the infantry, so all crew members engaged enemy positions with their personal weapons to help support the infantry's movement. Once darkness fell, the three AAVs retrograded to MSR Miami and served as an over-watch and provided MSR security. Throughout the entire engagement, all of the platoon's AAVs received small arms, mortar, machinegun, and RPG fires.

AAV's third section served as MSR security on August 6th and 7th, and was in General Support (GS) of the battalion as an armored ambulance. At the intersection of MSR Miami and Diagonal Road they continued to receive sporadic small arms and mortar fires; a RPG hit vehicle 312 at approximately 0230 on the 7th. Throughout the day and through the night, the Marines of third section continued to return fire at the enemy.

At approximately 1030 on August 5th, the Reserve QRF was utilized to re-supply CAAT A, CAAT B, and LAR. The AAVs were placed in GS of the battalion, were designated to enforce security along MSR Miami, and were assigned to deliver ammunition and other supplies as needed. The Reserve QRF AAVs were loaded with MSSG Marines who were left aboard FOB Hotel. Upon arriving at LAR and CAAT A's position, the AAVs began to receive small arms, mortar, machinegun, and RPG fire. Once the re-supply point was established, Gunnery Sergeant Sargeant was hit. Lance Corporals Hoffman and Triplett quickly pulled the injured Marine from the troop commander's hatch and began to stabilize him. Their immediate actions saved the Marine's life. Once they were able to locate medical assistance, they informed the corpsman about the medical procedures that were already administered, and provided a disposition regarding the Marine's condition. Lance Corporals Hoffman and Triplett had attended the Marine Combat Aidsman Course, and had put their training to effective use. In order to facilitate security as the Marines unloaded the ammunition, each vehicle provided suppressive fire at the enemy. The platoon commander dismounted with three other Marines and moved onto a building rooftop to establish an over-watch position. While in that location, the four Marines were able to kill and suppress the enemy located in the cemetery as they attacked the Marines with rocket propelled grenades, mortars and small arms sniper fire. The mortar fire began to register the location of the rooftop Marines. A volley of three mortars fell on top of the building causing the Marines to displace and relocate two levels lower. From their new vantage point, they were able to continue their over-watch and suppression of the enemy. As the day progressed, the 81mm mortar platoon was tasked with sweeping the area just west of MSR Miami. The AAVs of the Reserve QRF established positions to serve as an over-watch of 81s' movement. As 81s began to sweep into the cemetery, small arms, machinegun, mortars and RPG fires were engaging every unit in the area. The AAVs engaged multiple enemy firing positions utilizing coordinated 40mm grenade and .50-caliber machinegun fires. Once 81s had progressed over 100 meters into the cemetery, the AAVs were again unable to safely

fire into the cemetery without endangering friendly units, so all crewmen and MSSG personnel engaged enemy positions with their M16s.

During the following two days, first section was in GS of the Battalion and served as MSR security from route Favre to route Hartford. All AAVs continued to receive sporadic small arms and mortar fires but were unable to accurately return fires without endangering friendly units.

After completing offensive operations in the cemetery, third platoon returned to conducting ECP and QRF procedures. On August 8th, the platoon was tasked with providing the Army with dismounted infantry and additional support in the cemetery. Third platoon's task was to continuously maintain a section of AAVs in the cemetery to support of the embarked company. During the first twelve hours, Charlie Company was embarked. Bravo Company would then relieve Charlie Company for the next twelve hours.

At 1000 on August 16th, third section departed from FOB Hotel with 3rd Platoon, Company C and the Army's 1-5 Cavalry for the cemetery. The AAVs and embarked Marines and Soldiers were needed to provide security for the Army's tanks. Once in the cemetery, the AAVs followed behind the tanks from phase line to phase line and dismounted the infantry when they halted. One of the dismounted Marines found an IED on a cemetery road, so all of the tracked units executed a pullback. At approximately 2200, third section returned to FOB Hotel. Throughout the day, all of the AAVs received sporadic small arms and mortar fire, but they did not return fire because they could not positively identify the enemy.

First section departed FOB Hotel on August 16th at 1900 with 3rd Platoon, Company B to conduct a linkup with the Army's 2-7 Cavalry at FOB Baker. The Bravo Company Commander was in a HMMWV at the end of the column. Once the linkup with 2-7 Cavalry was complete, they proceeded to the cemetery where the section separated so the embarked Marines could provide security for the Army tanks. The AAV section, and all of the dismounted Marines on Phase Line (PL) Honda, came under sniper fire at 0800 on August 17th. Gunnery Sergeant Wynn was with the company commander for Bravo Company as a liaison for the AAVs. He was attempting to coordinate fires on enemy positions when the sniper fire started. The sniper fire pinned down the company commander, Gunnery Sergeant Darrin Wynn, and the other dismounted Marines behind a cluster of large headstones. Next the enemy began to use mortars to keep the Marines pinned down. Gunnery Sergeant Wynn had Corporal Jeremy Spradlin move vehicle 301 up to the pinned-down Marines for extraction. Once the Marines loaded onto 301, all units withdrew to PL Dodge and returned to their original positions. At 1000, another Army unit relieved the Marines at their location, and first section returned to FOB Hotel.

On the morning of August 17th, second section with 2nd Platoon, Company C, linked with 1-5 Cavalry at FOB Hotel and moved to the cemetery to relieve first section. Second section arrived, dismounted their infantry, and remained in the defense until 2200. There was no enemy contact, but the section did test fire their weapons. Lieutenant Erick Koob accompanied this section to act as a coordinator and liaison

between the AAV platoon, the embarked infantry and the supported Army Unit.

At approximately 1900 that evening, third section, with 2nd Platoon, Company B, again set out with 1-5 Cavalry to the cemetery. The following morning, at about 0100, all positions began to receive accurate mortar fire. One of the Bravo Company Marines was killed and another was seriously injured. After that incident, all units moved further into the cemetery and received sniper and mortar fire. The AAVs provided suppressive fires while the infantry maneuvered within the cemetery. At approximately 0900 that day, third section was relieved and returned to FOB Hotel.

On August 18th, first section embarked 1st Platoon, Company C, to return to the cemetery with 1-5 Cavalry. Once they arrived at the cemetery, 1-5 Cavalry allowed all of first section's AAVs to conduct a test fire of both the M2 .50 Cal and MK-19 machineguns. The section was tasked with providing security for the west flank of PL Dodge and for one tank. Two AAVs, one infantry squad, and one mortar section secured PL Dodge while the other two AAVs pushed into the cemetery. The AAVs would exchange positions several times during the day to allow the Marines some rest. Sporadic small arms, RPG, and mortar fires were directed at all of the AAVs that maneuvered into the cemetery. The AAV platoon commander requested and received a mortar mission that effectively knocked out one enemy mortar section and several enemy personnel.

At 0930 on the 19th, second section, with 3rd Platoon, Company C linked with 1-5 Cavalry at FOB Hotel and moved to the cemetery. Upon arrival, second section and their dismounted infantry supported Team Tank with a route reconnaissance of PL Ford. Lieutenant Erick Koob, Captain Matthew Morrissey and First Sergeant Justin Lehew conducted a route reconnaissance of route Oak, and pushed down to Phase Line Nissan while dismounted. They received several small arms, sniper and mortar fire. Second section provided over-watch for tanks while they conducted their recon. When tanks completed the reconnaissance, second section and their dismounts moved back to PL Dodge under hostile mortar, RPG, and small arms fire, and emplaced a defense on the western end of the cemetery. Second section successfully test fired their M2HB .50 cal and MK-19 in the cemetery. Around 1400, Captain Morrissey and Lieutenant Koob were recalled back to the Combat Operations Center (COC) at FOB Hotel for offensive planning. At approximately 2000, an enemy mortar position was observed in the vicinity of a parking structure west of Imam Ali Mosque. Corporal Sullivan successfully engaged and destroyed the mortar position with the initial burst of his MK-19. The mortar position was destroyed from a distance of over 1500 meters. Corporal Sullivan shot over 100 rounds of MK-19 grenades at the fleeing enemy, and at another building in which the enemy personnel were seeking refuge. PL Dodge did not receive any more mortar fire after the engagement. Second section returned to FOB Hotel at around 2200 after being relieved by another element of 1-5 Cavalry.

On August 20th, second and third sections were assigned to Company A for an attack on a former Iraqi Police station near the Kufa Mosque. Lieutenant Erick Koob controlled the movement while Gunnery Sergeant Darrin Wynn remained behind at FOB Hotel with first section as the QRF. AAV's second and third sections and one section of tanks moved to FOB

Baker to linkup with Company A for the mission. At around 0200, second section, third section, one section of tanks, and Company A departed FOB Baker, transited through FOB Golf's southern gate, and then proceeded east on route Hartford toward Al Kufa. Tanks pushed all the way to the objective to draw fire from the enemy and to get them to expose themselves. The FAC for Company A had an AC-130U Spooky II gunship on station, and would engage targets that were uncovered by the tanks. This worked exceptionally well, and the FAC, through the AC-130U, was able to kill or suppress numerous mortar positions, enemy firing positions, and enemy personnel. Second and third sections maintained their position at PL Andy, one kilometer west of the objective. After the tanks received fire and developed the situation, they called for the world famous Alpha Raiders, along with the AAVs, to proceed to the objective. Upon arrival, both sections received small arms, RPG, and mortar fire from the north and south sides of route Hartford. Second section dismounted their infantry to secure and cordon the Kufa IP station, while third section's infantry entered the IP station and started to clear the objective. Meanwhile, AAVs returned fire on the southern side of route Hartford. One AAV engaged and destroyed a suspected enemy mortar position, while the other engaged enemy personnel on the deck. An injured Marine was brought to the AAVs for evacuation. Unsure as to the extent of the Marine's injuries, Staff Sergeant Rice decided to load the injured Marine and take him to FOB Baker, rather than wait for the medevac track to find the injured Marine. He departed for FOB Baker with the injured Marine and two other AAVs. En route to their battle positions from FOB Baker, two AAVs encountered concertina wire on their starboard side while transiting on route Hartford, just south of the FOB's south gate. Both AAV's were unable to return to the fight. After the objective was cleared and secured, tanks, AAV's, and Company A withdrew and returned to FOB Baker with twenty-nine detainees. The two disabled AAVs had broken their portside final universal joint, and were towed back to FOB Baker. Both AAV sections returned to FOB Hotel at 0930 on August 21st. Private First Class Hill had his right arm caught in the ramp of an AAV as it was rising to close. He was medevaced with a possible broken arm.

The AAV platoon departed FOB Hotel at approximately 2200 on August 24th embarked with Company C for the attack on Battalion Objective 1 at the intersection of Ring Road and route Ash in the Old City of An Najaf. At around 0100, second section unloaded 3rd Platoon, Company C, at the objective. While offloading Charlie Company, second section received enemy mortar, RPG, and small arms fire. Sergeant Delarosa received injuries to the face due to enemy mortar during this operation. After debarking the infantry, second section linked with third section on route Alder and proceeded to FOB Baker to embark Company A. Alpha Company was embarked at approximately 0200 and was transported to route Alder. Once there, they waited to continue on to Battalion Objective 2. Second section carried the first platoon of Alpha Raiders to the fight and debarked them on Ring Road just west of their objective. While offloading the Raiders, an AAV from the section and Staff Sergeant Rice took direct RPG fire. The AAV returned fire with their MK-19. Second section broke contact with the enemy and returned to route Alder. The AAV platoon then returned to FOB Baker to retrieve a downed vehicle that was left there while embarking Company A. They then proceeded to FOB Hotel for maintenance and were ready for any on-call missions. On the evening of the 25th the AAVs returned to

route Adler, southeast of the Old City, in support of the infantry. The next morning on the 26th, third section was tasked as the re-supply and casevac section for Alpha and Charlie Companies. During this time they conducted one re-supply and one casevac mission. On the 27th they returned to the platoon and were in GS of the battalion. The following day the AAVs relocated Alpha Company to a traffic control point on the south central part of the Old City. Later that same day, they embarked them from that point and returned them to FOB Baker. After returning Company A, the AAV platoon returned to FOB Hotel.

The AAV platoon conducted ECP security and performed vehicle maintenance during the remainder of the month of August. They also provided a quick reaction force for the BLT.

The Scout Sniper Platoon of BLT 1/4 participated in combat operations from August 5th to 10th in An Najaf, Iraq as an attachment to Weapons Company. Over the next four days, they continued their combat operations in An Najaf as an attachment to the U.S. Army's 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. For the following three days, they were again utilized as an attachment to Weapons Company as they conducted follow-on combat operations in An Najaf. From the 19th to the 23rd, the Scout Snipers provided internal security for FOB Hotel. The four days after that were spent supporting Company C during combat operations again in An Najaf. On the 28th, the platoon was placed in General Support of the battalion. The Scout Snipers were utilized over the next two days to provide VCP/TCP over-watch in the city of An Najaf. Finally, on August 31st, the Scout Sniper platoon was again providing internal security for FOB Hotel.

During the month of September, The World Famous Alpha Raiders provided military training for the 404th Iraqi National Guard (ING) Battalion in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq. Company A also conducted daily joint patrols with the ING throughout greater Ad Diwaniyah and the Qadisiyah province. The company continuously rotated its platoons through the duties of FOB Echo guard force, and maintained a daily presence at the Joint Coordination Center (JCC). Memorial services were held at FOB Echo for Lance Corporal Alexander Arredondo and Private First Class Nick Skinner; both Marines were killed while engaged in combat operations against the enemy in An Najaf during the month of August.

The month of September was significantly less active than August for the Marines of Company B. Bravo Company resumed a normal presence at the An Najaf Agriculture Center, providing guard for the Provincial Governor of Najaf and the Agriculture Center itself - a key piece of terrain in the city. The company also resumed their Quick Reaction Force (QRF) mission, although the emphasis had shifted to a motorized QRF rather than the mechanized force that was used previously. The company also provided a reinforced rifle platoon to Battery R to augment the FOB Hotel guard.

During the month of September, Major General Natonski, the new 1st Marine Division Commanding General, spoke to the Marines and awarded three Bravo Company Marines with Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals (with Combat Distinguishing Device) for their actions in the Wadi al Salaam (WAS) cemetery in early August. Lieutenant General Sattler, the new I Marine Expeditionary Force Commanding General, also spoke to the Marines at FOB Hotel.

On 12 September, Company B held a memorial service for Sergeant Harvey E. Parkerson III, who was killed on 18 August while fighting in the WAS cemetery. The service was held at FOB Hotel, with nearly 200 Marines in attendance, including Combat Camera Marines who recorded the event.

The Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF), commanded by Captain Ben Pappas, conducted a raid in the Old City of An Najaf on 21 September, during which they captured four of Moqtada al-Sadr's top lieutenants and a huge cache of weapons. Bravo Company's QRF was activated to assist in removing the ordnance from the Old City and transporting it to FOB Duke for destruction. There were four 7-ton trucks completely loaded with weapons, ammunition, and explosives that al-Sadr and his minions were stockpiling. 2nd Platoon of Company B loaded the items on the trucks, transported it to FOB Duke and then unloaded it.

Company B received an enduring mission beginning on 27 September. Every Monday for the foreseeable future, the company would provide security for the MEU's Staff Judge Advocate while he paid solatia to the Iraqi people who had been affected by the fighting in the city. On the 27th, with Weapons Platoon supporting the mission, the payments occurred flawlessly. This set the example for 3rd Platoon to emulate during the first week of October.

On 30 September, those Marines not on post enjoyed a company run at dawn with the BLT Commander, running two laps (about three miles) around the inside of the FOB. Upon completion of the motivational run, LtCol Mayer addressed the Marines to provide them with an idea of what to expect for the upcoming months, as well as to recognize the outstanding performance of several Marines within the company.

Following the climax of combat operations in An Najaf and Al Kufa, Charlie Company began a transition toward SASO in the Najaf province. In the days after the cease-fire, each platoon was tasked with establishing snap Traffic Control Points (TCPs) on the east and west side of the Euphrates River. The Marines of Company C had not conducted any operations across the river before the beginning of September. This new mission afforded the Marines with an opportunity to see a different style of life in Iraq away from the busy cities. These few days, in retrospect, were reported by the Marines as being some of their most enjoyable since their arrival in Iraq. Expecting a mass exodus of enemy fighters and insurgents, the company was relieved to find that most people were just happy to be peacefully going about their daily life.

Concurrent with the cessation of combat operations in An Najaf was Charlie Company's relocation to FOB Baker. Their new location was adjacent to the 405th ING battalion of An Najaf, which facilitated their new role as the primary training cadre for the burgeoning Iraqi military unit. The El Salvadoran soldiers that were providing base security for FOB Baker departed the redoubt on the 7th, so Company C assumed the additional duty of guarding the base. Lieutenant Christopher Schickling became the FOB guard officer and for the next week he oversaw the changes and improvements to the guard plan. 1st Platoon was tasked with training the ING battalion platoon by platoon.

With a six-week schedule comprising everything from basic drill and military discipline to MOUT basics, the month passed quickly as ING soldiers cycled through the training. Lieutenants Moulton and Swihart were entrusted with the training of ING officers; they subjected the 405th's leadership to a complete gamut of rigorous training.

Training the ING proved to be a learning experience for all the Marines involved. Short-tempered Marines soon learned self-restraint and those who tried to maintain an overly stern countenance discovered the universal appeal of well-timed humor. Seeing the soldiers of the ING transformed from a group of individuals who did not know how to properly handle their weapons into a confident fighting unit, proudly polishing their military skills, provided a promising glimpse of what the Iraqi military might become in the future. In the following weeks, these men will, many for the first time, have a chance to fire their rifles and learn marksmanship skills. The Iraqi soldiers of the 405th may not be fully trained and ready for employment by the end of September, but the unit has shown it is capable of providing more of what Iraq needs, a determination to improve.

For many of the Marines of Company C, September will be remembered as the aftermath of a passing storm, as men tell stories of the fury they just endured and look forward to better times derived from calm and stability. Quickly transitioning from full-scale combat operations to low-key SASO training operations was a difficult culture shock for some of the Marines, but for most of the men of Company C, whether they stood guard or trained ING soldiers, it was a much appreciated relief. In the following month, Charlie company will continue its missions of training the ING, patrolling, providing convoy security, and conducting civil affairs projects. The Marines are also eagerly awaiting their relocation to FOB Hotel and their reunion with the rest of battalion.

Although major combat operations ceased for BLT 1/4 on 27 August, Combined Anti Armor Team (CAAT) B continued the fight against the Muqtada Militia (MM) during the month of September. At midnight on 6 September, CAAT B fought alongside the Iraqi Police (IP) to defeat remaining MM fighters who were located at the intersection of Routes Miami and Brady. The engagement lasted approximately thirty minutes. During the fight Lance Corporal Richard Boulerice, a M240G gunner, engaged two enemy positions that were located on the second story of two different houses on the south side of Route Brady. The Marines in Sergeant Eric Backus and Corporal Steven Hilbert's vehicles engaged these same positions and a few others after receiving steady small arms fire during the engagement. Lieutenant Scott Cuomo, ordered his CAAT B platoon to depart the area after the IPs had cleared the alleys and identified the houses where the MM were located. The IPs did not search the houses because they were ordered by the local Iraqi authorities to wait for a search warrant.

At 1105 on 9 September 2004, while escorting a civilian convoy of KBR trucks from CSC Scania to FOB Hotel, the convoy's advanced guard (1st Section, CAAT B) came under a simultaneous remote-controlled improvised explosive device (RCIED) and small arms fire (SAF) ambush while traveling along ASR Orlando in Ad Diwaniyah. The RCIED consisted of at least one 82mm mortar round and detonated less than ten meters from Corporal Ashley's vehicle, and approximately seventy meters in

front of the platoon commander Lieutenant Cuomo. Shrapnel from the RCIED penetrated Corporal Ashley's tire and the TOW missile that was in the tube. The vehicle's armor and Corporal Christopher Vallejos' Oakley sunglasses stopped other pieces of shrapnel from seriously wounding any of the Marines that were in the vehicle. The vehicle's TOW/M249 gunner, Lance Corporal Hill, received a slight concussion from the incident, but stayed in the fight despite his injury. As the smoke cleared from the blast, M2 .50 cal gunner Corporal Anthony Mazzola identified three individuals in the vicinity of a parked car and behind a dirt berm and shrubs less than thirty meters from where the RCIED detonated. He immediately engaged them; he ultimately killed one after multiple .50 cal rounds tore off his legs and blew a hole through his stomach, and severely wounded the other two. After eliminating any further threat from the suspected RCIED planters/detonators, Lieutenant Michael Mok, Corporal Anthony Mazzola, Corporal Gregory Agron, Lance Corporal Guillermo Anaya, Lance Corporal Richard Boulerice, and Lance Corporal William Ritchie suppressed an enemy SAF position that was located approximately 200 meters north of ASR Orlando behind an irrigation ditch. At the same time, Corporal Ashley moved his vehicle through the kill zone and began taking SAF from buildings approximately 400 meters south of ASR Orlando. Corporal Ashley, Corporal Vallejos, and Lance Corporal Hill suppressed this enemy position. In the middle of the engagement Sergeant David Stegall's vehicle linked up with the IPs and brought them to the site of the RCIED blast. There they swept the area and picked up the three individuals that Corporal Anthony Mazzola had engaged and brought them to the Ad Diwaniyah Hospital.

After securing the site and linking up with a QRF platoon from Company A and an Iraqi National Guard (ING) platoon, CAAT B vehicles commanded by Gunnery Sergeant Dennis Collins, Sergeant David Stegall, and Corporal Carl Welch, along with a HET detachment, departed to the Ad Diwaniyah Hospital to ensure that the three wounded individuals did not disappear. After finding MM propaganda, over \$240 in U.S. currency, a stack of Iraqi dinar, a cell phone, and identification cards from Amarah with the three individuals, they were assessed to be MM fighters from Amarah, a city east of Ad Diwaniyah and heavily influenced by al-Sadr and Iran.

In addition to these two engagements, CAAT B conducted over sixty security patrols and escorted more than ten convoys throughout the month. The highlight of the convoy escort missions was securing seventy-five kilometers of MSR Tampa for a brigade from the Republic of Korea. During the three days that CAAT B executed this mission, the Marines had the opportunity to interact with coalition forces from South Korea, England, Poland, Italy, and Latvia. On 16 September, CAAT B escorted an Iraqi National Guard Infantry Battalion from Ad Diwaniyah back to its FOB in Baghdad. While in Baghdad, CAAT B stopped at Camp Victory in order to have a Blue Force Tracker and Warlock system fixed. During a security patrol on 20 September, CAAT B escorted two detainees from Fallujah from the JCC to FOB Duke. The last highlight of the month was Corporal Vanbuskirk being selected for BOOST, where he will attend a three-month preparatory course prior to being accepted into the MECEP officer-commissioning program.

The 81mm mortar platoon (81s) was placed on guard at FOB Duke for the month of September. Upon assuming the guard, the 81mm mortar platoon found numerous deficiencies in the guard rotation, the

placement of guard posts and the guard mount procedures, and no individual in charge of the guard. All deficiencies were corrected, the posts were improved and made more defensible, a chain of command was put in place and the rotation was improved. The platoon also began to run perimeter patrols to the outlying civilian guarded posts on the western edge of camp. No major incidents occurred throughout the month.

Lieutenant Michael Borneo served as the officer-in-charge and convoy commander for the MEU's Warlock training conducted in Camp Victory, Iraq from 4 to 8 September. The Warlock system is a counter IED jamming device. The five-day training and installation package provided instruction for more than thirty Marines from the 11th MEU on proper Warlock employment. Six Marines from CAAT A received the training.

CAAT A conducted daily local security and civil affairs (CA) patrols in and around the Najaf and Qadisiyah provinces. During the month they assessed the condition of over fifty schools that will be prioritized for repair. They also assessed the condition of local sewage, water, electricity, telephone, police and fire stations, and government buildings, and observed the local sentiment toward the coalition. Each CAAT A section was assigned a specific outlying town to conduct CA missions. 1st section was assigned Manadra or Abu Sukahr and 2nd Section was assigned Al Faysaliyah, both south of An Najaf. They met with the town leaders and discussed their problems and prioritized local projects. Afterward, local contractors were solicited for estimates to complete the work. The Marines and the coalition are committed to pursuing these efforts to their fruition.

From 20 to 23 September CAAT A took part in a joint raid of Muqtada al-Sadr's offices in the Old City of An Najaf. The objective was located within fifty meters of the extremely politically sensitive Imam Ali Shrine. The raid included an assault force of Marine Force Reconnaissance and Army Special Forces with their Iraqi counterparts, a cordon force of CAAT A and Trailer Platoon, a QRF of LAR, and 7-ton vehicle support from 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company. After a day of planning and two mission "no-go" periods, the mission was brilliantly and professionally executed. During the raid, the coalition forces captured four of al-Sadr's key lieutenants, thirty other militiamen, over 100 RPG launchers, 400 AK-47s, mines, grenades, mortar and machinegun ammunition, and a significant amount of military intelligence. In total, it took three 7-ton vehicles to transport all of the captured enemy equipment. All of this was accomplished without a shot being fired. The element of surprise allowed the raid force to catch the enemy unprepared, and the raid force's violence of action facilitated their exploitation of the site.

The LAR platoon conducted daily local security patrols of An Najaf and Al Kufa from 1 to 4 September. On 3 September, they conducted a direct action (DA) mission in support of the Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF) in An Najaf. At approximately 0400 LAR established an over-watch and an outer cordon south of FOB Hotel on the objective while MSPF conducted the DA hit on a suspected Mahdi Militia weapons supplier. The hit was soon declared a "dry hole", as there was no weapons or weapons supplier at the location. Three days later, LAR conducted a media escort. They provided vehicle security and a

Personnel Security Detachment (PSD) for American and Iraqi press members through various locations within An Najaf to include the Fast Reaction Unit Police station, the governor's compound, and various schools in the area. An identical media escort mission was completed on 13 September.

On 20 September the LAR again supported the MSPF during a raid in Old City of An Najaf. At 0100 they escorted two 7-ton vehicles to the vicinity of the Imam Ali mosque to support the MSPF raid. From 0200 to 0700 they provided over-watch and local security for the MSPF, Other Defense Agencies (ODA), and Iraqi Specialized Special Forces (ISSF). This raid was very successful; the raid force captured a large amount of enemy weapons and munitions. Ten days later, the LAR platoon conducted another media escort that was the same as the ones conducted on 6 and 13 September. Throughout the month of September, the LAR platoon conducted unit training to include: daily weapon manipulation, crew-level gunnery, table 1-5 gunnery, basic scout engineering tasks and satellite patrolling.

Battery R continued its mission of guarding FOB Hotel during September. It also continued its enduring artillery mission of continuously maintaining the capability to provide artillery fire. During the first part of the month, Company B assisted the battery with its guard mission. This allowed the battery to assume the additional responsibility of providing security escort for civil affairs missions. The daily civil affairs patrols were conducted throughout the month.

The combat engineer platoon began September by recognizing the newly promoted Sergeant Marin, Corporal Byxbee, and Lance Corporal Lupperger. They also returned to a normal weekly training schedule that included daily physical training, NCO PME, and weekly classes. Additionally, Cpl Ashdown attended an Explosive Hazard Awareness Training (EHAT) course from 4 to 6 September. The tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) he learned were then shared with the rest of the platoon. The Marines of 1st squad continued to support Company A while 2nd, 3rd, and 4th squads remained in general support (GS) of the BLT during the month. Primary missions for the engineers included general construction in support of FOB Hotel, the construction of TCP 3, and continued fortification and force protection of FOB Hotel. Projects continued to be tracked on the Engineering Priority of Work Project Worksheet.

Marines are renowned for espousing the motto that "every Marine is a rifleman". That philosophy was embodied by the tank platoon in September as they parked their armor and conducted HMMWV motorize patrols throughout the Najaf Area of Operation (AO). The platoon, attached with the similarly motorized vice mechanized AAV platoon, traveled to Babylon, FOB Echo, and FOB Duke while conducting civil affairs (CA) patrols. The platoon also conducted tank maintenance and tank crew gunnery skills tests in preparations for tank gunnery.

The month began for the tankers with the promotion of Eric Lopez to Sergeant and Matthew Hendges to Corporal. Lieutenant Russell Thomas requested the use of two extra HMMWVs and, along with the assistance of the AAV platoon, the tank platoon began making daily patrols throughout the cities of Al Kufa and An Najaf. Some patrols were strictly for reconnaissance purposes but some were for public relations. On several

patrols the platoon escorted Civil Affairs (CA) personnel to check on nearby hospitals, schools, government buildings, and future sites for building health clinics. Gunnery Sergeant Michael Philley, and Corporals Kent Medlin, Scott Twente, and Lester Bock celebrated getting another year older and that much wiser. There was a noticeable difference in the attitude of the Iraqi residents. Local citizens were out, getting back into their regular routines while children and elders waved and smiled. Maintenance on the tanks continued in preparation for the worst as Lieutenant Thomas made regularly requested to have the platoon utilized in the northern city of Fallujah.

During the month of September, upon completion of August's offensive operations, 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion conducted the consequence management operations that were required as a result of the combat operations that occurred in the vicinity of An Najaf and Al Kufa. The Recon Marines engaged the local government and population in reconstruction and clean-up efforts in order to restore their quality of life, and reestablish commercial activity. They also continued their presence patrols to provide stability within An Najaf and Al Kufa area. Throughout September the reconnaissance platoon conducted over eighty-five patrols and civil affair projects in support of 11th MEU consequence management operations.

At the beginning of the month Recon was employed as a motorized platoon to assist in assessing damage that was done during August's fighting. The platoon established a template that provided the required information needed by the Iraqi Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO/11th MEU C.A.) for prioritizing CA projects to receive funding prior to the new fiscal year. These new missions and assignments once again proved that the Marines within the platoon were capable of adapting to any mission in a continuously changing combat environment. The platoon conducted sixteen school assessments, five neighborhood assessments, four fire station assessments, and assessed multiple orphanages and day care facilities. Additionally, the platoon continued its enduring missions of conducting area/zone reconnaissance (including counter-mortar patrols), route recon patrols, counter-IED sweeps, weapons for cash program/UXO disposal, detainee/release missions, site survey (Border Patrol), convoy security, and security patrols of key Iraq infrastructure throughout Najaf.

Corporal Hattar was recognized for his superb performance of 21 July 2004, and was awarded the Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal with the Combat Distinguishing Device. Corporal Schon was nominated for a Meritorious Combat Promotion to sergeant. First Marine Division provided the Battalion Landing Team with only one meritorious sergeant promotion for the entire battalion. Due to keen competition, Corporal Schon placed second overall within the Battalion Landing Team and distinguished himself as a true combat leader.

The month of September for the AAV platoon consisted of maintaining the assault amphibian vehicles with constant PMCS and preventive maintenance. The platoon was tasked with three missions; one section to provide a quick reactionary force (QRF), a second section with dismounted infantry to augment the QRF section, and a third motorized section to operate in armored HMMWVs. The platoon conducted unit training by firing their weapon systems and other small

arms along the FOB Hotel escarpment. They verified the usability and serviceability of the .50 caliber machinegun and MK-19 automatic grenade launcher. Some problems with two of the MK-19s and one .50cal were identified and submitted to higher headquarters for corrections.

The motorized section lead by Lieutenant Erick Koob and Staff Sergeant Joseph Krause conducted several security patrols, several escort and PSD missions, plus anti-VBIED patrols and anti-RPG patrols. On many occasions the section was tasked with providing convoy escort to Al Hilla, Babylon and other forward operating bases in Iraq. Also of note, they visited several towns in order to identify civil affairs requirements. To the local people they provided medical attention and supplies, food, water, pens and paper, and soccer balls to the school children. The AAV platoon Marines found the experience to be very rewarding.

The AAV Marines were very busy throughout the month with the upkeep of their vehicles while awaiting their next mission. Once again Gunnery Sergeant Darrin Wynn and the section leaders Staff Sergeant Joseph Rice, Staff Sergeant Joseph Krause, and Sergeant Thomas reviewed the platoon in search of the AAV of the month. The hard work and dedication of the crewmembers was rewarded with September's AAV of the month award going to vehicles 3E313 and 3E314 (also known as the AAVC-7). Because of their superior performance, it was impossible to determine exactly which vehicle was better than the other so both vehicles were awarded with AAV of the month. Sergeant Delarosa and Cpl Triplett were the Marines responsible for the hard work and were in receipt of the award.

The Scout Sniper Platoon provided internal security for FOB Hotel while additionally providing over-watch and "guardian angel" during the solatia payments occurring at the Agricultural Center in An Najaf every Monday of the month. The platoon also provided VCP/TCP over-watch for Bravo Company in support of the Army's screening process of new Iraqi Police (IP) recruits. The platoon began its seven-week training course for Marines who will be attending Scout Sniper School in January 2005. The course at Babylon trained Marines in all areas pertinent to a sniper platoon to include shooting and stalking. Through the duration of September, the sniper platoon continued to provide internal security for FOB Hotel as well as support other missions for the battalion.

Alpha company continued its guard duties, ING training, JCC operations, and QRF rotation throughout the month of October. Improvements continued to be made at the 404th ING compound through the funding and hard work of the Marines. On 12 October the 404th ING battalion conducted their first basic training graduation ceremony. Iraqi and coalition VIPs from around the country flocked to this historic event. The Iraqi Prime Minister and several Iraqi and coalition general officers were in attendance. The city of Ad Diwaniyah remained peaceful and quiet throughout the month, belying the volatile state of many other provinces around the country.

The month of October began for Company B with the promotion of two stellar Non-Commissioned Officers, Connor Gwynn and Joshua Morris, to the rank of Sergeant. The remainder of the day was business as usual with one platoon providing security at the Najaf Provincial Governor's compound, another platoon augmenting Battery R for FOB Hotel

security, and the other platoon providing a Provincial Quick-Reaction Force based at FOB Hotel.

The following day, 3rd Platoon was tasked with providing security for an Iraqi Police (IP) recruit screening at FOB Baker. The security detail consisted of establishing a vehicle checkpoint to ensure the civilian vehicles of the IP candidates were not bringing Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) or other weapons into the FOB. Upon completing this task and closing the checkpoint, a single mortar round landed in the midst of their checkpoint. Nobody was wounded in the attack, and 3rd Platoon spent the next ninety minutes scouring the town searching for the mortar's possible launch site.

On 3 October, 3rd Platoon, as the Quick Reaction Force (QRF), staged at Camp David, the U.S. Special Forces camp south of An Najaf, in order to support an MSPF raid. They were later deemed unnecessary in support of the raid, and the following morning they moved directly to the Government Information Center to support solatia payments. Three days later, one squad was tasked with augmenting the battalion commander's personal security detail (PSD) as they traveled through Al Kufa to provide the townspeople information about solatia payments. Later in the month, 3rd Platoon (still the QRF) used the FOB Hotel escarpment to conduct a small arms shoot.

Company B was again providing security for solatia payments at the Government Information Center on 11 October. 1st Platoon and Weapons Platoon were tasked with the event this time. Two days later another squad joined the PSD in Al Kufa, and the QRF conducted another small arms shoot. The following week began as the previous, with 1st, 3rd, and weapons platoons providing security for the solatia payments. The QRF conducted another small arms shoot, and the only change was that Bravo Company did not receive a task to support the PSD during the week.

A Warning Order to relocate from An Najaf to Abu Ghraib Prison and relieve Company L, 3rd battalion, 1st Marines was received by Bravo Company on October 20th. Lima Company was being replaced to allow them to rejoin their battalion for the upcoming flight in Fallujah. After several delays, Task Force (TF) Blackhorse (consisting of Company B(-)(Rein), a section of CAAT A, a sniper team, and an EOD team) finally departed on 27 October, arriving at the prison early on the morning of the 28th. TF Blackhorse immediately began their turnover with Company L, and started patrolling the streets of Khandari and Nassar Wa al-Salaam outside the prison. The realization for Bravo Company that their new area of operation (AO) was completely different than the mostly peaceful city of An Najaf had become was brought to light on October 30th. On that day, Marines of Company B, 1st battalion, 3rd Marines were operating just to the south of the prison, and were attacked by a Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED). The SVBIED targeted a 7-ton MTRV, killing eight and wounded ten of the Marines in the vehicle.

Halloween day saw the completion of the transfer of authority from Lima Company 3/1 to Bravo Company 1/4; Company B had now officially assumed control of the battlespace outside the prison. As Company L was departing, they were attacked with an IED, wounding four

Marines, and again reminding Company B of what they could expect during the upcoming month.

As daily life in Najaf continued its return to normalcy, the Marines of Company C continued their security patrols, solatia payments, and training of the local 405th ING battalion. Recovering from the violence of August, the economy of the city rebounded swiftly as people returned to work and as consumers began spending. Operating from FOB Baker/Golf, half of the company was needed to simply guard the base. Despite this inconvenience, the FOB proved to be invaluable for training the ING. 1st Platoon was the first element tasked with training the battalion in the basics of military skills. Twice a day for three hours per session, the Marines focused on turning a group of men without any military experience into something the city could be proud of. Halfway through October, this task was handed over to 3rd Platoon as the elements of the company rotated their assignments.

Coinciding with this shift in ING training was the closure of FOB Baker. Because of the agreement to have less US presence in the center of the city, all 140 Marines of Charlie Company were relocated to FOB Hotel. Now living in small trailers, the Marines of 1st, 2nd, and Weapons platoon augmented the guard at FOB Hotel to alleviate Romeo Battery's staffing requirements. Also involved in the guard rotation was the QRF for the city of An Najaf.

October, although uneventful in comparison with past months, saw many changes in the battalion and company. With the FOB relocation and the shuffling of duties, life for the company seemed to settle into a predictable pace. Also during October came the news that the battalion was to extend for an additional 60-90 days past their original seven month commitment, thus making BLT 1/4 the longest serving Marine unit in Iraq; the Marines would now have to spend nine months away from their families. To indemnify the Marines, the dining facility was decorated for Halloween.

The 81mm mortar platoon continued to guard FOB Duke during October. The platoon was in charge of all post-standers from five different units totaling 104 personnel every twenty-four hours. They were also responsible for all of the guard billets to include Corporal of the Guard (COG), Sergeant of the Guard (SOG), Guard Chief and Guard Officer. The platoon continued to train on a daily basis by conducting small weapons manipulation drills and mortar gun drills.

CAAT A conducted two four-hour patrols every day in October to help secure and stabilize Najaf. The patrols were usually uneventful and the Marines were greeted by mostly benign townspeople. The CAAT platoon provided convoy escort support to the civilian contracted vehicles used during the closing of FOB Baker in Al Kufa and relocation to FOB Hotel in An Najaf. Escort missions dominated CAAT A's operational tasking. The platoon was involved in escort missions to Scania, and five separate trips to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). All of the escort missions were executed without incident.

The platoon conducted numerous live-fire exercises during the month of October. Every Wednesday CAAT A performed immediate action (IA) drills encompassing combat shooting techniques and other weapons handling skills. The Marines of CAAT A also practiced weapon failure

drills, and magazine reloading during both day and night and both with optics and without. Completing a "point man" course training range was the pinnacle of the live fire training.

On the 27th of October, 1st section from CAAT A was tasked with supporting Company B in operation Phantom Fury. They were specifically assigned with providing main supply route (MSR) security and providing a "show of force" presence patrol in and around Abu Grahib.

October was another rewarding and busy month for the Marines of CAAT B. The platoon continued its enduring mission of conducting two daily security patrols that encompassed An Najaf, Al Kufa, and many of the smaller farming communities on the outskirts of the city. The Marines were continually amazed by the progress that was made in An Najaf and Al Kufa since they first arrived there in late July. The Marines all agreed, based on their experiences escorting convoys throughout most of southern, central, and western Iraq, that Najaf province has undoubtedly become the most stable, pro-coalition, and peaceful city in Iraq.

Enabling the platoon's daily interaction with the Iraqi people, CAAT B was often tasked to conduct civil affairs patrols, convoy escort, external security, and personal security detail missions throughout the country. On 5 October, Lieutenant Scott Cuomo and 1st Section went to Ash Shamiyah and met with the town's leaders. During the course of the meeting, the mayor identified multiple schools and a medical clinic that he wanted the coalition to help rebuild. Gunnery Sergeant Dennis Collins and 2nd Section conducted an identical mission in Mahniwiyah the following day. Once the projects were identified, Lieutenant Cuomo and Gunnery Sergeant Collins worked with Lieutenant Flinn, the BLT's Civil Affairs officer, in order to have funds allocated and work started on the schools, medical, and veterinary clinics in both towns.

On 9 October, Lieutenant Cuomo took 2nd and 3rd sections, commanded by Sergeants Eric Backus and David Stegall respectively, to Ar Ramadi in order to provide security for ten candidates of the Iraqi Police Academy. After escorting the prospective Iraqi policemen for over five hours to Camp Ramadi, the Iraqis refused to get off the bus and attend the course because the other 190 Iraqis in the course were Sunni Muslims from Ramadi and Fallujah. The ten Iraqis from Najaf were Shite Muslims and they wanted nothing to do with the Sunni Muslims in Ramadi; they didn't even want to be near them. After trying unsuccessfully for eight hours to convince the Iraqis to attend the course, CAAT B escorted the Iraqis back to Najaf later the same evening.

Staff Sergeant Gerald Mays, Corporal Gregory Agron, and Lance Corporal Haney used the knowledge that they gained graduating from CJTF-7's Explosive, Hazards, and Awareness Training (EHAT) course to teach the platoon about the types of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) being employed in Iraq. They also described the enemy's Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) in employing the devices. Throughout the month, these Marines continued training and evaluating CAAT B's Marines. The training proved to be invaluable on numerous occasions in saving the lives of the platoon's Marines.

Lieutenant Cuomo took 1st and 3rd Section to Ad Diwaniyah to provide external security for an Iraqi National Guard (ING) graduation ceremony on the 12th. Iraqi interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and Lieutenant General David Petraeus were in attendance at the graduation. The ceremony was a resounding success. On the return trip to An Najaf after the graduation, CAAT B escorted the 11th MEU (SOC) commanding officer, Colonel Anthony Haslam and the BLT 1/4 commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Mayer to Shamiyah and Mahniwiyah. There the two important leaders reviewed the local project requests and approved funding for them.

On the 14th, all three sections of CAAT B escorted a KBR convoy to Camp Babylon. While in Babylon, Cpl William Stoffers re-enlisted in the ancient ruins. This was the first of five re-enlistments for the platoon in October. Later in the month, Sergeant Christopher Ashley and Corporals Mazzola, Ralph Jaojoco and Justin Stover all reaffirmed their commitment to the defense of our great nation for at least four more years. Another KBR convoy escort was conducted to Camp Echo in Ad Diwaniyah on 17 October. On the 30th, Gunnery Sergeant Dennis Collins and 1st Section provided security for the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq as he traveled throughout An Najaf and Al Kufa.

Throughout the month of October, the Light Armor Reconnaissance (LAR) platoon conducted daily local security patrols of An Najaf and Al Kufa. On the 4th, LAR supported a Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF) direct action (DA) mission in town of Fasiliyah. LAR provided navigation and forward reconnaissance during the movement to the target and established over watch positions on the objective. The raid force captured a High Value Target (HVT) and his cell phone that he had been using to coordinate insurgent operations.

One week later LAR was providing a security escort for media personnel. They provided vehicle security and PSD escorts for American and Iraqi press in various locations within Najaf to include the Fast Reaction Unit Police station, Ring Road, the Governors Compound, and several schools in the area.

On 23 October the platoon provided security for MEU embark assets as they facilitated the delivery of ballots for the upcoming Iraqi election. From 0800 to 1800 LAR maintained a low profile and established over watch positions in the vicinity of the An Najaf airfield for the purpose of providing security to the MEU personnel and forklift.

LAR provided a security escort for media personnel again on the 28th during the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister's visit to An Najaf. They provided vehicle security and PSD escorts for Iraqi press in various locations within Najaf to include Ring Road, the Governors Compound, and several schools in the area.

Throughout the month of September, the LAR platoon conducted unit training to include: daily weapon manipulation, Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) training, traffic control point (TCP) rehearsals, and light armor vehicle (LAV) crew cross-training.

Throughout the month of October, Battery R continued its mission of guarding FOB Hotel. It also continued its artillery mission,

maintaining the capability to provide artillery fire. The daily civil affairs (CA) security missions that Romeo Battery augmented also continued throughout the month. The CA patrols were completed without encountering hostility from insurgent personnel, and there were no major accidents or mishaps.

The Combat Engineers were busy throughout the month. 1st Squad was attached to Company A, and located at FOB Echo in Ad Diwaniyah. They were instrumental in establishing the Iraqi National Guard training compound located just outside FOB Echo's south gate. They also constructed numerous mission essential structures to include the Physical Fitness Course.

At FOB Hotel, the platoon's 2nd, 3rd, and 4th squads spearheaded the improvements to the base, completing numerous projects to enhance security and increase the quality of life for the Marines. In addition, the engineers improved the security of An Najaf by removing abandoned vehicles and other potential IED sites.

The tank platoon began the month of October by recognizing Jeremy Wiley's promotion to Corporal. After the promotion ceremony, it was back to business with daily motorized-patrols through the cities of Al Kufa and An Najaf. The patrols had two main objectives; to insure that there were no signs of further insurgent activity such as emplacing roadside IED's, and to spread good will by mingling with the local people. During a few of these patrols the tank platoon was fortunate enough to be able to brighten the faces of a few students by visiting local schools and donating soccer balls. The children and teachers were very excited to receive the gifts and it also strengthened the relationship between the U.S. Military and local citizens.

Corporal Medlin was chosen to represent the platoon for the fourth NCO of the Quarter Board held on October 15th. Corporal Medlin competed against seven other Marines from throughout the BLT and was the overall choice for NCO of the quarter to represent BLT 1/4. This selection qualified Corporal Medlin to compete for the only Sergeant quota for the 11th MEU. On October 22nd, the announcement was made that Corporal Medlin was the Marine chosen by the 11th MEU and would receive the quota for meritorious promotion to Sergeant effective November 2nd, 2004. At the end of the month the platoon commander, Lieutenant Russell Thomas, announced that the tank platoon had been afforded the opportunity to participate in Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah and the preparations for travel commenced.

During the month of October, 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion continued the consequence management operations throughout An Najaf and Abbasiya. Recon platoon continually engaged the local government to restore or establish some quality of life, and continued their presence patrols to provide and maintain stability within the An Najaf and Al Kufa area. Throughout the month, the reconnaissance platoon continued moving forward on civil affairs projects in support of the 11th MEU consequence management operations. Also, the platoon had cumulatively conducted over 120 patrols since arriving in country.

The Battalion Landing Team (BLT) and the 11th MEU assigned a myriad of missions to the Recon platoon. Recon conducted every type of

mission that they were given to include: they checked the status of the contracted Civil Affairs work to maintain the MEU standards for work being completed, provided security escort for KBR convoys to Babylon, confirmed the operational status of gas stations within the An Najaf and Al Kufa areas, and provided security for the Civil Affairs General and for solatia assessments. Additionally, the platoon continued one of its enduring missions of conducting area and zone reconnaissance to include counter-mortar patrols, route recon patrols, counter-IED sweeps, detainee/release missions, convoy security, and security patrols of key Iraqi infrastructure throughout Najaf. The platoon adapted once again to the ever-changing combat environment and proved to be a universal asset to the 11th MEU (SOC).

The reconnaissance platoon had a story written about them concerning their participation in the MEU civil affairs projects entitled "11th MEU Recon out in open in Iraq". The story was featured on the official USMC website. Congratulations were in order for Ryan Evans and Joshua Smith; both of the Marines were promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant. Corporal Schon was nominated for the Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) of the quarter board to represent the reconnaissance platoon. Corporal Schon represented the platoon well with his superb results, but due to the keen competition, he did not win the board.

Despite their constant tasking, the reconnaissance platoon still had time to conduct a two-week pre-dive course to prepare its Marines for the U.S. Marine Corps Combatant Dive School in Panama City, Florida. Selectees from the platoon would attend the course upon their completion of the 11th MEU deployment. The pre-dive course consisted of dive medicine & physics, charting, pre/post dive procedures on the open circuit and LAR V (MK-25 Mod 2) closed circuit re-breather. The platoon's training was not limited to just the pre-dive course, it also focused on live-fire marksmanship sustainment training, small unit leadership training, PMEs, and physical training. To close out the month of October, a few members of the platoon decided to dress up in costumes and go trick-or-treating throughout FOB Duke. The amount of treats that they received should last until their departure from Iraq.

The month of October for AAVs consisted of maintaining the assault amphibian vehicles with constant PMCS and preventive maintenance. The platoon continued to provide support for three missions. One section provided a quick reactionary force (QRF), another section with dismounted infantrymen augmented the QRF section, and a third section was tasked with providing a motorized section in armored HMMWVs. The platoon went out to the FOB Hotel escarpment and was able to shoot 12-gauge shotguns, AT-4s, 9mm pistols and M16 rifles. The four Marines that shot the AT-4s were Lance Corporals Adler, Parfitt, Faltinsky and Howard. Lance Corporal Howard had a direct hit of the target and proved that the 1833 MOS Marines were just a little better than the 2141 MOS Marines in shooting the AT-4 that day. Every member of the platoon enjoyed shooting the 12-gauge shotgun. In addition to shooting the shotgun they were familiarized with the nomenclature and procedures for handling the weapon. Many of the men were surprised by the powerful re-coil from the shotgun.

The motorized section of the AAV platoon continued to conducted many security patrols, escort and PSD missions, and anti-VBIED and

anti-RPG patrols. On several occasions the section was tasked with escorting KBR truck convoys to Babylon and other forward operating bases in Iraq. They also visited several schools to observe the completion of reconstruction projects and provided security for Lieutenant Toby Flinn who supervised the contractor's work and progress. Throughout the month, the Marines were very busy with the upkeep of their vehicles while awaiting their next mission and possible re-deployment elsewhere. On Halloween, the Marines showed their spirit by displaying decorations while some even dressed in costume.

The scout sniper platoon continued to provide internal security for FOB Hotel while providing over watch and "guardian angel" during the solatia payments at the Agricultural Center every Monday. On the 5th of October, the platoon departed for Babylon to conduct a five-day "stalking" training package for the Marines departing for Scout Sniper School. Training included classes on field skills as well as practical application at a forward operating base manned by Polish troops. On the 23rd and 24th, the sniper platoon, along with the AAV platoon, was able to conduct a shooting package at the escarpment of FOB Hotel. On the 25th, three sniper teams departed for Ramadi to assist 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment in combat operations. While operating out of Hurricane Point and Snake Pit, Lance Corporal Douglas Brown took a shot at 633 yards with zero percent illumination. An insurgent was emplacing an IED on Route Michigan and was undetected until his partner stepped on the brakes of the accomplice's vehicle. Lance Corporal Brown was able to range the distance and take the shot, killing the insurgent and resulting in a secondary effect as the IED exploded in place. The sniper platoon continued to support 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment throughout the remainder of October.

In November, the world famous Alpha Raiders transferred their authority of Forward Operating Base Echo in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq to Polish and Bulgarian forces. Alpha Company delivered and distributed the remaining toys that were donated to "Operation Orphan", a toy drive started by the Raiders in late September. Turnover with the Polish and Bulgarian Forces consisted of familiarizing them with FOB Echo, conducting joint patrols in the area of operation, assuming the duties as the guard force and Joint Coordination Center officer, and reviewing the Iraqi National Guard training plans. By the end of the month when Alpha Company departed Ad Diwaniyah, the improvements and lasting impression left on the city, FOB, and 404th ING Battalion was clearly evident. Alpha Company relocated to FOB Duke, in An Najaf, Iraq.

November 1st was a busy day in Bravo Company's new area of operations surrounding Abu Ghraib Prison. It began with the promotion of three Lance Corporals to Corporal: Corporals Perez, Humphrey, and Midgley proudly joined the NCO ranks. Blackhorse units conducted thirteen patrols, including MSR security patrols, counter-IED patrols, vehicle checkpoints, and EOD escort missions. One IED was discovered and detonated by EOD. Task Force Blackhorse includes Company B, CAAT A, a BLT sniper team, an EOD team from MSSG-11, and one THT soldier.

On 2 November, there was a coordinated IED/VBIED/SAF attack on Abu Ghraib Prison and on a passing convoy. The IED was intended to stop the convoy, and the VBIED was intended to attack the convoy once it stopped. At the same time, insurgents commenced firing at the prison from all sides, probably in an effort to distract the Marines in

the guard towers (from Battery E, 2nd Battalion 10th Marines) from the IED attack. A Civil Affairs Marine who happened to be at the prison's entry control point noticed the driver of a car firing an AK-47 at the prison as he drove slowly towards the convoy; the Marine shot and killed the driver with his M-16. Less than twenty minutes later, Blackhorse elements departed the prison, accompanying Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines on a raid against the insurgents located at the Nassar Wa al Salaam City Council building. As they passed a parked car, a young girl pointed at the car, saying "bomb." Blackhorse EOD was dispatched, and discovered that the car contained thirty to forty 155mm rounds (nearly 500 pounds of explosives) and conducted a controlled detonation of the intended VBIED. Due to the attack, Blackhorse was only able to conduct six patrols throughout the day. These included dismounted patrols from the Nassar Wa al Salaam (NWS) Iraqi Police Station and a dismounted sweep of the agricultural fields to the south of the prison, where it was believed insurgents were staging for more attacks against the prison.

The following day, 2nd platoon conducted a "Knock & Talk" of Khandari. This allowed them to become acquainted with the people of the town and to meet with a local sheik who was supportive of the coalition effort in the area. The daily MSR security and counter-IED patrols continued. 1st Platoon of Company B and 2nd Section of CAAT A joined Task Force Blackhorse on 4 November, arriving from the Agriculture Center in An Najaf after turning that mission over to Company C. They immediately began familiarizing themselves with the area, attaching key personnel to outgoing patrols from 2nd and 3rd Platoons. CAAT conducted several MSR security patrols, and 2nd Platoon conducted a dismounted sweep of Khandari.

The Sniper team conducted a night patrol through the cemetery on the 5th, looking for any possible weapons caches, but found nothing. Five Blackhorse Marines (Captain Carl Lowe, Lieutenant Michael Wyrsh, Corporal Jonathan French, Lance Corporal Christian Gonzalez, and Lance Corporal Marshall Medrano) were attached to Company L, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines for the duration of Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah.

3rd Platoon conducted a "Knock & Talk" and a presence patrol through Khandari Market on the 6th, handing out Beanie Babies and candy to the children. Just before sundown, a small enemy unit attacked the prison from the north. Task Force Blackhorse snipers rushed to one of the guard towers, where Corporal Ramsey got two confirmed kills. The QRF was launched to retrieve the enemy's bodies for intelligence purposes, but was unable to find any traces of the bodies. Within twenty minutes of the QRF passing through the Khandari Market, an IED detonated, killing eight Iraqi civilians. The investigation of the IED site over the next couple of days lead us to believe that the IED was intended to kill the Iraqis as a warning against them cooperating with the coalition forces.

November 7th was business as usual, with "Knock & Talks", MSR security, and dismounted patrols from the NWS IP station. 3rd Platoon continued the search for the enemy KIA (EKIA) from the night prior, but still found nothing. During a dismounted patrol the following day in the Khandari market, 3rd Platoon spotted two vehicles quickly approaching their position. The Marines in the platoon took all possible measures to stop the vehicles, but the vehicles continued to

accelerate towards them until the Marines fired at the vehicles. This resulted in one EKIA and two EWIA. As they were assessing this situation, they were fired upon from the Sheik Dari Mosque with a burst from a medium machinegun and several AK-47s, followed by three medium or heavy mortar impacts just to their south. After completing their mission, 3rd Platoon returned to the prison with all gear and personnel accounted for.

On 9 November, two IEDs were detonated against one of the CAAT sections, causing minor vehicle damage but no personnel injuries. CAAT questioned several individuals, but were unable to extract any useful information. At about the same time, another IED detonated in the vicinity of 1st Platoon, but not close enough to them to be sure they were the intended target. The civilians in the area went about their normal business as if nothing had happened. The following day, the Marines of Task Force Blackhorse celebrated the Marine Corps' 229th birthday with cake and a barbeque at the Prison.

3rd Platoon conducted a cordon and search of Sheik Harith al Dari's home on the 11th. He is the leader of the Sunni Muslim Scholar's Association, known for their anti-coalition sentiment and activities. There were reports of three hostages possibly being held at this location, but none were found. No detainees were taken, although several items were confiscated, including a Thuraya satellite phone, a cell phone which later analysis indicated had been used in a remote IED detonation, and an actual IED detonator along with several anti-coalition pamphlets and pictures that provided intelligence value. 1st Platoon later dropped off two dead Iraqis that had been sitting in the prison's "morgue" (one was there for nearly two months) at Camp Fallujah. CAAT platoon conducted normal MSR security patrols.

On the morning of 12 November, 2nd Platoon was conducting a dismounted patrol through Nassar Wa al Salaam (NWS), noting that the people seemed more friendly. Later, around 1300 while conducting a counter-IED patrol, they detected an IED on the MSR. EOD was attached to their patrol, so Staff Sergeant Simon Wade took control of the situation. He deployed one of his robots to investigate the IED, and as the robot was maneuvering to disarm the IED, it was detonated, destroying the robot. As 1st Platoon was preparing to go on a counter-ambush patrol in the NWS Cemetery, a response to insurgent attacks from the cemetery over the past two nights, one of the Marines of Company B took his own life. Corporal Jarrod L. Maher was pronounced dead at 1852 by the duty physician at the 115th Field Hospital, Abu Ghraib Prison, Iraq.

After an operational pause on 13 November, normal operations resumed on the following day. CAAT platoon conducted MSR security patrols and 2nd Platoon performed a sweep of the cemetery, but neither patrol discovered anything significant. Towards sundown, another IED detonated on a CAAT patrol, this one destroyed a HMMWV and wounding all four Marines inside (two routine, one urgent, and one priority). The two routine WIA immediately returned to duty, and the other two Marines were evacuated to 31st Combat Army Surgical Hospital (CASH) and later to Germany.

On 17 November, another IED detonated near CAAT, but was intended for a passing convoy from RCT-7. The convoy sustained no damages, and

continued on its mission, which happened to be dropping detainees off at the Prison. One of the TOW gunners from the CAAT section noticed a man on a roof, who appeared to be observing the site of the IED, then running away after detonating the device. CAAT immediately moved to apprehend the individual, and ended up detaining five likely insurgents. They called for the QRF to pick up the detainees, and while the QRF was in the process of taking custody of the detainees, they took four more, totaling nine likely insurgents now off the streets. For the remainder of Bravo Company's time at Abu Ghraib, the IED threat at that location was practically nonexistent.

The next several days consisted of MSR Security patrols and an increased involvement with the Iraqi National Guard. 1st Platoon conducted a cordon-and-search of some houses with the ING in NWS on the 21st, identified some possible insurgents, and detained two individuals. On the 22nd, the Task Force conducted a cordon-and-search of two objectives that were suspected to be the homes of IED makers. Half of the force aborted due to vehicles being stuck in the mud, but 1st Platoon's portion of the C&S went smoothly, although nothing was found.

A 120mm mortar round impacted inside of the Task Force Blackhorse living area on November 24th. Over the previous several days, the impacts had been getting closer and closer to the prison, always coming from approximately the same grid, and the point of origin (POO) was just out of reach of the Task Force's 60mm mortars. In an effort to catch the mortarmen as they were striking the prison, TF Blackhorse spent several hours on Thanksgiving Day in a counter-mortar ambush. The Task Force believed that the locals somehow observed the ambush and wisely chose not to fire their mortars. The POO at the ambush site was not used again since that day, although several days later a new POO began firing at the prison.

On the 26th, Lieutenant Michael Borneo left the Task Force for his follow-on orders in Okinawa, Japan with 3rd FSSG. He was replaced by Lieutenant Christopher "Razor" Schickling, a former Company C platoon commander. Lieutenant Borneo would be returning to An Najaf in a few days, so most of the patrols were focused on tying up "loose ends," especially those related to civil affairs and the ING and IPs. On the 27th, one of the CAAT sections was attacked with an IED, but it was ineffective. Blackhorse believed it was a "copycat" of the IED attackers detained on the 17th. 3rd Platoon spent the last few days at the prison focusing on southern Khandari, ensuring that that neighborhood wouldn't be a problem for the unit relieving Task Force Blackhorse.

On Blackhorse's last day of patrolling the area was very peaceful, a complete change from when they assumed the area of operation (AO) just a month before. The next day, November 30th, was a packing day and by 2200 the vehicles were staged for Task Force Blackhorse's departure.

On every Monday in November, elements of the 11th MEU would travel to downtown An Najaf to a site secured by Charlie Company Marines. There, hundreds of thousands of dollars in solatia payments were distributed. The third Monday of the month was a record-setting turnout in which over 2,327 claims were processed and over 1.7 million dollars distributed.

As violence escalated in other parts of Iraq, the Marines of Company C were called upon to assist the 24th MEU. The neighborhood of Lutayfiyah and Mahmoudiyah saw an increase in violence as the attack in Fallujah escalated. Since the majority of the Marines in Company C spent the month of June 2003 at the oil depot in that city, they were chosen to assist in the mission. In the preceding month, insurgents repeatedly attacked a key bridge used by civilian traffic. One complete side was collapsed and the other had three car-sized holes in the surface. The rebuilding of the bridge in such a hostile area required more ground troops than the 24th MEU could support. Charlie Company loaded their trucks and headed north to FOB Kalsu. After two days of planning and attempts to move north, the mission was accomplished in sixteen hours. Charlie Company presented such a hard target that not a single shot was fired during the mission.

Company training for the month included live-fire ranges and platoon size operations. Also, as ING training continued to settle into a more regimented schedule, it was clear to see a true military unit forming. Lieutenant Craig "The Hammer" Swihart continued to work on his Arabic speaking as he sought to put as many translators as possible out of a job. Late in the month, Lieutenant Seth Moulton and the Marines of third platoon were called upon to find a buried weapons cache just 10km E/NE of FOB Hotel. With the help of the locals and EOD, the cache was found and safely removed.

The 81mm Mortar platoon continued to stand guard duty at FOB Duke during the month of November. They went to the weapons range for a week and a half straight, practicing live-fire small arms manipulation, speed reloads, and weapons malfunction recovery. The live-fire focused on failure drills, controlled pairs, firing at the flanks, firing while moving, and fire and movement.

For the month of November, CAAT A's mission was to conduct SASO and MSR security patrols in and around Abu Ghurayb prison. On 9 November, 1st section had two IED's detonate at them near the Sheik Dari Mosque. Fortunately there were no casualties, only minor damage to the lead vehicle. The platoon was unable to find the insurgents involved in the attack. From the 11th to the 13th, CAAT A moved to "TCP 1" near Fallujah to support Operation Phantom Fury. They filled a battle space for the U.S. Army's 1/5 Cavalry. Their mission was to screen MSR Mobile and prevent any Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF) from escaping the area.

On 14 November, 2nd section was hit by an IED. The device was constructed with forty pounds of PE4. The explosion destroyed one of the vehicles and wounded two Marines. Lance Corporal Velasques and Private First Class Roacho were sent back to the United States to convalesce. The platoon cordoned off the area and detained nine individuals. Detaining the suspected bombers helped prevent attacks on MSR Mobile and Michigan. Seven days went by without an attack along the MSRS. Throughout the entire month, the platoon conducted four two-hour patrols each day. The patrols were to prevent the emplacement of IEDS along the MSRS. On November 24th, Lieutenant Chris Schickling took command of CAAT A. The previous commander, Lieutenant Mike Borneo was to execute orders and leave the battalion.

November was another challenging, rewarding, and busy month for the Marines of CAAT B. On a daily basis, the platoon continued its enduring mission of conducting counter-mortar/IED and civil affairs patrols in and around Najaf Province. The province continued to be amongst the most peaceful and pro-coalition areas in all of Iraq. Additionally, the platoon conducted numerous convoy escort, site security, and humanitarian assistance missions throughout the month.

Lieutenant Scott Cuomo and 1st and 2nd sections, commanded by Sergeants Casey Ashley and Eric Backus respectively, escorted the BLT logistics convoy to Abu Ghurayb Prison on 5 November. While en route to the prison, the convoy halted at bridge 21A on MSR Tampa for two hours while the 24th MEU's QRF destroyed a daisy-chained IED that was located 1000 meters North of the convoy's position.

During the return movement to An Najaf the following day, two U.S. Army Heavy Equipment Trailers (HETs), made a wrong turn on Route Sword (toward Baghdad) that led to a delay of 30-45 minutes. Less than a half hour after turning the HETs around, inserting them back in their assigned positions, and continuing toward An Najaf, the convoy halted because all of the eastbound lane and part of the westbound lane a few hundred meters east of Bridge 34A on MSR Tampa exploded less than 1500 meters in front of the convoy. Units from the U.S. Army's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, arrived to secure the blast site approximately fifteen minutes later. After moving the convoy into the westbound lane, Lieutenant Cuomo guided the vehicles on foot through the maze of destruction on the road so that convoy could continue its movement to An Najaf.

On 11 November, CAAT B escorted Company C to FOB Kalsu to support the 24th MEU in conducting operation "Big Dig". The mission required BLT 1/4's CAAT B and Company C to secure what remained of "IED" Bridge just North of Lutifiyah in order to allow MSSG-24 to fix the damage caused by numerous VBIED blasts. A hasty planning session was conducted that evening and the units were ready to execute the mission at approximately 1700 the following day. Lieutenant Cuomo and his 1st Section were tasked with securing the area immediately northwest of "IED" bridge. Gunnery Sergeant Dennis Collins and 2nd were tasked with conducting mounted patrols in vicinity of the urban area south of the bridge. One hour later, while moving through Mahmudiyah to secure the northern approaches to the bridge, one of CAAT B's vehicles rolled over and crashed. It had attempted to swerve out of the way of a vehicle that intentionally jumped the median on ASR Jackson and drove directly at the CAAT vehicle. Lance Corporal Nicholas Anderson was tragically killed in the crash. Upon moving into position to secure the crash site, Lieutenant Cuomo's and Corporal Stephan Hilbert's vehicles were ambushed by small arms fire from a team to squad sized element located approximately 150 meters southwest of the site. Corporal Anthony Mazzola, Lance Corporal William Ritchie, and an Marine Corps AH-1W Super-Cobra attack helicopter immediately suppressed the enemy positions with machine gun fire. After the initial enemy attack, the vehicles were in sporadic contact with insurgents over the next two hours while waiting to extract the damaged vehicle. Corporal Hilbert killed one insurgent at a range of less than 100 meters during the fighting. After linking up the entire northern task force and extracting the vehicle, all the Marines moved to FOB Mahmudiyah, Task Force 2/24's command post, to rest over night. The Marines arrived at

FOB Mahmudiyah just before midnight on 12 November. The northern task force then departed FOB Mahmudiyah at 0600 the following morning to secure the northern approaches to the bridge. Throughout the day of the 13th, Marines from BLT 1/4 prevented the enemy from interfering with a hastily emplaced makeshift bridge built with destroyed cars (ones that were used as VBIEDs), rocks, sand, and steel plates. At approximately 1800, MSSG-24 completed a hasty repair of the bridge and the entire task force returned to FOB Kalsu. Insurgents destroyed the hastily emplaced bridge less than ten days after it was built.

Lieutenant Scott Cuomo and Sergeant David Stegall's section escorted the BLT's logistics convoy to Abu Ghurayb prison on 17 November. They departed the prison at 0900 on 18 November to return to An Najaf after distributing mail and POL supplies to Task Force Blackhorse. Within minutes after pulling out of the prison, the convoy was halted in order to allow the U.S. Army to destroy one of its tanker trucks that had flipped while coming down the off-ramp on Route Sword. After waiting for approximately thirty minutes, the convoy proceeded for ten kilometers on MSR Tampa before being halted again due to a convoy ahead of them spotting a potential IED in the middle of the eastbound lane. The convoy was halted for approximately two hours before EOD declared the area clear for convoy traffic. Approximately ten kilometers later, Corporal William Stoffers' vehicle, halted the convoy because of a potential VBIED in the median in the immediate vicinity of Bridge 32A on MSR Tampa. Upon observing the potential VBIED (a 1970s red Chevy pick-up with its hood up) Lieutenant Cuomo ordered Corporal Stoffer to fire a flare in vicinity of the vehicle to see if anyone moved. The flare was fired, but there was no reaction from around the vehicle. Lieutenant Cuomo then ordered Corporal Stoffer to fire a series of tracer-bullet warning shots at the vehicle to see if it would induce any movement from the vehicle. That action also produced no results. Lieutenant Cuomo then contacted the 24th MEU COC, informed the watch officer of the potential VBIED, and requested either EOD support or permission to engage the vehicle, after describing its proximity to the bridge and likely damage to the road and bridge if the vehicle was indeed a VBIED. Lieutenant Cuomo was denied permission to engage the vehicle because of the likely damage to critical infrastructure and was told that the 24th MEU EOD QRF was en route. Lieutenant Cuomo then passed all of the information to an Air Force aircraft serving as an airborne radio relay. Approximately three hours after contacting the 24th MEU, an Air Force EOD team attached to the 1st Army Cavalry Division, arrived at the site and began assessing the potential VBIED. After searching the vehicle for approximately one hour, the EOD team's \$270,000 robot discovered six blasting caps, a series of wires, and a Red Scorpio pager underneath the vehicle's seats that was connected to a point just below the steering wheel. The EOD technicians used the robot to cut the wires. The EOD technicians then tried to use the robot to rip off the paneling on the vehicle doors but the paneling was bolted on too tightly. An Air Force Master Sergeant then proceeded to the vehicle alone to find three 130mm High Explosive (HE) rounds, three 82mm Illumination rounds, and 36 sticks of Semtex explosive lining the door panels and emplaced underneath the vehicle's seats. EOD then placed the ordnance, explosives, and vehicle approximately twenty meters to the side of the road. After gaining clearance from their higher headquarters, the EOD technicians destroyed the VBIED in place. The explosion launched pieces of the vehicle over 300 meters away and left a minimal semblance that there was ever a

pick-up truck in vicinity of the bridge. This VBIED would have undoubtedly disintegrated at least one if not two of the HMMWVs and MTRVs that were traveling in the convoy.

After eastbound traffic was stopped along MSR Tampa for nearly six hours, Lieutenant Cuomo suspected that the enemy would emplace at least one IED along the route to attack coalition convoys as they proceeded east and south. He permitted five coalition convoys to pass his and "clear" the route before continuing to An Najaf. There were more than 100 vehicles in the passing convoys and they were all traveling with their lights on. The CAAT B and their logistics convoy totaled nine vehicles, and all drove with their lights off. Nevertheless, approximately 1000 meters before CAAT B and the convoy arrived at Bridge 21A, a daisy-chained IED consisting of one 120mm HE and three 130mm HE rounds exploded between Lieutenant Cuomo and his lead vehicle. Proper vehicle dispersion coupled with the enemy's inability to time the detonation (due to not being able to see the vehicles at night) likely prevented any Marines from being injured and any vehicles from being damaged. The convoy arrived at FOB Hotel at approximately 2200 with no further incidents.

CAAT B conducted a memorial service for Lance Corporal Nicholas Anderson on 19 November. The service was the beginning of a long healing process for the platoon in dealing with the loss of their brother that was loved dearly by all the Marines.

The following day, the platoon conducted a medical visit and handed out hundreds of presents to the children in a village located by a dam over the Euphrates River that the platoon crosses often. The visit went extremely well. Hospitalman Third Class Patrick Bourland treated a baby girl who had multiple oil burns on her leg. All the Marines had the opportunity to hand out soccer balls, coloring books, and other gifts to a very thankful group of families. The Marines returned from the patrol smiling and in good spirits, a change that was much needed after the tragic loss of Lance Corporal Anderson and recent experiences dealing with insurgents and other Sunni Arabs in Babil and Anbar Provinces over the previous few weeks.

First section escorted staff personnel from the 11th MEU to Camp Lima in Karbala to conduct a pre-deployment site survey on 24 November. The visit and trip went very well. Three days later Sergeant Backus' 2nd section provided external site security for MSSG-11 during a Humanitarian Assistance Operation (HAO) in the vicinity of the intersection of Routes Miami and California. The Marines enjoyed the mission; they again had the opportunity to interact with many grateful Iraqis.

On 29 November, the platoon commander and 3rd section escorted another logistics convoy to Abu Ghurayb prison. After the many incidents along MSR Tampa on the previous trips to the prison, the convoy took an alternate route. This route led the convoy through the desert along ASR Boston until arriving at the southern bridge into Fallujah. Once in Fallujah, the planned convoy route was to go straight down ASR Michigan to Traffic Control Point (TCP) 1. However, upon checking in with "Inchon" a few minutes prior to arriving at the southern bridge, the convoy was directed to bypass ASR Michigan to the North because troops were in contact with the enemy along that route.

Moving a convoy with a Heavy Equipment Trailer (HET) through the destroyed roads in Fallujah without a city graphic map proved to be a very enjoyable experience. The convoy arrived at Abu Ghurayb prison without incident at approximately 1330.

The following day, CAAT B provided security for the battalion commander "Pale Rider 6" as he visited BLT forces that were supporting combat operations in and around Fallujah. CAAT B traveled to "Inchon Forward" in the heart of Fallujah to visit the BLT snipers. Next they traveled to a bridge just south of Karmah along ASR Chicago to deliver mail to the BLT's tank platoon. Then they went to Camps Baharia and Fallujah to deliver mail and to talk with the BLT's AAV and Engineer platoons. All of the Marines that were visited were doing very well and were looking forward to their return to An Najaf.

The LAR platoon conducted local security patrols from midnight to 0400 every night during November. Lieutenant Jake MacDonald, Staff Sergeant Jason Smith, or Sergeant Michael Allen led the patrols. They worked on cross-training vehicle commanders in patrol preparation and conduct of the patrol. All of the patrols were uneventful.

Throughout the month of November, the LAR platoon conducted unit training to include: LAV crew gunnery, LGST, LAV driver training, vehicle/scout integration, urban patrolling, basic demolition, daily physical training, and Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) training.

Battery R continued its mission of guarding FOB Hotel during November. It also continued its enduring artillery mission of continuously maintaining the capability to provide artillery fire. Daily civil affairs patrols were conducted throughout the month. The patrols were completed without encountering hostility from the enemy, and there were no major accidents or mishaps.

On November 3rd, the engineer platoon deployed to Camp Fallujah. Four days later they were integrated with coalition forces. On 8 November, 1st, 3rd, and 4th squads led the breach into the city of Fallujah for Operation Fajr. This was the first time that "line-charge" demolitions were used in urban warfare. The three squads remained in general support of RCT-1 until 11 November. 2nd squad provided general support for the U.S. Army's 2/7 Cavalry during Operation Fajr.

For the remainder of the month the engineer platoon spearheaded Task Force Bruno. The platoon went from house to house throughout the Northwest quarter of Fallujah and cleared over 250,000 square meters per day of potential insurgent hiding places. They found and destroyed countless enemy weapons, demolitions, and ammunition.

The tank platoon began the month of November by promoting Justin Sowels to Corporal and promoting Steven Lafavre and Greg Watts to Sergeant on the 1st. Kent Medlin was promoted to Sergeant meritoriously the following day. Four other Marines were recognized for their dedication and devotion to duty. Corporal Matthew Hedges, Lance Corporal Oswaldo BeltranTapia, Lance Corporal Patrick Degnan, and Lance Corporal Christopher Deluca received Certificates of Commendation for their efforts as the drivers during the fighting in Al Kufa and An

Najaf in the month of August. Tank platoon left FOB Hotel for Fallujah on 4 November. The twelve-hour convoy arrived on the 5th, and it was full speed ahead from that moment.

Alpha section and Bravo section alternated twelve hour shifts the first four days as they took up a defensive blocking position at TCP 1 on route Mobile. Shortly after, 2nd Recon Battalion felt the platoon would be more useful on the Southeastern section in the city of Queens. Although that mission began as a blocking position, it quickly turned into more of a screening mission. A combined total of approximately 170 main gun rounds were fired between the 7th and the 15th that accounted for an estimated thirty enemy KIA. The platoon was later detached from 2nd Recon and attached to 1/5 Cavalry to assist in operations in Kharma, a small city north of Fallujah, that carried the moniker "Little Fallujah".

Tank platoon was set up at the Delta Iraqi National Guard Compound (known as the "DING") where they ran daily patrols into the city and shared the responsibilities of guard duty in the towers of the facility with fellow Marines, Army, and ING soldiers. The Army brought out a Thanksgiving dinner of turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, cranberry sauce, and carrot cake so that everyone could enjoy the spirit of Thanksgiving. The remainder of the month consisted of more patrols, blocking positions, IED sweeps and an occasional dodging of mortars.

While the media world focused on the operations being conducted in Fallujah, the Reconnaissance platoon continued to conduct stability and security operations (SASO) in and around the vicinity of An Najaf and Abbasiya. The platoon set the standard once again for conducting consequence management operations by completing 800 solatia assessments in one day in the Old City, An Najaf.

Throughout the month the platoon continually progressed with their civil affairs projects. Six major projects were approved for the township of Abbasiya while it was under the cognizance of the Recon platoon. The projects included the restoration of four local schools, the refurbishment of a medical clinic inside and out that included the installation of two generators, and the construction of a fifty-shop marketplace. The platoon continued to engage and establish a dialogue with the Mayor of Abbasiya to fulfill the 11th MEU requirements for consequence management operations. The approved projects would provide over 200 jobs for the people of Abbasiya and would last for a period of two months.

During combat operations from August through November, the platoon conducted more than 160 combat patrols and missions. In the previous month, the patrols included Operation Exxon, personal security details (PSD) for key personnel, solatia assessments in the Old City of An Najaf, and convoy security for KBR personnel to Babylon and Ad Diwaniyah. Additionally, the platoon still continued one of its enduring missions of conducting area/zone reconnaissance missions (including counter-mortar patrols), route recon patrols, counter-IED sweeps and detainee transportation missions.

The Reconnaissance Platoon conducted operation Exxon in support of and in full partnership with the Iraqi government. The operation

supported the local Iraqi National Guard, Iraqi Police stations, Border Patrol and the local government of An Najaf, which will in turn benefit the local Iraqi citizens. The operation was intended to reduce the amount of time a local Iraqi has to spend in line for petrol. The operation's success would establish and improve the necessary infrastructure in the city of An Najaf.

In addition to all of its operational tasking, the platoon completed the two week pre-dive course it had created to train its prospective dive candidates. The overall class academic average was a solid 85%. The class honor man was corporal Terrian with an overall combined average of 97.6%. The instructors did an outstanding job developing a pre-dive curriculum for a course that was conducted in a desert environment. The training definitely met and exceeded the standards for the United States Marine Corps Combatant Dive School. Training was not limited to just the pre-dive course; it also focused on Explosive Handling Awareness Training (EHAT), physical training, and PME. PME included instruction on USMC history, uniform regulations, and personal administration such as OMPF and FITREPs.

Recon's ability to remain fluid in an ever-changing combat environment proved to be a dynamic asset to the 11th MEU (SOC). The Battalion Landing Team (BLT) was tasked to support operations at Abu Gharyab and Lutifiyah (security for bridge re-construction) and offensive operations in Fallujah. The platoon showed its resilience and commitment in support of the BLT and the 11th MEU (SOC). The platoon truly demonstrated its ability to successfully provide reliable information and to support any operation that the Battalion Landing Team Commanding Officer had to offer.

The AAV platoon spent the initial days of November preparing for its movement to Camp Fallujah. The AAV platoon, engineers and tanks departed FOB Hotel in route to Camp Fallujah on 3 November. The convoy arrived at Camp Fallujah early the following morning. The three units were attached to RCT-1 then to their respective units. For two days, the AAV platoon was attached to Delta Company, 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion.

On 5 November, the platoon was tasked to report to 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines to support them in Operation Phantom Fury. The platoon's job was to transport Kilo Company and Lima Company into the attack. The AAV platoon was also tasked with providing two vehicles for the BLT 1/4 engineer platoon. They loaded Kilo Company and moved to the battalion's attack position the following evening.

At dawn on the 7th, the AAV platoon first transported Company K into the attack to secure eight large apartment complexes on the Northwest side of Fallujah. Once the apartments were secured, 7-Ton trucks transported Company L to the AAVs. As night fell, the AAVs took Lima Company through the breach and into their battlespace. Once the infantrymen debarked, the AAVs retrograded back through the breach. After the area was secured, three vehicles and their crews went back through the breach and rejoined Lima Company to support them in their defense and to serve as an armored ambulance if needed.

From November 8th through the 17th, the platoon was split into three elements. Two AAVs from 1st section were with the BLT 1/4

engineers. The four AAVs from 3rd section were with Kilo 3/5, and the four AAVs from 2nd section were with Lima 3/5. The platoon commander and platoon sergeant AAVs rotated between the sections as needed, depending on which company had a larger area to clear or who was in the most contact with the enemy. Each day the AAV Marines and the Marines of both infantry companies developed ways to use and maximize the utility of each other. Most notably, the AAVs would pull into a street, engage each side of the street with both the MK-19 and .50 caliber machine guns, and then ram the walls to make a quick breach in a wall or home for the infantrymen to rapidly enter. This not only saved supplies, time, and the energy of the Marines, but it let the infantry gain an unexpected and rapid entry into a home or building. They would often catch the enemy off guard and would always give the Marines the upper hand.

For the remainder of the month, the AAV platoon continued to support Kilo and Lima 3/5 through Task Force Bruno. They accompanied the infantry Marines on daily security patrols, clearing missions, and destruction of enemy weapons caches missions. During this time the Marines again tried to maximize the usefulness of each other. The AAVs were used to flush the enemy out of their havens or used as blocking positions to deny the enemy an avenue of escape. The AAVs were also used on several occasions to pull wounded Marines out of the battle for medical treatment (where the rear crewman was able to help the corpsman or tend to the wounded in the absence of the corpsman) and to transport weapons and detainees back to the battalion's command post.

Lance Corporal David Adler received shrapnel to his lower back while trying to clear a jammed MK-19 while under enemy fire on the 11th. He was evacuated to the 31st CASH, then to Germany, and finally sent home to recover from his wounds. On the 24th, Lieutenant Erick Koob was transported to Abu Ghurayd prison to link up with Bravo Company, BLT 1/4, for redeployment back to the United States to execute orders. In his absence, Gunnery Sergeant Darrin Wynn filled the platoon commander billet, Staff Sergeant Joseph Rice was made the platoon sergeant, and Sergeant Cirilo Saiz was made the 2nd section leader.

The Scout Sniper Platoon of BLT 1/4 departed 2nd Battalion 5th Marines on the 1st of November. The platoon received a FragO to attach to Task Force Wolfpack, 3rd LAR for combat operations in support of Operation Phantom Fury (Al Fajr). On the 7th, they were tasked with securing the bridges and islands on the peninsula, preventing any insurgents from exiting the city of Fallujah. Staff Sergeant Randolph Revert's Team 1 was attached to the 24th MEU's Small Craft Platoon and patrolled the Euphrates River to penetrate the small island on the north west tip of the peninsula and establish a blocking position to secure the obstacles attaching the small islands. Team 2 and Team 3 was attached to the Army's 1/9 tank and Bradley teams. Corporal Alexander Lemons' Team 2 established a position on the peninsula's southern bridge (G.Washington) to kill or capture any insurgents leaving the city of Fallujah. Corporal Bryan Midgett's Team 3 established a position on the northern bridge (Brooklyn) to kill or capture any insurgents leaving the city of Fallujah. Task Force Wolfpack was the main effort with an end state of securing the peninsula in preparation for the main attack on the city of Fallujah on 8 November. As the main battle developed in the city of Fallujah, Team 1 was re-tasked to attach to the forward element, and establish an

observation post (OP) in the middle of the peninsula, providing over watch for Wolfpack Forward. Team 2 was re-tasked to occupy an abandoned house and establish an OP at the intersection of Boston and no-name road in order to keep the MSR open for the LAR vehicles. Team 3 was re-tasked to attach to Bravo Company, 1st Battalion 3rd Marines for combat operations in the heart of the peninsula.

As the battle for Fallujah progressed, Task Force Wolfpack was able to secure the peninsula, which gave the Scout Sniper Platoon the flexibility to operate anywhere in the city. Team 1 was then re-assigned to Charlie Company, 3rd LAR for combat operations in the Southeast part of the peninsula by dam road. Team 1 was able to successfully attrite the insurgents attempting to swim across the river into the peninsula as well as kill insurgents operating in small pockets of the peninsula. Team 2 was re-assigned to Bravo Company, 3rd LAR for sweeping operations on the peninsula, starting in the vicinity of ASP Rock and going to no-name road and Boston. On 20 November, Scout Sniper Platoon received a FragO to attach to RCT-1 Forward for combat operations in the city of Fallujah. Team 2, was tasked with returning to 1st Battalion, 4th Marines in preparation for their return to the United States for further training and for three Marines to attend Scout Sniper School. Teams 1 and 3 joined RCT-1 Forward in Fallujah and began sweeping operations as RCT-1 Forward took ownership of the terrain for the FOB. The teams continued to provide over watch for the regiment as units conducted sweeping operations to kill or capture small pockets of insurgents remaining in the city of Fallujah.

December began with a temporary three-week stay at FOB Duke in An Najaf for the world famous Alpha Raiders while they waited to move to FOB Lima in Karbala. During their time at FOB Duke the company put an emphasis on physical training (PT), academic classes, and small unit leader time and training. At the company level, the Alpha Raiders conducted two motivated company PT sessions, one convoy live-fire, and one squad competition live-fire exercise. Before the company moved North to Karbala, Alpha Company bid farewell to several of their great Marines who were redeploying back to the United States early to exit the Marine Corps or to change duty stations.

Task Force Blackhorse's last day at Abu Ghraib Prison was December 1st. All but 1st Platoon left by ground convoy in three serials. The trip was uneventful except for 3rd Platoon getting a flat tire on the infamous bridge in southern Fallujah. They were able to change the tire once they pushed south of the bridge and continue their mission without further incident. 1st Platoon flew out of the prison during the evening of the same day. This too was without incident, except that a few rounds were shot at the first helicopter to take off as it passed over Zaydon.

The remainder of the first week of December was uneventful, with the company refitting after five weeks of constant operations and reassigning a few key NCOs to accommodate the new mission Company B was preparing to undertake. 1st Platoon had a mission on 4 December to provide security for the U.S. Navy SeaBees while they built a school at the intersection of Miami and California. They were tasked with doing this again on the 5th, but the SeaBees decided to take Sunday off. On 6 December, 2nd Platoon moved to FOB Duke to assume responsibility for the

leadership of the FOB Guard. 3rd Platoon spent the days of the 6th and 7th providing security for the SeaBees.

The company attended suicide briefs given by the combat stress psychologists on the 9th. The following day, 1st Platoon and Headquarters Platoon went to Range 1 at FOB Duke to battle-sight zero (BZO) their new ACOG and reflex sights on their rifles, and 3rd Platoon and Weapons Platoon did the same on the 11th. On 12 December, Staff Sergeant Robert W. Willis, Jr. received a Bronze Star Medal with the Combat Distinguishing Device for his heroism in the Wadi al Salaam cemetery during the initial stages of the fight in An Najaf from 5-7 August 2004. They continued the day with a "beer day," in which each Marine received two bottles of Budweiser (or Bud Light) and a small bottle of Bacardi rum.

From 13 to 15 December, the Marines of Company B prepared for the move to FOB Lima near Karbala, where they will provide Force Protection until relieved by the Mississippi Army National Guard in late January. The company relocated on 16 December. Immediately upon arriving at FOB Lima, Marines began standing post with the Polish soldiers from the 2nd Battle Group. The following day, Company B took complete control of Force Protection at FOB Lima. The Marines' days now consisted of standing post, exercising, and conducting quick reaction force (QRF) drills, with occasional dismounted patrols outside the perimeter of the FOB.

Since the deployment began in May, most of the Marines in Company C thought of December as the end of the 7-month road. December arrived and the patrols continue, the training continues, and the deployment continued. Because of the Iraqi elections scheduled for the end of January, the Marines of the 11th MEU (SOC) were extended an additional 30-60 days to help keep stability in their southern Iraqi city. An Najaf could be called a success story compared to the restive cities of the north. Everywhere in the city there were buildings being erected, everywhere there were police and ING guarding neighborhoods and mosques, and almost everywhere someone waved to an American with a genuine sense of gratitude.

As the weather turned cool during the last week of November, the Marines of Charlie Company dug into their seabags and pulled out their polypropylene underwear that some people decided to leave at home. December was a complete change from the searing temperature of August and September when the bulk of the fighting for Company C occurred. The missions of training the ING, guarding FOB Hotel, and securing the Agricultural Center took center stage in December. Three raids punctuated the calm. The first two were weapons cache sweeps conducted by 3rd and 1st Platoons respectively. The first one turned up a sizeable amount of ordinance while the second took two trips to locate the cache. Both were conducted without incident and produced tangible results. The third raid combined the ING with 1st Platoon to capture a suspected bomb maker. With the Marines as an outer cordon and the ING as the assault force, the man was captured in his residence without any struggle and hardly any damage to local property.

On the training side, Weapons platoon conducted a mortar and SMAW shoot at FOB Duke's new live-fire training range "complex" to maintain their warfighting skills. 2nd Platoon completed the gray-belt training

course of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) led by trainers from Weapons Platoon. Squad leaders from several platoons completed the green-belt course and began working toward their brown-belts.

As Christmas approached, the Marines began receiving dates for redeployment to the United States from the BLT. Company C was split into two redeployment groups, each consisting of an airborne element and a ground element. Just the idea of going home was enough of a Christmas present to keep the Marines in good spirits through the holidays. As January approached, the light at the end of the tunnel seemed closer. But, as all Marines on combat tours soon realize, nothing is certain until the plane hits the runway on American soil.

The 81mm platoon was officially relieved as the unit responsible for security at Forward Operating Base Duke on 7 December. Security for the base was turned over to the MSSG and a platoon from Bravo Company under the command of Lieutenant Mike Cap. After moving to Forward Operating Base Hotel, the platoon began conducting security patrols on the morning of the 10th. The patrol schedule was established so that the platoon would conduct two four-hour patrols every alternate day with CAAT A. The platoon patrol times were from 0800-1200 and 1200-1600.

The 81mm Mortar Platoon, in conjunction with the Trailer Platoon, conducted consecutive raids on suspected IED factories in An Najaf on 23 December. Planning for the raids began at 0900 and the raids were executed at 1400. The raids did not discover any explosives, but several individuals with ties to Iranian intelligence officials were detained, and a wealth of documents and computer disks containing information linked to the IED cell were recovered. On 25 December, 81mm Mortar Platoon conducted memorial services for Sergeant Yadir Reynoso and Corporal Roberto Abad. Later, after a VBIED was detonated on CAAT B as they were returning to Karbala, the platoon also conducted two four-hour security patrols in An Najaf.

CAAT A returned to FOB Hotel from Abu Ghurayb on 1 December. The platoon was glad to return to Najaf and begin SASO operations once again. CAAT A conducted an escort mission to Camp Fallujah on the 11th to provide security for the AAV platoon's return to FOB Hotel. They repeated that same mission three days later. On the 19th the platoon went to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) to provide security for a communications project in Najaf; the following day CAAT A provided security for the off loading of the communications gear near revolutionary circle. On 23 December, 1st section went to FOB Echo to escort KBR trucks back to FOB Hotel. The remainder of the month CAAT A conducted local security patrols for SASO operations. The Marines of CAAT A were also allowed a "beer day". 1st section consumed their beer on the 12th of December while 2nd section had theirs on the 17th of December. The Marines were very appreciative of that small indulgence.

December was amongst the most challenging, exciting, busy, and rewarding months for the Marines of CAAT Bravo since returning to Iraq for OIF II. During the first ten days of the month, the platoon continued its enduring mission of conducting counter-mortar/IED and civil affairs patrols in and around Najaf province. The province continued to be amongst the most peaceful and pro-coalition areas in all of Iraq. Beginning on 14 December, CAAT B began patrolling the

urban areas and villages throughout the Karbala province. This province has remained a relatively unknown entity since 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines conducted a relief-in-place (RIP) with the Polish 2nd Battle Group in late August 2003. Amongst many other missions, the Marines of CAAT B were tasked to survey the Karbala Province by 1 February in order to allow elements of the 155 Brigade Combat Team of the Mississippi National Guard to assume the battlespace with a minimum amount of unknown variables. In addition to CAAT B's operations in Najaf and Karbala, the platoon continued to conduct numerous convoy escort missions and site security missions throughout the month.

On 1 December, the platoon conducted two patrols in An Najaf, while also conducting a convoy escort mission from Abu Ghurayb Prison to FOB Hotel. Lieutenant Scott Cuomo and Sergeant David Stegall's 3rd Section escorted a BLT logistics convoy through downtown Fallujah and then through Iraq's western desert along Route Boston all the way back to Najaf. The mission was a success. The next day, the platoon conducted two counter-mortar/IED and civil affairs patrols in and around Najaf Province. Lieutenant Cuomo, Gunnery Sergeant Dennis Collins, and Sergeant Casey Ashley's 1st Section escorted elements of the 11th MEU Command Element staff to FOB Lima in Karbala on 3 December. 2nd and 3rd Sections, commanded by Sergeants Eric Backus and David Stegall respectively, conducted two patrols in Najaf Province. The platoon conducted three counter-mortar/IED and civil affairs patrols in and around Najaf Province the following day. On December 5th the entire platoon had its first day off since early September. From 6-7 December, the platoon conducted six counter-mortar/IED and civil affairs patrols in and around Najaf Province.

Lieutenant Cuomo and 3rd Section conducted a route reconnaissance of ASRs Cleveland and Long Island to identify an alternate route to Fallujah on 8 December. They were also going to locate the position of Alpha Company, of the 401st Iraqi National Guard Battalion. The mission was a success. The Marines stopped briefly at "Inchon" Forward in Central Fallujah before spending the next two days at Camp Fallujah preparing to bring the BLT's tanks and AAVs back to Najaf. 1st and 2nd Sections conducted four counter-mortar/IED and civil affairs patrols in and around Najaf province during the two-day period.

At 2200 on 10 December, Lieutenant Cuomo and 3rd Section departed Camp Fallujah to escort fifteen Heavy Equipment Trailers (HETs), an MTRV, and a HMMWV through central Fallujah along Route Michigan, then down Route Boston all the way back to Najaf. It took the convoy over three hours to reach the western side of the southern bridge in Fallujah because the convoy's tanks and HETs had to cross the bridge individually before moving the tanks onto the HETs once across the Euphrates River. The convoy arrived at FOB Hotel at 0700 on the morning of the 11th.

A live-fire training exercise was conducted on 11 December at the ranges west of FOB Duke. The exercise afforded the Marines an opportunity to "battle sight zero" (BZO) the ACOG sighting devices on their rifles and to become more familiar with their reflex sites. Gunnery Sergeant Collins established a crew served weapons course of fire that enabled the platoon to enhance their proficiency in rapidly locating, acquiring, and destroying targets. From 12-13 December, the

platoon packed all of its gear and cleaned its living areas at FOB Hotel in preparation for its move to FOB Lima.

On 14 December, the platoon left FOB Hotel for FOB Lima. Once at FOB Lima however, it was readily apparent that until most of the Polish Battle Group departed Karbala for Ad Diwaniyah, billeting would not be available for more than one section from CAAT B. As a result, Lieutenant Cuomo and 1st and 3rd Sections moved back to FOB Hotel. Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd Section remained at FOB Lima to provide a QRF and a readily available patrolling force for the Marines at the FOB. Concurrently, they coordinated with the FOB Camp Commandant and Polish forces to ensure that the rest of the platoon would be accommodated upon their permanent move to Karbala.

Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd Section conducted a patrol in Karbala on the 15th. Two Polish officers accompanied the Marines on the patrol and served as guides for the Marines as they began their familiarization of the province. Marines from 1st and 3rd Sections spent the day in preparation for escorting Iraqi Police (IP) to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) the following day.

At 0800 on 16 December, Lieutenant Cuomo and 1st and 3rd Sections departed FOB Hotel and linked up with 115 Iraqi Policemen at IP Headquarters in Najaf. Once an effective link-up was conducted, the platoon escorted the IPs to the Jordanian Police Academy transition point inside of BIAP. In addition to this task, the platoon also had to escort a generator and pick up a SMART-T satellite system from BIAP. The mission was an adventure. Once at IP Headquarters, Lieutenant Cuomo inquired about the "bump plan" in case one of the buses transporting the IPs broke down. The response he received was, "bump plan, the buses won't break down." Needless to say, one of the two IP busses broke down less than twenty miles into the trip; the other bus had a transmission problem and could not shift out of first gear for approximately twenty kilometers. In the absence of a "bump plan", Lieutenant Cuomo told the IPs to squeeze as many Iraqis onto the one working bus (82 IPs on a 44 passenger bus) as possible. Approximately 15 other IPs jumped into a KIA van and tried to make the trip to BIAP, but ran out of gas in Hillah. There were many other twists and turns to the adventure that ended in Najaf at approximately 2300, with 82 IPs being delivered to the Police Academy, a SMART-T being dropped off in Karbala, and a new generator delivered back at FOB Hotel. 2nd Section conducted their second joint patrol in Karbala on that day as well.

While attempting to relocate to FOB Lima for a second time, the platoon conducted three patrols in Karbala on the 17th. Once again though, billeting was not available so Lieutenant Cuomo returned to Najaf in the evening with 1st and 3rd sections. The next day, the platoon conducted three patrols in Karbala Province. Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd section conducted two patrols using Polish guides to identify key locations in the province. Lieutenant Cuomo and 3rd section escorted an EOD team to a weapons cache along ASR San Juan, a route that runs West-Northwest from Mussayib toward Jurf As Sakr and numerous old Iraqi military ammunition supply points (ASPs). This route had historically been amongst the most dangerous for coalition forces in Iraq. Once at the site, the EOD team destroyed four 152mm HE rounds, two 122mm HE artillery rounds, one 115mm HEAT round, one 100mm

HE tank round, four 57mm rockets, and two PG-9 rockets. The mission was a resounding success.

A Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED) detonated less than 400 meters from the two most sacred mosques in Karbala on 19 December while Lieutenant Cuomo and 1st section were patrolling from Najaf to FOB Lima. Once at the FOB, the platoon commander was informed about the SVBIED attack that killed five IPs, fifteen civilians, and wounded approximately fifty more civilians. While preparing to escort EOD to the site, the IPs requested assistance in cordoning and destroying a suspected VBIED in the middle of a market area in the heart of Karbala. Lieutenant Cuomo and 1st section escorted an EOD team and linked up with the IPs in the vicinity of the military grid provided for the suspected VBIED. They found the vehicle; it turned out to be nothing of significance. The patrol then proceeded to the site of the SVBIED explosion. The SVBIED left an 8'x7'x3' gaping hole in the center of ASR Cleveland just north of "Ring Road" and destroyed at least ten civilian vehicles.

The platoon conducted three patrols on 20 December. On the first patrol, Lieutenant Cuomo and 1st section found three hollowed-out 122mm mortar rounds in the immediate vicinity of a platoon-sized ambush position oriented on Route Ibis, an ASR that leads into the northwest corner of Karbala. Sergeant Stegall's 3rd section responded to an IED blast in the center of Karbala during the evening patrol. The blast left a 2'x2' hole in the ground, destroyed a light post, and destroyed a portion of a fence in front of a house located in the vicinity of the explosion.

December 21st was relatively uneventful aside from the official transfer of authority taking place between the 2nd Battle Group and the 11th MEU. The platoon conducted four patrols into what the Poles identified as being the most dangerous areas and routes in Karbala province and were met with a neutral to fairly receptive response. Many Iraqis also appeared shocked to see the Marines back in Karbala.

Another four patrols were conducted on the 22nd. They mostly focused on the "dangerous areas" and were used to determine the trafficability of many of the routes in the province. Lieutenant Cuomo went on a helicopter reconnaissance of the Karbala Province and parts of western North Babil. Upon returning from the helicopter reconnaissance, he took 1st Section and detachments from U.S. Army THT and PsyOps units and conducted a patrol to a village northwest of Karbala called Shariaa. The Poles claimed that Shariaa was a Wahabbi village that had many refugees from Fallujah. The Poles also claimed that they came under fire from multiple houses in the village while conducting a raid a few months beforehand. After all of that buildup, the patrol was uneventful. After an initial shock period, the Iraqis in the village warmed to the patrol's presence and many children and adults came out of their houses to talk with the Marines and soldiers. The patrol proceeded to the Askari district in northwest Karbala, another suspected Wahabbi hideout according to the Poles. Here too the patrol received a warm welcome, although many of the district's older men expressed frustration with the coalition due to the lack of fuel, electricity, and clean water in Iraq almost two years after the United States invaded their sovereign nation.

The platoon conducted three patrols within Karbala on the 23rd. The platoon commander and 1st section picked up a Segovia representative and two Marines from Camp Taqqadum while Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd section were delivering and receiving gear for Company B from FOB Duke. All missions that day were a success, especially the link-up with the Segovia representative. The representative ensured that the Marines and soldiers at FOB Lima had the ability to communicate with their loved ones via phone and Internet in time for Christmas Day.

On Christmas Eve, the platoon conducted four patrols throughout Karbala Province. The Marines handed out many pieces of candy, soccer balls, and other treats to hundreds of Iraqis that were very happy to interact with the platoon's patrols. During the early evening patrol, Sergeant Stegall and 3rd section, responding to an initial report from the IPs, located a significant weapons cache inside of a warehouse in the industrial area in southeast Karbala. Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd section provided security for EOD later in the evening as the EOD Marines assessed the quantity and types of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in the warehouse.

Christmas Day was amongst the busiest of days that the Marines of CAAT B had endured since returning to Iraq for OIF II. Initially, the platoon was scheduled to have the day off. That plan didn't last long though. CAAT B's first patrol was a dismounted security patrol in the immediate vicinity of FOB Lima. Lieutenant Cuomo and 3rd section departed the FOB at 0700 and returned to base at 0945. Most of the Iraqis in the local villages were very shocked to see Marines patrolling on foot through their villages. The Marines really enjoyed being dismounted and brought bags of candy to hand out to the Iraqi kids. The platoon commander then took 1st section on the platoon's next patrol at 1000. This was a mounted security patrol whose mission was to deter the enemy from attacking the FOB with indirect fire. The patrol returned to base at 1240 with nothing significant to report.

While Lieutenant Cuomo's patrol was out, Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd section departed at 1100 to escort elements of the BLT back to FOB Hotel and to pick up mission-essential gear that needed to be transported to FOB Lima. At 1430, while patrolling through the town of Khan al Hammad on the way back to FOB Lima, the patrol was attacked with a VBIED that was located in a partially concealed position in the median on MSR Miami. Due to Gunnery Sergeants Collins' leadership, watchful eye, thorough understanding of the enemy, and rapid decision-making skills, along with the immediate actions of all of 2nd section's Marines, the patrol survived the VBIED blast suffering only two minor casualties. The damage was limited as a direct result of Gunnery Sergeant Collins ordering the vehicles behind him to swerve hard right after he saw that the vehicle in the median had its hood lifted, a broken window, and no occupants. By ordering the vehicle's to swerve to the right, he ensured that there was at least forty feet between the suspected VBIED and Corporal Adam McCabe's HMMWV when the VBIED exploded. This gap dissipated much of the explosion's blast pressure and caused the fragmentation pattern to almost completely miss all of the platoon's vehicles. The blast caused a small piece of rock to penetrate into Corporal McCabe's left cheek. Corporal McCabe ignored the injury while helping to establish an immediate cordon around the blast site. While ensuring the security cordon was established within seconds, the platoon sergeant, Gunnery Sergeant Collins, called FOB

Hotel on his Thuraya satellite phone and sent a Blue Force Tracker message to FOB Duke in order to inform his higher headquarters about the blast and to request EOD support. Approximately thirty minutes later, the CAAT B Marines linked up with the battalion commander "Palerider 6" who traveled to the site to ensure that his Marines were okay. After linking up with the BLT Reconnaissance Platoon and EOD, Gunnery Sergeant Collins proceeded to FOB Lima and arrived at approximately 1745 with the MEU and BLT chaplains.

Lieutenant Cuomo and 3rd section had already departed on another local security patrol when Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd section returned to the FOB. The platoon commander's patrol started at 1600 and initially focused on local security in the vicinity of the FOB. Approximately one hour into the patrol, the operations officer "Palerider 3" gave Lieutenant Cuomo a fragmentary order (FragO) that required patrolling to the Hussein Hospital in downtown Karbala. Once at the hospital, the patrol was tasked to try and locate two Iraqis that were injured as a result of the VBIED. Lieutenant Cuomo and Sergeant Stegall eventually located one individual, who had received shrapnel injuries to the abdomen and upper back. After speaking with the IPs and the gentleman's family for approximately one hour, the Lieutenant assessed that the injured Iraqi was just an innocent bystander. The patrol returned to FOB Lima at 1945.

At 2000, the platoon commander, platoon sergeant, and twelve noncommissioned officers (NCOs) from CAAT B departed on the platoon's fifth patrol of Christmas Day. This patrol began with an initial focus on local security around the FOB, but was also tasked to visit hospital to try and locate a Sudanese fighter that the IPs suspected was involved in the VBIED attack. After talking to the IPs, emergency room doctors, and the injured man's family again, Lieutenant Cuomo and Gunnery Sergeant Collins found that the IPs had been mistaken; no Sudanese man had been at the hospital on that day. The patrol returned to FOB Lima at approximately 2230 in order to brief the BLT operations officer and intelligence officer.

Approximately fifteen minutes later, the same group of Marines went on the platoon's sixth patrol of the day. This patrol's mission was to go Khan al Hammad and attempt to establish the whereabouts of the two suspected triggerman. One was thought to be Sudanese and the other was thought to have likely been killed in the blast. After speaking with personnel from the town's medical clinic and the IPs, the platoon commander and platoon sergeant discovered that the VBIED had injured two Iraqis and killed another. One of the individuals was moved to Karbala and the other two went to the Al-Hakim Hospital in Najaf. The two in Najaf were brothers who had been working as farmers in Khan al Hammad despite being from Nasiriyah. Their dark complexion initially led the IPs to suggest that they were from Sudan, but after further investigation, the IPs determined that they were in fact Iraqis from Nasiriyah. After reporting this information to higher headquarters, the patrol moved back to FOB Lima, arriving at 0100 on 26 December. In sum, the platoon conducted six patrols on Christmas Day. Aside from three fifteen-minute gaps between patrols, Marines from CAAT B were "outside the wire, keeping the wolf away", from 0700 on 25 December until 0100 on 26 December.

On 26 December, the platoon conducted four patrols throughout the Karbala Province. Gunnery Sergeant Collins and 2nd section conducted a counter-IED sweep on ASR Cleveland during the early morning patrol. While on ASR Cleveland, the platoon sergeant identified a new IP checkpoint approximately five kilometers northeast of the Imam Hussein and Abbas Shrines. CAAT B Marines had repeatedly recommended that the IPs establish a checkpoint in this vicinity in order to have a defense in depth against SVBIED attacks. Had this checkpoint been in existence and properly manned on 19 December, the SVBIED that detonated less than fifty meters from "Ring Road" would have been stopped at least five kilometers beforehand. The platoon's next two patrols returned to the FOB with nothing significant to report. Lieutenant Cuomo and 1st section departed on the platoon's final patrol of the day at 2000. Approximately twenty minutes into the patrol the battalion operations officer "Palerider 3" tasked CAAT B to link-up with the IPs at the Joint Coordination Center (JCC) and investigate a potential IED maker's home in the southwest corner of Karbala. After linking-up with the IPs the patrol moved to a house that had been destroyed by an explosion. Little remained at the house upon the patrol's arrival because the IPs had already conducted an investigation of the site. After talking to investigators on the scene, the patrol moved to a nearby police station, where Lieutenant Cuomo spoke to Colonel Majid. The colonel explained that the IPs had discovered TNT, a Dragunov Sniper Rifle with a Night Vision Scope, and a red Opel vehicle with Baghdad license plates at the house. The patrol took pictures of the sniper rifle and night vision scope, recorded the locations of the TNT and vehicle, thanked the IPs for their help, and then returned to the FOB at 2245.

The LAR platoon conducted local security patrols from midnight to 0400 every night during December. Lieutenant Jake MacDonald, Staff Sergeant Jason Smith, or Sergeant Michael Allen led the patrols. They worked on cross-training vehicle commanders in patrol preparation and conduct of the patrol. All of the patrols were uneventful.

Throughout the month of December, the LAR platoon conducted unit training to include: LAV crew gunnery, LGST, LAV driver training, vehicle/scout integration, urban patrolling, MEDIVAC procedures, daily physical training, and Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) training.

Battery R continued its mission of guarding FOB Hotel during December. It also continued its enduring artillery mission of continuously maintaining the capability to provide artillery fire. Daily civil affairs patrols were conducted throughout the month. The patrols were completed without encountering hostility from the enemy, and there were no major accidents or mishaps.

The engineers continued clearing houses with Task Force Bruno until the 10th. For the remainder of December, Engineer Platoon was attached to 2nd CEB in Fallujah and tasked with various counter-mobility and survivability missions. From the 11th until the 17th, the platoon constructed Entry Control Point One (ECP-1). It was the main entry point for civilians returning to the war-ravaged city.

On 20 December, the engineers constructed two bunkers to serve as checkpoints for the Iraqi Interim Police that provided protection for the city's main sewer lift and a secondary sewer lift station. The

following day, the platoon constructed concertina barriers inside four high-rise apartment buildings that overlooked the mayor's compound and the main Combat Operations Center (COC) for RCT-1. The barriers were constructed to prevent possible enemy access to the upper floors that provided observation into the compound.

Two more bunkers were constructed on the 23rd to serve as checkpoints for the Iraqi Interim Police who were protecting the main electrical substation that powered the northwestern quarter of Fallujah. The following day, 3rd squad prepared Arabic-language mine warning signs. On 25 December, the platoon used the signs to mark over four kilometers of un-cleared area adjacent to the railroad tracks on the north side of Fallujah. For the remainder of December, the engineers performed maintenance and returned by convoy to FOB hotel on the 31st.

Tank platoon was still occupying the Delta Iraqi National Guard (DING) compound in December. They were originally scheduled to be detached from 1/5 Cavalry on the 1st of the month, but were not actually released until the 10th. On 2 December, while still attached with 1/5 Cavalry, they established an observation point known as "Hill 66" on MSR Mobile. Prior to their arrival at "Hill 66" they had a 24-hour maintenance stand-down that also allowed the platoon time to recognize the promotions of John Bultema and Robert Trevino to the rank of Corporal. Most of the tanker's time at "the hill" was spent guarding a nearby TCP. They were also given the mission of assisting a raid on some nearby houses.

The BLT commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Mayer, and Sergeant Major Jayme Winders visited the platoon along with other officers of the BLT on the 8th. They brought the good news that the Heavy Equipment Transport Systems (HETS) were scheduled to pick up the tanks for a return to FOB Hotel on the 10th. At approximately 2200 on 10 December, the platoon started its convoy to FOB Hotel and arrived around 0700 the following morning.

The 12th brought a day of relaxation and remembrance of the Marine Corp Birthday with two beers and a shot of rum for all legal drinking age military personal. Volleyball, table tennis, flag-football tournaments, and "spades" card tournaments were also included as part of the days activities. The platoon didn't fair well with the spades or volleyball tournaments, but made it to the finals of the football tournament after defeating the all-officer's team 20-0 in the semi-final. The tankers played a hard final game but fell short to H&S Company who took home the title. Everyone in the platoon was happy with the outcome considering they had been in the middle of the fighting and gone for nearly a month and a half; everyone felt tanks had represented well. After taking a day off after the glorious win over the officers, it was back to work at 0800 the following morning as the tankers started to tackle the job of replacing the tanks shoes on their tracks. That and other maintenance issues became their top priority for the duration of the month.

The Reconnaissance Platoon assumed more operational responsibility in Najaf as other units headed north to aid the operations in Al Anbar province or to support the assault in Fallujah. The platoon increased its operational tempo and made a seamless

transition to absorb any gaps that were created in the security patrol schedule when the units were deployed. The platoon also increased its civil affairs operations to improve the infrastructure in An Najaf and the surrounding area of Abbasiya. The Marines were committed to making sure the missions came first, even with the approaching holidays and everything going on around them offering daily distractions.

In 2004, the Reconnaissance Platoon conducted more than 200 combat patrols and missions in Iraq. December's patrols included multiple Close Target Reconnaissance missions in support of the Multi-National Coalition - Iraq (MNC-I), personal security details (PSD) for key personnel, and convoy security for KBR personnel to Ad Diwaniyah. Additionally, the platoon still continued its enduring missions of conducting area/zone reconnaissance (as well as counter-mortar patrols), route recon patrols, counter-IED sweeps, and detainee transportation missions.

Recon conducted a two-week Helicopter Rope Suspension Training (HRST) package. The course was designed to enhance the Marines' knowledge and to re-familiarize them with the types of knots that are utilized throughout the Reconnaissance community. The curriculum that was developed met and exceeded the standards of 1st Marine Division's Helicopter Rope Suspension Training school. The HRST course consisted of HRST policies, responsibilities, safety, Special Patrol Insert Extract (SPIE) terminology, HRST terminology, knots, equipment nomenclature, tower rigging, and aircraft rigging for UH-1N, CH-46E and CH-53E helicopters.

The platoon then conducted two days of SPIE practical application utilizing the venerable CH-46E. Over a two-day period, the platoon completed twenty-five lifts that resulted in 150 personnel being able to grasp the fundamentals of SPIE rigging. One lift was used especially for Sergeant Balkowitsch who conducted his second reenlistment while attached to his SPIE rope and suspended hundreds of feet in the air beneath the helicopter. Upon completion of the HRST course, the platoon focused its training on an Assault Climbers package. The classroom training was conducted at Forward Operating Base Duke. The practical application was conducted along the escarpment just to the Northwest of An Najaf. The platoon's training was not limited to just HRST/Assault Climbers courses; it also focused on small unit leadership training to include guided discussions, technical military instruction preparation (power point usage), professional reading and physical training.

The Reconnaissance Platoon had four Marines depart Iraq in December. Their support, motivation, commitment, and devotion to duty brought great success to the platoon during the deployment. Corporal Jonathon Kelly moved to another level in the reconnaissance community. His orders were to report to 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina in February 2005. Corporal Jacob Dessem, Corporal Hunt Collins and Corporal James Wakefield had orders to report to the Basic Airborne School in Fort Benning, Georgia for training. Airborne school is part of a reconnaissance Marine's military occupational specialty career progression. It enhances 1st Reconnaissance Battalion's capabilities for filling the table of organization for a qualified jump team in the future. The platoon will sorely miss the departing Marines. The platoon continued to be

resilient and unswerving while constantly adapting to a fluid combat environment. They proved to be an integral part of the BLT and the 11th MEU (SOC).

The AAV platoon was ordered to detach from 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines on 5 December, but stayed one extra day to assist in a raid to capture suspected militia forces at a small farming community on the Northwest side of Fallujah. The following evening, the platoon returned to Camp Fallujah to retrograde with the other BLT units back to FOB Hotel. On the 10th, the tank platoon and the first seven AAVs were transported back to FOB Hotel on HETs. Two days later, the remaining eight AAVs and the engineer assets were transported to FOB Hotel. From 13 to 31 December, the AAV Marines began to clean and repair the AAVs in preparation for their upcoming transit to Kuwait. From there, they would be loaded onto ships along with all of the platoon's gear and equipment to be transported back to San Diego.

Scout Sniper teams 1 and 3 continued to conduct combat operations with RCT-1 Forward in Fallujah during the first week of December. They provided over-watch as the regiment established itself on the battlefield. The positions chosen by the snipers allowed them to oversee their supported units as they continued to clear small pockets of insurgents occupying houses throughout Fallujah. On December 10th, the Scout Sniper teams were detached from RCT-1 and returned to BLT 1/4 via a convoy to FOB Hotel. While at FOB Hotel, the Marines were able to refit their equipment and rest. The Scout Sniper Platoon moved to FOB Lima on 20 December to conduct SASO operations.

Personnel and Administration

1. Legal

Company Non-Judicial Punishment	9
Battalion Non-Judicial Punishment	14
Summary Courts Martial	0
Special Courts Martial	2
General Courts Martial	0
JAG Investigations	14
Administrative Separations	1
Request Masts	0

2. Awards

Navy and Marine Corps Medals	1
Bronze Star Medals	4
Purple Hearts	6
Navy Commendation Medals	15
Navy Achievement Medals	32
Certificate of Commendation	63
Meritorious Masts	14

Logistics and Embarkation

Prior to the BLT's debarkation from amphibious shipping on July 6th, the Logistics Officer ensured that proper planning had been done to promote a smooth off-load and subsequent movement north to Camp Virginia, Kuwait. A quartering party was sent ashore; they prepared

the necessary groundwork to allow the remainder of the BLT to efficiently debark. From the onset however, the Logistics & Embarkation Staff (S-4) encountered friction due to a lack of communication between the MEU S-4, located aboard the amphibious ships, and their advance party at the Kuwait Naval Base (KNB). Despite the unfavorable circumstances, the BLT S-4 proceeded on its own initiative and continued to execute the plan that was briefed to the MEU's Commanding Officer. Because the MEU's advance party was operating on an unbriefed and completely different plan, the BLT was faced with numerous shortfalls. Authorization for movement had not been coordinated through the Movement Control Teams, and the MEU provided no secondary sources of communication. Nonetheless, the S-4 continued to execute their plan and successfully off-loaded the BLT, and then completed the movement to Camp Virginia with all equipment and personnel accounted for.

Once established at Camp Virginia, the S-4 transitioned from debarkation to logistical support of the BLT's training package and "vehicle hardening" process. As training began, the Motorized Transportation Section (Motor T) saw numerous vehicles, which were signed over to the BLT just before their departure, break under the rigors of training. The vehicle hardening process did not function as smoothly as originally anticipated, but it was completed in time for the BLT's movement to their Area of Operation (AO). The S-4 sent some of its Marines with the BLT's advance party to Iraq, but also comprised part of the rear party in Kuwait. The rear party ensured that the BLT occupied portion of Camp Virginia was turned over to the U.S. Army in a better state than when it was received. They also ensured that all equipment, containers and other materiel were embarked aboard trucks headed for Iraq. The rear party convoyed to Iraq with the last set of trucks destined for FOB Duke.

Members of the S-4 were distributed across all three of the BLT occupied FOBs for their efforts to best support the battalion. At each FOB, the BLT began the Relief In Place (RIP) process with their U.S. Army counterparts. Once the RIP was completed, the S-4 began the lengthy process of improvements to FOB infrastructure and build-up of emergency supplies. The goal was to have five DOS of Class I on hand and adequate Class III. The process of closing FOB Baker was discussed, and a detailed plan was developed.

The first part of August was spent properly equipping the ING/IP forces with weapons, ammunition, flak vests, helmets, and foodstuff. This included transporting 800 AK-47s and issuing them to ING/IP forces. The process of properly stocking FOB Hotel for future combat operations continued. FOB Hotel created a hasty Ammunition Storage Point (ASP) and began storing a variety of DODICs. As the Battalion Commander moved his forces to better support the mission, the S-4 relocated its Marines to best support the battalion. On August 5th, an UH-1N Iroquois Gunship was felled by enemy fire. The S-4 was called upon to extract the entire helicopter and return it safely with all its equipment to FOB Hotel. The logistics Marines escorted a civilian crane, operated by a Marine from the CEB platoon, to the crash site. They posted security while the chopper was loaded onto the back of two MTVRs. The aircraft was then safely delivered to FOB Hotel. The following several days were spent providing supplies to BLT units that were engaged in combat within the An Najaf cemetery. Initially, this

was accomplished by pushing supplies directly to the company positions, but soon the combat train could not keep up with the demand of the companies and attachments. Consequently, the S-4 emplaced a Resupply Rally Point (RRP) to better support the battalion. At the RRP, the BLT's many Company Gunnery Sergeants could draw supplies such as ammunition, Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), and bottled water. Meanwhile, the lone combat train could push supplies and materiel to a single location: the RRP. A cease-fire was called August 8th, so the RRP was collapsed and returned back to FOB Hotel.

Following the halt in offensive operations, the S-4 continued to increase its supplies of Class I and Class V materiel. They also provided continuous logistical support during the numerous raids conducted by the BLT. Beginning on August 21st, the S-4 began the process of selecting future RRP's for offensive operations, and identified passable routes through the cemetery by conducting several leader's recons and site surveys. A suitable site was located, and on August 23rd the logistics Marines departed FOB Hotel and established an RRP to support the BLT during combat operations. Charlie Company entered the Old City of An Najaf that evening and established a foothold for the battalion by clearing and occupying a large building on the outer edge of the city. Shortly thereafter, the S-4's combat trains began the task of supplying the companies with victuals, water, ammunition, and Class II items. Making numerous runs into the city under intense enemy fire, the combat trains successfully delivered all of the combat essential materiel. Back at FOB Hotel, a Logistics Operations Center (LOC) was emplaced to serve as a hub for all resupply requests received from the RRP. Additionally, a Casualty Collection Point (CCP) was established at the RRP; it was used to stabilize casualties prior to their helicopter flight to FOB Hotel or Babylon. Throughout the engagement, the sections within the S-4 performed flawlessly and provided continuous support of the entire BLT. On August 29th, the RRP was collapsed and all units returned to FOB Hotel. Upon return, the BLT S-4 immediately shifted its efforts to attaining gear accountability, and initiated the process of replenishing stocks that were expended during the course of offensive operations.

During the month of September, the logistics platoon stayed very busy. After a full month of fighting, many logistical functions that had not been a priority during combat needed much attention. First and foremost, equipment maintenance needed direct attention. Lieutenant Nathan Woodside, the battalion's maintenance materials officer (MMO) was moved from FOB Echo, Ad Diwaniyah to FOB Hotel, An Najaf so that he would be co-located with 90% of the BLT's equipment. The platoon constantly strived to strike a balance between maintenance and continuing operations. The motor transport section conducted much needed maintenance on the battalion's rolling stock. Additionally, limited technical inspections (LTIs) were conducted on the M1116 Up-Armored HMMWVs (UAHs) that the BLT received from the MEU. Maintenance "contact" teams were dispatched on numerous occasions resulting in efficient repairs and a continued high standard of constant asset availability.

The armory section traveled to all of the BLT's FOBs to conduct LTIs on its weapons systems. This two-week process ensured that weapons were properly inspected and then submitted into the maintenance cycle. Second echelon repairs were made on-site and weapons that

required third echelon maintenance were evacuated in a timely manner. Within eight hours of receiving forty-three M-4 rifles, LTIs & PFIs were completed and the weapons were distributed to the infantry companies within the battalion.

The field mess section continued to assist The Event Source (TES) in operating the dining facility (DFAC). The Field Mess Chief maintained an inventory of all the bottled water and provisions aboard the FOB. Additionally, incoming PWC trucks were monitored and then returned to Scania once the victuals were fully off-loaded. The field mess section did have a difficult time finding a balance between storing provender and returning PWC trucks in a timely manner. Proper storage containers for comestibles were not available at FOB Hotel, so the PWC trucks were utilized. Consequently, the pool of trucks available for delivering viands was decreased.

Corporal Dwayne Dockings became the acting Supply Chief at FOB Hotel while Gunnery Sergeant Peter Wojczak was located at FOB Echo. Corporal Dockings receipted for the battalion's uniform replacement requirements, placed them on order, and once received, issued them to the proper units. Additionally, he was pivotal in receiving the numerous "open purchase" items that were placed on order prior to departing San Diego. He tracked the outstanding items, and once received, ensured that they were added to the proper CMRs and distributed according to plan. The supply section continued to track the on-hand MREs and ensured that the battalion maintained the MEF directed fifteen DOS.

Largely due to the commitment of logistics Marines to supporting combat operations, FOB improvements had been postponed during July and August. During the month of September though, the S-4 began supporting the time consuming process of moving KBR assets from FOB Baker to FOB Hotel. The "Four Horsemen" supported security escorts from Baker to Hotel as well as re-supply runs to Babylon. By late September, KBR had erected a temporary dining facility and completed the construction of a weight lifting tent and an entertainment tent. FOB Hotel also had a laundry service building constructed as well as a fully functional wash rack.

In the last days of September, Captain Duane Forsberg, Lieutenant Stanley Bednar, and Staff Sergeant Val Tunnell attended retrograde meetings. In conjunction with the operations section, the BLT's initial TPFDD data was developed and a rear party was assembled. In the following months, the TPFDD data will continue to be adjusted as further planning is conducted.

During the month of October, the logistics platoon was tasked as the primary convoy security element for KBR and other contractors. The platoon was on the road daily delivering viands to the Agricultural Center and also conducted counter-mortar patrols when the BLT's assets were stretched thin. The platoon spent so many hours on the road that the BLT's Commanding Officer determined that it was necessary to provide the logistic platoon's convoy commander with a Blue Force Tracker and FBCB2.

Maintenance of the BLT's vehicles was continuous. The HMMWVs that had additional armor installed while in Kuwait began to have

numerous maintenance issues. The most significant and costly being faulty transmissions. The added weight of the armor was too much for the stock transmissions to handle and slippage in the gears became a common occurrence. The BLT quickly exhausted the transmissions that were available in the Class IX block. It became apparent that acquiring transmissions in Iraq would prove to be a formidable task. Vehicles lingered on the deadline report while waiting for repair parts. Another problem caused by the increased weight of the HMMWV armor was overcompression of the suspension springs. The HMMWVs with the installed armor had only an inch of travel in the springs; they were nearly completely compressed. Tie rods began to break under the stress of the weight, and the front tires had excessive wear due to the tires toeing out. Gunnery Sergeant Roger Borst acted quickly and ordered springs designed for the new Up-Armored HMMWV (UAH) that would be able to handle the increased load of the armor. Replacement springs began arriving at the BLT towards the end of October and the mechanics began the installation process. Annual preventative maintenance (PM) was completed as scheduled. Maintenance "contact" teams were dispatched on numerous occasions resulting in efficient repairs and a continued high standard of constant asset availability.

The armory section continued traveling to all the FOBs to conduct LTIs on the BLT's weapons systems. This process normally takes two weeks, ensuring that the weapons are properly LTI'd and then submitted into the maintenance cycle. 2nd echelon repairs were completed on-site and weapons that required 3rd echelon maintenance were evacuated in a timely manner. Gunnery Sergeant Zachary Rhodes ensured that weapons company had their CLUs inducted into the maintenance cycle. The CLUs required an updated version of computer software due to malfunctions in the missile guiding system. The CLUs were shipped to Al Taqaddum and the required data was loaded, thereby making the entire lot of CLUs mission capable.

The field mess section conducted a turnover with ESS who replaced TES as the Dining Facility (DFAC) managers. The Field Mess Chief maintained an inventory of all the bottled water and provisions aboard the FOB. Additionally, incoming PWC trucks were monitored and then returned to Scania once the victuals were fully off-loaded. Last month it was reported that the Mess Chief was struggling to find adequate storage room for the incoming viands. When ESS arrived to FOB Hotel, they brought adequate storage containers with them to contain all the provender. The field mess section made deliveries to the out-posted platoons at the Agricultural Compound three times per day.

Corporal Dwayne Dockings and his supply Marines acquired the materials necessary to construct TCP/VCP kits for all of the maneuver units within the BLT. Additionally, Lance Corporal Andrew Yi continued to manage the DSAF and tracked all repairables from Taqaddum to FOB Hotel/Duke. He tracked the "open purchase" items that were placed on order aboard the USS Belleau Wood, or ordered prior to departing San Diego. He ensured that outstanding items, once received, were added to the proper CMRs and distributed according to plan. The supply section continued to track the on-hand MREs and ensured that the battalion maintained the MEF directed fifteen DOS.

FOB improvements continued during the month of October. KBR began the process of erecting living containers that would replace the

tents in which Marines dwelt. The tent living area was fitting referred to as "tent city". Providing power to the containers became an issue as KBR was running short on the cable required to run from the power source to the living container. Additionally, generators aboard the FOB had been experiencing significant maintenance issues. KBR placed an order for new generators that that would be shipped from Dubai, UAE. The generators were due to arrive in late December or early January.

The Logistics Officer continued to participate in the battalion's retrograde planning. The early redeployment sticks for Marines who were leaving the Marine Corps or changing duty stations was reviewed and confirmed, and an Available Load Date (ALD) was identified. On 28 October, the S-4 sent Lieutenant Stanley Bednar up to Abu Gharayb Prison to provide Team Blackhorse logistics support while they were supporting Operation Phantom Fury.

During the month of November, the Logistics Platoon continued to provide convoy security for KBR and other contractors. They were on the road daily, either making chow deliveries to the Joint Coordination Center (JCC) at the Agriculture Compound or conducting counter mortar patrols when the BLT was stretched thin on assets. Additionally, the "Four horsemen" conducted four convoys up to Fallujah to deliver ammunition, mail, and other required supplies to the units supporting Operation Phantom Fury.

Maintenance of the BLT's rolling stock was continuous. The transmission issues reported last month continued to be a problem in November. Replacement transmissions were not provided to the BLT due to availability issues. The Up-Armored HMMWV (UAH) springs ordered by Gunnery Sergeant Roger Borst continued to come in at a slow, but steady rate. As the springs were received, they were mounted on the BLT's vehicles. Priority was given to the units that are on the road the most, beginning with the CAAT Platoons and the commanding officer's PSD. Annual preventative maintenance was completed as scheduled. Gunnery Sergeant Roger Borst provided a maintenance "contact team" and truck to support Task Force Blackhorse that was supporting Operation Phantom Fury. The contact team stayed very busy and managed to maintain a high level of vehicle readiness, even when faced with limited Class IX support from the supported unit (759th MP Battalion). Contact teams were dispatched from FOB Hotel on numerous occasions resulting in efficient repairs and continued asset availability.

The Field Mess section lead by Staff Sergeant Howard Jones did a fantastic job coordinating both the Marine Corps birthday meal as well as Thanksgiving dinner. Both meals helped to boost morale throughout the FOB. The Field Mess Chief maintained an inventory of all the bottled water and provisions aboard the FOB. Additionally, incoming PWC trucks were monitored and then returned to Scania once the victuals were fully off-loaded. The field mess section made deliveries to the out-posted platoons at the Agricultural Compound twice daily.

Corporal Dwayne Dockings returned to San Diego; he had completed his service obligation to the Marine Corps. Lance Corporal Manual Aguilar took over as the Supply Chief for FOB Hotel. A "squared away" Marine, Lance Corporal Aguilar provided fantastic support resulting in a seamless transition from one chief to another. Lance Corporal Justin

Talbert arrived at FOB Hotel at the end of November to assist Lance Corporal Aguilar in his duties. Additionally, Lance Corporal Yi continued to manage the DSAF and tracked all repairable items from Taqaddum (TQ) to FOB Hotel/Duke. The FSSG announced that the MEU would be entering "Fill or Kill" mode regarding the requisition of repairable items. Basically, if the part were not in stock at TQ when the order was received by TQ, the order would be cancelled. Corporal Dockings also continued to track the "open purchase" items that were placed on order aboard the USS Belleau Wood, or ordered prior to departing San Diego. He ensured that outstanding items, once received, were added to the proper CMRs and distributed according to plan. The supply section continued to track the on-hand MREs. The MEF determined that fifteen DOS of MREs was no longer required; fifteen DOS was required in preparation for Operation Phantom Fury. The BLT was ordered to transition to seven DOS of MREs.

FOB improvements continued during the month of November. All available living containers had power routed to them and were complete. Generators aboard the FOB continued to experience significant maintenance issues. KBR placed an order for new generators to be shipped from Dubai, UAE. Projected receipt of generators is late December to early January. Retrograde planning continued in earnest. The early redeployment sticks for Marines who were leaving the Marine Corps or changing duty stations were validated, and an Available Load Date (ALD) was identified.

The Logistics Platoon "Four Horsemen" found themselves on the road more than ever in December. They were tasked with coordinating the retrieval of tanks, AAVs, and the CEB's tracked assets. Initially, this only included cross coordination with the CULT assets and various logistic sections in the Fallujah area. But the simple coordination task soon evolved into assuming the responsibility as the convoy commander for all movements to and from Najaf and Fallujah. When all of the gear was accounted for at FOB Hotel, and the mission was deemed complete, the "Four Horsemen" had made four round trips up to Camp Fallujah. On 22 December, the S-4 was notified that the BLT would be provided with three UAHs to replace the assets destroyed while supporting Operation Phantom Fury. The "Four Horsemen" were again called upon to receipt for these assets. That included providing the necessary drivers and assistant drivers for the newly acquired vehicles. The following day, the "Four Horsemen" convoyed to Camp Fallujah to deliver mail to the engineer platoon that was still supporting 3rd Battalion 5th Marines. All of the missions were a success due to the employment of proper convoy procedures and the fine leadership found at every rank in the S-4.

Lieutenant Nathan "lady-killer" Woodside and Staff Sergeant Howard Jones departed for FOB Lima, Karbala to establish a logistics detachment to provide support for the Marines at Lima. They took a Motor Transport contact-truck with two mechanics and one armorer with them. The detachment, lead by Lieutenant Woodside was responsible for interfacing with KBR and ensuring Alpha and Bravo Companies were properly supported. FOB Hotel pushed logistic support to FOB Lima in the form of transportation during the movement of forces.

Maintenance of the BLT's vehicles was continuous. There was only one Up-Armored HMMWV (UAH) still down for a faulty transmission. A

projected receipt date for the much needed transmission had not been identified due to availability issues. There were still HMMWVs that lacked the necessary UAH springs and that issue was a concern for the redeployment convoy to Kuwait. Annual preventative maintenance was completed as scheduled.

The Field Mess Chief, Staff Sergeant Howard Jones, departed for FOB Lima. He would be acting as the Logistics Chief for that FOB. Corporal Javier Martinez stepped up as the Field Mess Chief at FOB Hotel. The Marines of the Field Mess Section were very busy supporting the numerous convoys the S-4 was tasked with. On 12 December, Corporal Martinez coordinated with KBR to provide a picnic type meal for the BLT Morale Day. As always, the meal was superb and the cooks' hard work did not go unnoticed.

The replacement generators that KBR placed on order had not yet arrived, thus generators aboard the FOB continued to experience significant maintenance issues. Projected receipt of generators remained at late December to early January. New shower units were being installed, as the old units had become electrical hazards. Retrograde planning continued in earnest. The early redeployment sticks for Marines who were leaving the Marine Corps or changing duty stations were validated, and an Available Load Date (ALD) was identified. Advance Party numbers were validated and convoy compositions for the movements to Kuwait were completed.

Intelligence

The BLT's mission of supporting Stability And Security Operations (SASO), initially considered by some to be a quiet and easy role, quickly changed to full-scale military combat operations in An Najaf. The battalion immediately shifted its focus and organization in order to stem the violence incited by the Mahdi Militia within a day of their Relief In Place (RIP) being completed with the U.S. Army. That rapid turn of events validated the watchword preached by the battalion's Military Intelligence Officer (S-2) of, "Be ready... Do not put off what you can do now, for what you may or could do in the future". As a result of the S-2's pre-deployment and transitional preparation, they had already produced and distributed most of the products necessary in support of operations in An Najaf and Ad Diwaniyah. They were also able to fulfill most of the immediate requests in support of the mission to destroy the Mahdi Militia and return the city of An Najaf to the local Iraqi Government.

Accomplishing RSO&I from Camp Virginia, Kuwait to the 11th MEU(SOC) AOR in Iraq occupied the S-2 during the beginning of July. During the first week, they tracked the latest information from the new AOR, and also participated in numerous SASO training events. The S2 started to focus on the advance party movement (ADVON) from Kuwait to Iraq that was scheduled to depart on July 11th and arrive in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq on July 16th. The preparations for movement into Iraq included loading computer equipment and mission essential gear, which required detailed liaison with several logistical components within the battalion and with convoy commanders.

The S2 ADVON (Staff Sergeant Cecilio Berrios, Corporal Clint Merchen, and Lance Corporals Daniel Rice and Samuel McAfee) arrived in

Ad Diwaniyah and An Najaf (FOBs Echo and Hotel respectively) around July 16th. Upon arrival, they conducted immediate liaison with their counterparts of the units scheduled for the RIP. At FOB Hotel, the 1ID Division Artillery Battalion turned over with the battalion S2 (Captain Michael Wilbur, Corporal Clint Merchen and Lance Corporal Samuel McAfee); FOB Echo was turned over by the 1-14 Cavalry, 2 BCT, 25 ID. The Battalion Landing Team (BLT) was distributed over three locations (FOBs Duke, Hotel, and Echo) in order to provide adequate forces and Command & Control (C2) for both An Najaf and Ad Diwaniyah and their respective provinces. This division of forces at different locations necessitated the separate liaison. The FOB Echo S-2 (Staff Sergeant Cecilio Berrios and Lance Corporal Daniel Rice) combined their resources with elements from the 11th MEU(SOC) Command Element (CE) and MSSG-11 to form a consolidated intelligence section. This greatly facilitated intelligence collection and dissemination throughout the Ad Diwaniyah area.

The remainder of July was spent working with and turning over with the U.S. Army units established in the AOR. The Battalion S2 element at FOB Hotel in An Najaf, Iraq was busy learning the "ins and outs" of that religiously important city, and also worked on screening Individual Augments (IAs) to work inside the S2 shop. The Marines that were augmented to work in the S2 shop at FOB Hotel were 1st Lieutenant D. M. Post, Lieutenant K. Max Pettit (BLT Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer, USN), and Lance Corporal Shedden. The entire S2 was busy providing full-scale intelligence support, to include countless map products, and full mission support to operations and planning.

The month of August proved to be extremely busy. The Battalion S2 was still split into two elements, located in An Najaf and Ad Diwaniyah, and both were continuing to track and document enemy movements within the Battalion's AOR. Around August 5th in An Najaf, the main Iraqi Police (IP) station near Revolutionary Circle was attacked by elements loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr (Muqtada Militia) with small arms, machinegun fire and RPGs. The battalion created a QRF force consisting of Charlie Company, LAR, CAAT A, and the BLT Forward command. Departing at approximately 0200, the QRF drove south on route Miami to the police station, but the attack had ended. The QRF drove through the city for approximately one additional hour to ensure that everything remained quiet. Upon returning to base and after eating breakfast, there were reports of a second attack occurring at the police station. Once again the QRF prepared to move south; however, based on the JCC's reporting, the decision was made to take most of the elements but leave some Marines and vehicles at the FOB since this disturbance was only an extension of the early morning attack against the police station. As the QRF convoy drove south on ASR Miami (Iraqi Highway 9), its forward units received fire in the vicinity of the petroleum plant near Revolutionary Circle; this initial contact led to three days of continuous combat within the cemetery. During this time, FOB Hotel was the center of operations for offensive actions against the Muqtada Militia (MM) in An Najaf. During the fighting, the Intelligence Officer and his staff continued to provide updates from UAV imagery collection over the cemetery and the surrounding city. During these three days of combat, the battalion fought from east to west and secured half of the southern portion of the cemetery. Eventually, the decision was made to have the battalion return to FOB Hotel after they had advanced all the way to "Ring Road" surrounding

the Imam Ali Mosque. At that time, MNCI did not want BLT 1/4 to penetrate any further into the city of An Najaf. For the remainder of the week, the battalion was in constant contact with the Mahdi Militia while conducting armed reconnaissance and security patrols throughout An Najaf. While conducting these patrols, Marines routinely contacted three to five-man teams armed with RPGs, AK47s and RPKs. On a couple of occasions, the patrols were attacked by small squads attempting to conduct ambushes by combining 60mm or 82mm mortars with their machineguns and RPGs. During each of these attacks, the Marines returned fire and sustained only minor injuries and damage to vehicles from fragmentation and bullet impacts. Injuries to Marines were minimal due to the special glass and armor plating of their vehicles.

Within a week, the decision was made that the Mahdi Militia would have to be removed from the Old City of An Najaf, and that Sadr would have to leave the Imam Ali Mosque that he currently occupied. Two U.S. Army mechanized infantry battalions joined BLT 1/4: 1-5 Cavalry, and 2-7 Cavalry from the 1CD (1st Cavalry Division) located in Baghdad, Iraq. The S-2 of 1-5 Cavalry and BLT 1/4 actively worked together as operational planning to attack the Mahdi Militia commenced. The BLT's S2 worked targeting issues and intelligence reporting, plus coordinated with adjacent battalion S2s/HHQ. They provided real-time intelligence and intelligence products to BLT Marines in support of the two-week operation.

The battalion's Military Intelligence Marines supported all phases of combat operations throughout its active combat phase in An Najaf. The Battalion S2 Forward was fully supporting the Battalion Commander in the field, and was lead by Captain Michael Wilbur with the assistance of Lance Corporal Clint Merchen. While the S-2 Forward was engaged in pushing information to the battalion Combat Operations Center (COC) at FOB Hotel, the Marines and Sailor located there (Lieutenant Max Pettit, USN, 1st Lieutenant David Post, Staff Sergeant Cecilio Berrios and Lance Corporal Andrew Shedden) maintained a 24-hour watch schedule in order to facilitate all planning requirements and intelligence dissemination. They were responsible for aiding in all operational planning, and for ensuring all products necessary for mission accomplishment were disseminated to all companies with the battalion. During these operations, the S2 produced hundreds of maps, images, diagrams and overlays to support the Marines in the fight. With the enormous volume being produced, they used four high volume printer cartridges in just three weeks. (In contrast, during combat operations of one-year prior, they only used nine cartridges over an entire nine-month campaign.) During this same time, the MEU S2 produced over 200 products to support the Marines fighting in the cemetery. Throughout the month of August, the battalion was involved in numerous raids and engagements around the Imam Ali Mosque, in the Old City of An Najaf, in Al Kufa (East-northeast of An Najaf, close to the Euphrates River), and in the An Najaf Cemetery. Throughout all phases and operations, the Battalion S2 tracked enemy movement and current reporting, as well as provided the best enemy update available to the companies prior to any major engagement.

The last days of August saw an end to major combat operations and a return to the SASO mission originally assigned to the battalion. The Battalion S2 had to scale down combat mission planning, and start creating products to support historical records. These records would

be maintained in the case of enemy abuses of the local Iraq Security Forces or the public at large. They also prepared for Civil Affairs operations and SASO.

The Intelligence (S-2) platoon continued to provide support to the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) throughout September. They provided intelligence updates, product support, and debriefing/briefing of all incoming and outgoing Marine and Army patrols. The "Intel" Marines maintained a 24-hour Combat Operations Center (COC) duty post and continued to track enemy movements in the BLT's Area of Responsibility (AOR). They also monitored "Indications & Warnings" through every intelligence channel available that might indicate any type of planned or perceived attacks against the BLT. With the end of hostilities in Najaf, the battalion became involved in full spectrum Security and Stabilization Operations (SASO). This included, but was not limited to, assessments on schools, hospitals, clinics, police stations, power distribution stations, and water management stations. The S-2 rebuilt civil affair assessments and tracking formats, much like the ones the shop had developed the previous year during OIF I, for all information relating to Civilian Military Operations and to the overall sentiment of the populace in the districts of Najaf Province.

In September, the S-2 shop lost a couple of Marines that had augmented the staff. Lance Corporal Andrew Shedden returned to his former command at I MEF due to augmentation limitations and manpower shortages. 1st Lieutenant Jason Hunn continued learning the responsibilities as the assistant Intelligence Officer. As a radio and signals intelligence officer, Lieutenant Hunn was not required to take the ground intelligence course that is required for other Intel officers. As a result, he had a steep learning curve with an enormous amount of information to learn while simultaneously performing his normal daily duties. While absorbing the new information, he rapidly developed a keen understanding of his role and eventually provided the level of support found in an experienced ground intelligence officer. He assisted in numerous mission briefs, and helped prepare the daily Operations & Intelligence (Ops/Intel) brief. The Ops/Intel brief was attended by all of the BLT's primary staff members and all augment commanders to the BLT. The Intelligence Officer, Captain Michael Wilbur, normally handled the Intel portion of the brief, but within three weeks as an assistant, Lieutenant Hunn was able to perform the brief. This freed the Intel Officer, allowing him to travel to other FOBs to conduct his additional duties as Force Protection Officer.

With the end of hostilities in An Najaf and the Battalion's rapid transition to civil affairs operations, the S-2 monitored enemy actions throughout the province and surrounding areas of interest. The Intelligence specialists maintained a vigilant watch over known problem-areas inside the city of An Najaf and tracked the Muqtada Militia (MM) and Muqtada al Sadr (MAS) activity throughout the province. During this time the MM and MAS factions pushed deep underground in the Najaf area and were observed traveling north to Sadr city to resume hostilities in that area. They were later crushed by the operations and actions of the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division. Due to the hostilities in the north, the S-2 spent many hours monitoring the movement of MM forces. Meanwhile, they tried to ascertain the intent of the enemy activity, should the MM leadership have desired to resume hostile actions against the Marines within the province.

Surprisingly to some, the fatwa for insurgents to lay down arms directed by Allahtoya al Sistani remained in tact and no attacks materialized during the month. There were, however, multiple "human intelligence" (HUMINT) reports of MM desiring to engage in hostile actions against the Marines, Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Guard. As a result, the intelligence department provided input to the operations department regarding recommended patrol activities, especially around the FOBs, to deter and prohibit enemy forces. The information was also sent to the Marines to help them maintain their awareness regarding a subversive enemy that was operational and still prevalent in the region.

Intelligence updates, product support, and debriefing/briefing of all incoming and outgoing Marine and Army patrols, and Department of Defense personnel passing through the FOB or conducting supporting operations in the BLT's area of responsibility (AOR) continued in October. The Intelligence Marines maintained a 24-hour Combat Operations Center (COC) watch and continued to track known and suspected enemy movements in the BLT AOR. They also monitored, through every intelligence channel, any Indications & Warnings that might indicate any type of planned or perceived attacks against the BLT. The S-2 shop was primarily occupied with full spectrum Security and Stabilization Operations (SASO) that included but was not limited to assessments on schools, hospitals, clinics, police stations, power distribution stations, and water stations. The S-2 tracked civil affair assessments, city district threat assessments, and both country and area MSR/ASR threat conditions due to the spike of IED, VBIED, mine, Small Arms Fire (SAF), and Indirect Fire Attacks against patrols and convoys moving through areas north of Al Hillah and especially in outlying areas surrounding Baghdad. In addition to daily briefs and reports, the S2 participated in numerous patrols with most members of the shop getting out into town. This allowed the Marines to personally observe areas and maintain their operational and situational awareness as they participated with the patrols and interacted with the Iraqi citizens in the city. The Iraqi people were pleased with the Marines actions and their presence; most Iraqis just went about their daily activities.

The Battalion Landing Team required an Intelligence detachment to be sent in direct support of Bravo Company while they operationally replaced Company L, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines at Abu Gharib Prison outside of Baghdad. Bravo Company's mission was to provide a QRF in the event of an attack at Abu Gharab, and provide counter IED patrols and support full spectrum combat operations as necessary. Lance Corporal Samuel McAfee was sent to perform all intelligence related tasks in accordance with the planned movement of combat forces to AO Raleigh from Najaf. All RCT-1 forces in AO Raleigh were being consolidated in support of ongoing combat operations in the Al Anbar Province, specifically for the attack to destroy all insurgents in Fallujah. The S-2 support for the mission entailed maintaining a constant link with Company B at Abu Gharab and immediately fulfilling all its support and operational needs. The support effort by the S-2 shop enabled the company to have constant visibility on enemy activity, trends and tactics throughout AO Raleigh. Lance Corporal McAfee provided Intelligence products in support of raids, cordon and knocks, IED sweeps and anti mortar patrols around Abu Gharab and the surrounding area.

The S-2 shop also monitored all activities associated with the Iraqi Voter Registration process in Najaf Province. The S-2 is not responsible for issuing information material concerning the voting process and registration but is actively tracking sites associated with the voting process in An Najaf in order to assess possible attack locations or security risks to coalition personnel.

As the Battalion Landing Team settled into full spectrum SASO, the S-2 continued to monitor enemy actions and suspected activities throughout the province and surrounding area of interest. They maintained a vigilant watch over any problem areas inside An Najaf and tracked the Muqtada Militia (MM) and Muqtada al Sadr (MAS) activity throughout the province. During this time the MM and MAS activity pushed deep underground in the Najaf area and developed smaller, less centralized groups that continued to threaten ongoing SASO and ISF in the city. The intelligence Marines spent many hours monitoring the movement of MM forces while trying to ascertain the enemy's intended activity should the MM leadership have a desire to resume hostile actions against the Marines within the province. Ayatollah al Sistani's fatwa that directed all Shia Iraqis to support and participate in the upcoming elections was continuously upheld since its inception. No MM or other Shia splinter groups conducted any type of attack against the Marines or coalition in the area. There were, however, multiple HUMINT and SIGINT reports of MM desiring to reengage in hostile actions against the Marines, Iraqi Police and Iraqi National Guard. As a result of the reports, the S-2 shop and its leader Captain Michael Wilber who was also the Force Protection Officer, made recommendations to the S-3 regarding force protection measures and patrol activities especially around the FOBs to deter and prohibit enemy forces from acting against the Marines. At the same time, the S-2 shop conducted their nightly Operations & Intelligence meeting and conducted additional pre-briefs to push information down to the Marines to help them maintain their awareness about the subversive enemy that was operational and still prevalent in the region.

The intelligence Marines successfully supported the BLT by providing intelligence products to the elements redeploying back to FOB Hotel, An Najaf, following their full spectrum operations in AO Raleigh during November. The S-2 was busy preparing for the TOA/RIP with Polish Forces in Karbala city and Karbala province. They met with intelligence counterparts and gathered the information necessary to aid the BLT in taking over Karbala and the surrounding areas of the new AO. The S-2 shop was prepared to send a small detachment of intelligence Marines that included Captain Michael Wilbur, Corporal Clint Merchen, and Lance Corporal Jarius Rice to be responsible for all intelligence flow as a part of the BLT Forward element.

As the Battalion Landing Team settled into full spectrum SASO, the S-2 continued to monitor enemy actions throughout the province and surrounding areas of interest. They maintained a vigilant watch over problem areas throughout the Najaf Province and tracked the movements of Muqtada Militia (MM) and Muqtada al Sadr's (MAS) activity throughout the province. During November, the intelligence Marines tracked political movements inside the AO and tracked possible flashpoints or friction points within the political pantheon of Shia opponents. The S-2 observed limited amounts of enemy activity throughout the Najaf

Province but there were still groups that threatened ongoing SASO and ISF within the city. Ayatollah al Sistani's fatwa still remained in effect and was continuously upheld since its inception. The recommendations to the S-3 regarding force protection measures and patrol activities were continued as a precaution.

The intelligence Marines continued to provide the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) with intelligence updates, product support, and debriefing/briefing of all incoming and outgoing Marine and Army patrols throughout December. The S-2 Marines maintained a 24-hour Combat Operations Center (COC) watch and continued to track enemy movements in the BLT AOR. They also monitored the Indications & Warnings that might indicate any type of planned or perceived attack against the BLT using every available intelligence channel. They were primarily occupied with full spectrum Security and Stabilization Operations (SASO) that included but was not limited to assessments on schools, hospitals, clinics, police stations, power distribution stations, and water stations. The Marines also tracked civil affair assessments, city district threat assessments, and the area MSR/ASR threat conditions.

The S-2 shop successfully deployed a detachment and turned over the Karbala Province with MND-CS forces in-zone. The detachment moved all its gear to Karbala that included numerous maps, special products, the S-2 HMMWV, and electronic equipment to support full spectrum SASO. While in Karbala the S-2 turned over with the Polish S-2. The Polish S-2 provided information about Karbala, but due to the reduced presence of the Polish throughout the Province (the Polish had turned over most of the province to the Iraqi National Guard and the Iraqi police) much of their information was outdated and left a large gap in current intelligence information. Additionally, the S-2 officer, in his duties as the Battalion Force Protection (FP) Officer, departed two weeks earlier than the Forward Command to conduct FP assessments and attempt to resolve as many of FP discrepancies as possible prior to the main body of Bravo and Alpha Companies arrival. During that time, Captain Wilbur identified over seventy discrepancies and resolved approximately thirty of the FP issues within three weeks as the main element of the Battalion arrived at FOB Lima. Due to the scope of the necessary work, KBR was given a Bill of Materials for over \$250,000 in FP materials needed to bring the FOB up to US military standards. After initially balking, KBR was compelled by the MEU to complete the work and contracts were emplaced to cover the FP materials and the work. The base was scheduled to be at standard by the beginning of February.

The S-2 shop also monitored all activities associated with the Iraqi Voter Registration process in Najaf Province. The S-2 is not responsible for issuing information material concerning the voting process and registration but is actively tracking sites associated with the voting process in An Najaf in order to assess possible attack locations or security risks to coalition personnel. Due to the scope of the security measures needed to increase the survivability and decrease the susceptibility of attack, Captain Wilbur was selected to assist the MEU and the two provinces with emplacing FP measures and standards. He assisted the Iraqis with building and emplacing their own security measures around the polling sites and assisted the IP and ING in correctly and efficiently developing an adequate guard force plan at each location. The polling site security process and the

city's force protection for its citizens was an ongoing project through December and would continue until the elections.

For the S-2 to facilitate its additional requirements, Lieutenant James Madrinan became the Intelligence Officer for FOB Lima. During a quick three-day turnover, Lieutenant Madrinan bird-dogged Captain Wilbur and assumed the duties as the Intel Officer while Captain Wilbur assisted with the Polling Site Force Protection in Najaf and Karbala Provinces. It was a daunting task considering that the two provinces contained approximately 500 polling sites and one million people were expected to turn out on Election Day. During the last two weeks of December, Captain Wilbur met with the MEU and Battalion staff along with the Iraqi local government to discuss site security and area security for the upcoming elections.

There were three successful IED attacks within the BLT's AOR (two in Karbala and one in Najaf) in December. There were two unsuccessful attacks as well. Of the botched attempts, one IED self-detonated and killed the suspected IED maker, destroyed his home, and killed his entire family. The other IED was discovered and successfully defused at the Karbala hospital after the Mahdi Militia requested the bodies of the self-destructive IED maker and his family. The first successful IED attack in Karbala targeted a religious Sheik of Al Sistani as he departed the Al Hussein Shrine. The second IED attack in Karbala was a suicide VBIED that detonated at an IP checkpoint and killed an IP and several civilians. Iraqi police reported that the last IED detonated after it had been thrown from a car when the vehicle's occupants approached an Iraqi traffic control point in An Najaf.

Headquarters and Services

Off-loading the Marines from their Navy ships upon arriving at the Kuwait Naval Base is where many Headquarters and Services (H&S) Company Marines are afforded the opportunity to display their specialized skills. The Logistics (S-4) Shop, which includes the embarkation/debarkation gurus, was extremely busy tracking the mass of gear and personnel that came barreling off the ships. Once the trucks, tanks, storage containers, and other gear were off-loaded, it was sent inland to Camp Virginia, Kuwait. From there H&S Company began to prepare for the long march to An Najaf, Iraq. Training commenced with MSPF (Maritime Special Purpose Force), PSD (Private Security Detail), and Scout Snipers conducting a live-fire exercise in a simulated town. The simulated town was a very good shooting range and the Marines considered the training to be realistic and beneficial. The remainder of H&S Company had planned on participating in three training events, but because oil was discovered on one of the ranges and due to a lack of time, the company consolidated its training into a one-day exercise. The ranges in Kuwait are not as restrictive (concerning which weapons systems are allowed to fire at each range) as they are at Camp Pendleton, so H&S Company had the opportunity to combine several different weapon systems and ammunitions into one training event. At one point, Marines were firing the M240G and MK19 while using smoke to simulate combat conditions.

After the completion of training in Kuwait, H&S prepared its personnel and equipment for the convoy north into Iraq. Several units departed two days early to ensure facilities were prepared for the

battalion's arrival. The trip proved to be difficult because of safety concerns on several key roads. The MEU Commander, Colonel Haslaam, chose to send the battalion on different roads, which were unimproved, dirt roads because of the higher degree of safety from enemy contact on these roads. The roads were very dusty, but the battalion arrived at its destination safely.

Communications Platoon was very busy in Kuwait unloading all its equipment, receiving and distributing new equipment, such as the Blue Force Tracker (BFT) System, and preparing for the movement to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Hotel. After a 24-hour convoy up to Najaf, and a brief turnover with the departing Army units, Communications Platoon began the difficult task of installing the communications infrastructure for the FOB. Thousands of feet of category 5 networking and slash wire were emplaced to support data and telephone connectivity. The result of all the hard work was that the communications were ready in time for combat operations.

Once the battalion assembled at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Duke, the commanders were tasked with planning how to position their forces in and around An Najaf. Using the preplanning completed on ship and considering the current situation, the commanders began sending their Marines to different sites. Marines from H&S were spread throughout FOB Echo, FOB Hotel, and FOB Duke. As the enemy situation in An Najaf developed, elements of H&S were consolidated closer to An Najaf at FOB Hotel in order to provide better support to the battalion.

On Thursday August 5th, the Mahdi Militia engaged the battalion in An Najaf. H&S' key responsibility during the ensuing battle was to provide re-supply trucks with security to the front lines where the infantry companies were battling with the militia. Concurrently, H&S Marines escorted a combat engineer detachment to a downed helicopter to be transferred to a secure location. That day proved to be fatal for Sergeant Rocha, for he was the gunner providing security who was shot while reloading his machinegun. His vehicle was instantly rushed to FOB Hotel and within ten minutes he was in the hands of the medical team. Unfortunately, the wound was too severe and H&S lost one of its finest Marines.

For the following week, the battalion was busy patrolling and conducting raids on enemy targets, including Al-Sadr's central An Najaf home. The Iraqi Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, made a surprise visit to discuss a cease-fire with the Mahdi Militia, but after three days of unsuccessful negotiations the Iraqi government walked out on the meeting. Al-Sadr demanded an unrealistic set of stipulations that the government could not agree to. One of the stipulations was the withdrawal of all American forces from An Najaf, and another was handing over the security responsibility for the holy city to the Mahdi Militia. The Iraqi government, in a surprising move, told BLT 1/4 to move into a defensive posture. The Prime Minister insisted that Iraqis should deal with Iraqi problems.

Communications Platoon was heavily involved in the combat operations of August. Marines from Communications Platoon were either attached or in direct support of every company and independent platoon in the battalion. Radio operators at the Joint Command Center (JCC) in downtown Najaf manned a retransmission station amidst regular mortar

and small arms fire. Radio operators also provided essential support for the companies and independent platoons as they executed combat operations. Radio operators participated in action in the Wadi Al Salaam Cemetery outside the Imam Ali Mosque, security patrols within the Old City of An Najaf, Al Kufa, and An Najaf, direct action raids, and many other missions.

Wire and data Marines provided essential support for the BLT COC, expanding phone and data services to better support the operational needs of the battalion staff. New phone and data lines were run to extend network services to vital users. The technician section also distinguished itself by repairing radio equipment. The techs, lead by Staff Sergeant Lyle Scott, worked day and night to repair broken radio equipment and to get that radio equipment back into the fight.

Communications Platoon was a vital element in the final push to destroy the Mahdi Militia forces holed up in the Imam Ali Mosque. In addition to the radio operators, Staff Sergeant Scott and Corporal Richie were attached to Charlie Company as a mobile retransmission team. Both served with distinction during the worst of the fighting in the Old City. A mix of Marines from all the sections within the communications platoon, lead by Gunnery Sergeant Carlos Gomez, established radio communications for the Rapid Resupply Point (RRP), which was only two kilometers from the mosque. In all, the hard work and dedication of the Communications Platoon contributed to the success that the BLT enjoyed over the insurgents.

After hostilities subsided, the MEU realigned the battalion's main objective in September. Proving in many ways to be more difficult and frustrating than the combat operations that Marines are trained for, Security and Stability Operations (SASO) became the new mission as the Marines "dug in" in Najaf. SASO includes local patrolling, winning the "hearts and minds" of the locals, and keeping the peace. "SASO" translates to most battalion Marines as "keeping your patience around the mobs of Iraqi children". The relative tranquility of An Najaf in September also verified and validated the effectiveness of the peace deals struck by the Grand Ayatollah Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr.

Headquarters and Services Company's mission changed from supplying the line companies with combat supplies under heavy enemy fire to passing out candy, water, and "tobas" (soccer balls) to Iraqi children during patrols and logistics convoys to Babylon. The S-4, battalion aid station (BAS), and Communications shop were still busy providing the battalion with logistical support that never stops regardless of the mission.

The camp underwent a drastic change in September as KBR relocated their dining facility, weight room, television room, and laundry facility to FOB Hotel from FOB Baker. Volleyball nets were erected, picnic tables were built, and FOB Hotel became a much better place to live. Headquarters platoon was charged with the camp design, visitor escorting, and the daily problems that arise on a 1200-man camp. As another local U.S. Military camp retrograded, many U.S. Army and U.S. State Department units began the process of moving in with the Marines at FOB Hotel. The relocating units were primarily focused on civil affairs; they tackled the hundreds of infrastructure projects in the Najaf province that were beyond the scope of the battalion. The

battalion contributed over 1.5 million dollars towards the revitalization of the primary and secondary schools surrounding FOB Hotel.

H&S Company revisited a previously hostile area next to the Old City in An Najaf to conduct weapons training. Adjacent to the Old City is a large escarpment that affords the battalion an excellent location to fire its rifles. The S-4 shop led the charge in establishing the range. The downtime following the cessation of hostilities allowed the Communications Platoon to restock and restore all the equipment and expendables that the battle had depleted. Communications support was also provided to Alpha Company and Charlie Company as they moved to separate FOBs within the area of operation (AO).

The country of Iraq was preparing itself for the upcoming January elections and was leaning hard on the coalition forces to keep the local towns safe during the process. Still, local sentiment in Najaf appeared to suggest a lack of confidence in the process due to the limited information about the candidates and their history. The battalion was working very hard to improve the flow of information to the public.

October brought something very special to every Marine in Iraq - COOLER WEATHER. As fall began to settle in, the camps experienced several awesome thunderstorms and cool fronts. October also brought smiles to the salted and chiseled faces of many Marines as the 155th Brigade from Mississippi sent a handful of representatives to visit Najaf. The representatives were well received because the 155th might be assuming the 11th MEU's Area of Responsibility (AOR) early in 2005. In the military, events change as whimsically as the weather; few things are set in stone.

H&S continued to support civil affairs missions as they spent over 3 million dollars on the reconstruction of schools and clinics in Najaf and the surrounding towns. Thousands of students benefited from the new construction projects that brought basic necessities to the buildings such as power, windows, doors, restrooms, and desks.

The services at FOB Hotel continued to excel as KBR put the finishing touches on the camp. At all hours of the night, Marines can be seen playing table tennis, shooting pool, playing video games, working out, and competing in sand volleyball tournaments. The Camp Commandant, Gunnery Sergeant Glenn Montgomery, was always on call and was the main link between KBR and the Marine Corps. Communications Platoon constantly improved the infrastructure and services provided to the FOB. The platoon supervised the setup of satellite television services to the dining facility, and set up two morale, welfare, and recreation Internet Cafes. The Internet Cafes proved to be especially popular with the Marines. The dining facility was also completed and named "Sergeant Moses Rocha Chow Hall" in memory of the fallen comrade.

The weather in November continued to remind the Marines of home as they approached the holiday season. With Halloween and Thanksgiving over, only two more holidays remained. When one is deployed, the holidays act as milestones. Marines tell themselves "If I can just make it to Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years." Before long, the months have flown by. November remained a peaceful month in

Najaf. Thanksgiving brought turkey, football games, company sports, and the Marine Corps Birthday celebration. Although the ceremony was brief, all Marines celebrated in their own way. Most anticipated the "Beer Day" which would take place when the battalion's Marines returned from Fallujah. H&S Company supported the Fallujah offensive by sending intelligence, operations, logistics, mechanics, and technical support with Bravo Company.

H&S Company also began sending Marines home who had future orders, or would be venturing off into the civilian world. The company sent home many Marines who brought 1st Battalion, 4th Marines success during OIF I and OIF II. They are all heroes and will be truly missed.

The administrative shop (S-1) processed awards and finalize orders for Marines who would depart in late November. The intelligence shop (S-2) continued to spend countless hours processing intelligence for the battalion. The S-2 also sent an Intelligence Marine to Abu Ghraib prison to support Bravo Company's mission in Fallujah. The operations shop (S-3) began planning for the battalion's relocation to Karbala and follow-on missions. The logistics shop (S-4) continued to lead vehicle convoys to faraway towns to retrieve KBR food trucks and to assist Alpha Company in their retrograde to FOB Duke. Another logistics task of the S-4, which was much more enjoyable, was to begin the detailed planning of the battalion's retrograde to San Diego. The S-4 also sent a team of mechanics to Abu Ghraib prison with Bravo Company as the assault was underway in Fallujah. Several successful trips were made from FOB Hotel to Fallujah in order to support the movement of personnel and equipment. The communications (S-6) shop worked diligently to support the Karbala move for the Marines who would soon call Camp Lima their home. The S-6 sent several Marines to Abu Ghraib Prison to support Bravo Company as they played an integral part in the Fallujah offensive.

Close on the heels of Company B returning from Abu Ghraib Prison in early December, Communications Platoon began its preparation for the BLT's deployment to Camp Lima, Karbala. A thorough inventory of all the platoon's gear was conducted and the embarkation of all assets to be used at Camp Lima was completed. The BLT commenced its deployment to Karbala on the 10 December when an advanced party consisting of Marines from Communications Platoon and other elements of the BLT went ahead to prepare for the arrival of Company A, Company B, and CAAT B.

Installing the communications network at Karbala was an arduous task but the BLT's communicators completed it efficiently. The result was a robust and reliable network consisting of VHF, HF, and SatCom radios, NIPR, SIPR, DNVT and DSVT tactical phones, and commercial ITT lines. A VHF retransmission site was erected at the Karbala JCC to provide wider radio coverage for the area of operation (AO).

December was also a time for Communications Platoon to say farewell to some of its longest tenured Marines and honor its own. Gunnery Sergeant Damany Willingham, the wire and data section chief, Corporal Richie, a radio operator, and Lance Corporal Nicholas Girdner, a network administrator, said goodbye to the platoon and returned stateside in order to execute orders. Numerous awards and honors were also given to some of the most outstanding Marines in the Platoon. Sergeant Shane McCracken, a MUX operator from the MSSG-11

Communications Platoon, Corporals Mark Kreitzer, Jacob Maynard, and Taylor, and Lance Corporals Robert Bradbury, Christopher Holden, and Douglas Johnson all were awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for outstanding performance. Corporal Jamaal Queen received a Purple Heart for wounds received during the Battle of Najaf. Corporal Queen was also meritoriously promoted to Corporal due to his outstanding performance on the Battalion's Marine of the Quarter Board.

The Marines in the Communications Platoon were also able to enjoy the holiday season with the BLT's first and only beer day of the deployment. Numerous activities such as a football tournament and a video game competition were held. Of note was the victory for Headquarters and Services Company's football team over all challengers including the previously undefeated world famous Alpha Raiders.

SECTION 3

SEQUENTIAL LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Jul 5-8	BLT offload from amphibious shipping at Kuwait Naval Base (KNB)
Jul 10-20	Reverse-cycle training for full-spectrum operations
Jul 16	Quartering party departs to Iraq from Camp Virginia, Kuwait
Jul 18	First BLT units arriving in Iraq
Jul 21	Rear party and Weapons Company departs to Iraq from Camp Virginia, Kuwait
Jul 24	All BLT units established at FOBs Hotel and Duke in An Najaf and at FOB Echo in Ad Diwaniyah
Jul 25	Romeo Battery assumes artillery support mission
Jul 31	Transfer of authority from 1-14 Infantry to BLT 1/4 of Najaf and Qadisiyah Provinces
Aug 2	CAAT A engaged by Mahdi Militia at Moqtada al-Sadr's house
Aug 5	Mahdi Militia attack main Iraqi Police station in An Najaf; UH-1N Iroquois Gunship shot down; Alpha

Company departs from Ad Diwaniyah for combat operations in An Najaf; Romeo Battery fires its first combat support mission

Aug 5-8 Battalion level battle in Wadi al-Salaam (WAS) cemetery

Aug 6 Lance Corporal Larry Wells killed by enemy sniper in WAS cemetery

Aug 9 Alpha Raiders conducted coordinated raids on suspected enemy positions at two schools in An Najaf

Aug 10 CAAT A, LAR and Alpha Company patrol Ameer and Zahraa neighborhoods in An Najaf

Aug 11-14 Scout Sniper platoon attached to U.S. Army's 2-7 Cavalry

Aug 12 Charlie Company, BLT Recon and CAAT A raid primary residence of Muqtada al-Sadr

Aug 13 CAAT B and LAR support MSPF raid at Salah Mosque

Aug 16 Alpha Company and BLT Recon conducted raid in Old City of An Najaf

Aug 17 Bravo Company screens northern flank of WAS cemetery; Tank platoon conducts raid in Al Kufa

Aug 18 CAAT A, CAAT B, LAR, 81mm Mortar platoon and Company B conduct destruction raid in Al Kufa

Aug 19 Sergeant Parkerson killed by enemy mortar in WAS cemetery; Bravo Company conducts raid at technical college in Al Kufa

Aug 20 CAAT B conducts route reconnaissance near Kufa Mosque

Aug 21 Alpha Raiders conduct mechanized raid with AAV and tank support in Al Kufa while Bravo Company conducts another raid at the technical college in Al Kufa

Aug 23 Bravo Company conducts cordon and search mission

Aug 24 Charlie Company & BLT Recon establish foothold in Old City

Aug 25-27 BLT engaged near Imam Ali Mosque in Old City of An Najaf

Aug 27 Traffic Control Points established in Old City to inspect and control movements around the Imam Ali Mosque

Sep 3 LAR & MSPF conduct Direct Action (DA) mission

Sep 4-6 Explosive Hazard Awareness Training (EHAT)

Sep 4-8 Warlock training in Camp Victory, Iraq

Sep 6 CAAT B and IPs engage insurgents at Route Brady/Miami intersection; LAR escorts media personnel

Sep 7 Company C relocates to FOB Baker to train ING

Sep 9 CAAT B ambushed in Ad Diwaniyah during convoy

Sep 11 Alpha Raiders conduct memorial services for Lance Corporal Alexander Arrendondo and Private First Class Nick Skinner

Sep 12 Company B conducts memorial service for Sergeant Harvey Parkerson III

Sep 13 LAR escorts media personnel

Sep 20-23 CAAT A, LAR, MSPF, Force Recon and U.S. Army Special Forces and Iraqi Specialized Special forces raid Muqtada al-Sadr's offices in Old City of An Najaf

Sep 21 MSPF executes raid in Old City of An Najaf

Sep 27 Company B begins security for weekly solatia payments

Sep 30 LAR escorts media personnel

Oct 3 Company B supports MSPF raid

Oct 4 LAR and MSPF conduct Direct Action on HVT in Fasilliyah

Oct 5 CAAT B conducts Civil Affairs mission in Ash Shamiyah

Oct 9 CAAT B convoy to Ar Ramadi with ten Iraqi Police candidates

Oct 11 Company B provides security for solatia payments; LAR conduct media escort

Oct 12 404th ING battalion (trained by Alpha Raiders) conducts graduation ceremony that was attended by Interim Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi

Oct 14 CAAT B provide convoy escort from An Najaf to Camp Babylon

Oct 17 CAAT B provide convoy escort from An Najaf to Ad Diwaniyah

Oct 23 LAR conducts security patrol for MEU embark assets

Oct 25 Scout Snipers depart to Ramadi to support 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment

Oct 27 Task Force Blackhorse (Company B, CAAT A, Scout Snipers, EOD) departs for Abu Gharayb prison to provide prison security during operation Phantom Fury

Oct 28 LAR conduct media escort

Oct 30 CAAT B provide security for Interim Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq in An Najaf and Al Kufa

Nov 1 Scout Snipers detach from 2/5 and are sent to Fallujah

Nov 2 Coordinated IED/VBIED/SAF attack on Abu Gharayb prison

Nov 3 Task Force Blackhorse conducts "knock & talk" patrol of Khandari around prison; Combat Engineers and AAVs relocate to Camp Fallujah in support of Operation Phantom Fury

Nov 4-5 Tank platoon convoy to Fallujah for Operation Phantom Fury

Nov 5 CAAT B escorts convoy from FOB Hotel to Abu Gharayb prison; AAV platoon attached to 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment

Nov 6 Task Force Blackhorse responds to another attack on prison

Nov 7-17 AAV platoon conducts multiple combat missions in Fallujah

Nov 8 Combat Engineers lead breach into city of Fallujah

Nov 9 CAAT A attacked by two IEDs

Nov 11 Task Force Blackhorse conducts cordon and search of Sheik Harith al Dari's home; Operation "Big Dig" in Lutifiyah

Nov 11-13 CAAT B secures IED bridge in Lutifiyah

Nov 11-13 CAAT A occupies TCP 1 in support of Phantom Fury

Nov 12 Lance Corporal Nicholas Anderson killed in vehicle crash

Nov 14 CAAT A attacked by IED

Nov 17 CAAT A attacked by IED; CAAT B escorts convoy from FOB Hotel to Abu Gharayb

Nov 19 Memorial service for Lance Corporal Nicholas Anderson

Nov 20 CAAT B offers humanitarian assistance to Iraqi town; Scout Snipers attach to RCT-1

Nov 21-22 Task Force Blackhorse conducts several cordon and search missions on suspected IED makers

Nov 24 Task Force Blackhorse attacked by mortar; site survey at FOB Lima in Karbala

Nov 27 Alpha Raiders transfer authority of FOB Echo to Polish and Bulgarian military forces; CAAT A attacked by IED; CAAT B provides security for Humanitarian Assistance Operation

Nov 29 CAAT B escorts convoy from FOB Hotel to Abu Gharayb

Nov 30 CAAT B and BLT 1/4 Commanding Officer visit Fallujah

Dec 1 Task Force Blackhorse returns to FOB Hotel from Abu Gharayb

Dec 4-7 Bravo Company provides security for SeaBees while they renovate local school

Dec 5 AAV platoon detaches from 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines

Dec 7-10 81mm mortar platoon relocates from FOB Duke to FOB Hotel

Dec 8 CAAT B conducts reconnaissance of ASR Cleveland/Long Island

Dec 10 Tanks detach from 1-5 Cavalry; Scout Snipers detach from RCT-1 and return to FOB Hotel

Dec 10-12 AAVs return to FOB Hotel

Dec 11 CAAT A escorts AAV form Fallujah to FOB Hotel

Dec 14 CAAT B relocates from FOB Hotelo to FOB Lima in Karbala

Dec 16 Company B relocates from FOB Hotel to FOB Lima in Karbala; CAAT B escort 115 IPs from An Najaf to BIAP

Dec 19 CAAT A provide convoy security from BIAP to An Najaf; CAAT B responds to SVBIED attack

Dec 20-23 Combat Engineers constructed IP checkpoint bunkers

Dec 21 Transfer of authority between 2nd Battle Group and 11th MEU

Dec 23 81mm mortar platoon and trailer platoon conduct raids on suspected IED factories in An Najaf; CAAT A escort KBR trucks from FOB Echo to FOB Hotel

Dec 25

81mm mortar platoon conducts Memorial service for
Sergeant Yadir Reynosos and Corporal Roberto Abad;
CAAT B attacked by IED while traveling from FOB Hotel
to Karbala

Dec 31

Combat Engineers return to FOB Hotel

SECTION 4

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

TAB A	BLT FRAGO 28 CMOC (SECRET)
TAB B	FRAGO 28 50-04 Patrols (SECRET)
TAB C	BLT FRAGO 05 The One That Started It All (SECRET)
TAB D	FRAGO 6 50-04 Operation Pacific Storm (SECRET)
TAB E	Sadr Complex Raid (SECRET)
TAB F	CG's Visit (SECRET)
TAB G	BLT FRAGO 20 Kufa (SECRET)
TAB H	BLT FRAGO 21 Kufa (SECRET)
TAB I	FRAGO 21 to OPORD 50-04 - App 19 (SECRET)
TAB J	BLT FRAGO 22 Route Apple Reconnaissance (SECRET)
TAB K	BLT FRAGO 23 Najaf Decisive Operations (SECRET)
TAB L	BLT FRAGO 25 Security Patrols (SECRET)
TAB M	FRAGO 26 50-04 CMOC (SECRET)
TAB N	BLT FRAGO 27 ROK Division Escort (SECRET)
TAB O	BLT FRAGO 31 Security Patrols (SECRET)
TAB P	BLT FRAGO 32 Security Patrols (SECRET)
TAB Q	BLT FRAGO 33 Civil Affairs Patrol (SECRET)
TAB R	FRAGO 34 Civil Affairs Patrol (SECRET)
TAB S	BLT FRAGO 36 Civil Affairs Patrol (SECRET)
TAB T	BLT Plan v.2 Iraqi National Guard Training (SECRET)
TAB U	FRAGO 21 to OPORD 50-04 Najaf Decisive Operations (Secret)
TAB V	BLT FRAGO 40 Gas Robbers (SECRET)
TAB W	BLT FRAGO 42 Iraqi Police Screening (SECRET)
TAB X	BLT FRAGO 43 Civil Affairs Patrol (SECRET)
TAB Y	BLT FRAGO 44 Oil Pipeline (SECRET)

TAB Z	BLT FRAGO 45 Iraqi Police Escort (SECRET)
TAB AA	BLT FRAGO 41 Graphic (SECRET)
TAB AB	BLT FRAGO 41 Traffic Control Point (SECRET)
TAB AC	BLT FRAGO 46 Phantom Shield (SECRET)
TAB AD	BLT FRAGO 47 Voter Registration Delivery
	(SECRET)
TAB AE	FRAGO 47 50-04 VBIED (SECRET)
TAB AF	BLT FRAGO 48 155 BCT PDSS Team Support (SECRET)
TAB AG	BLT FRAGO 49 Security Patrol (SECRET)
TAB AH	BLT FRAGO 50 Phantom Fury (SECRET)
TAB AI	FRAGO 52 50-04 Karbala RIP v3 (SECRET)
TAB AJ	BLT FRAGO 52 Cordon and Knock Arms Cache Seizure (SECRET)
TAB AK	BLT FRAGO 53 Jrajan Patrol (SECRET)
TAB AL	BLT FRAGO 56 Cache Recovery (SECRET)
TAB AM	BLT FRAGO 51 Redeployment (SECRET)
TAB AN	Latafiyah Bridge Operation (SECRET)
TAB AO	19 Dec BIAP Mission (SECRET)
TAB AP	BLT FRAGO 30-04 Najaf Cemetery Ops 17 to 31 Dec (SECRET)
TAB AQ	BLT FRAGO 60 Convoy Security Mobile Phone Switch Network (SECRET)
TAB AR	BLT FRAGO 61 Cordon & Search IED Manufacturers & Iranian Intelligence Agent (SECRET)
TAB AS	BLT FRAGO 62 Cordon & Search IED Manufacturers (SECRET)
TAB AT	BLT FRAGO 63 UXO Trasport (SECRET)
TAB AU	FRAGO 1 OFFLOAD (SECRET)
TAB AV	FRAGO-2 to OPORD 49-04 Convoy to Udari
TAB AW	FRAGO-3 to OPORD 49-04 Udari training
TAB AX	FRAGO-4 to OPORD 49-04 Vehicle Hardening

