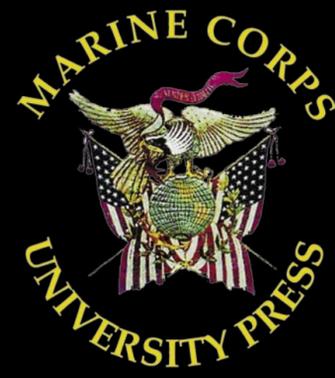


# AMONG THE PEOPLE

*U.S. Marines In Iraq*

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*Lieutenant Colonel David A. Benhoff*

Benhoff

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*U.S. Marines in Iraq*



Photographs and Text by  
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Quantico, VA  
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## Foreword

**S**ince Vietnam, we have come to realize that today's conflicts involve more than victory in battle to succeed. We need to win the hearts and minds of the people as well as the firefights in order to prevail. Ironically, Marines get this. Their legendary courage and tenacity on the battlefield is equally matched by their compassion and engagement with the traumatized civilian population. Marine General Jim Mattis summed it up best when he said, "We can be your worst enemy or your best friend."

In the al Anbar Province in Iraq there is an astonishing turnaround taking place. The people in this Marine area of responsibility are rejecting violence and radicalism. No doubt we will study this positive change in years to come to better understand why this province went from the most violent and troubled area of Iraq to a hailed success story. In no small measure, the commitment, patience, and determination of the Marines to connect to the people, to address their needs, and to gain their trust contributed to this success.

This book captures, in moving photographs, the day-to-day efforts of our Marines' civil affairs work with the Iraqi people. These photos will touch your hearts as the actions they depict touched the hearts of those Iraqis who lived through the turmoil in al Anbar. Our American pride in the fighting prowess of our Marines is equally felt for their demonstrated compassion.

Anthony C. Zinni  
General, U. S. Marine Corps (Retired)

## Preface

**A**s we rolled out of the forward operating base enroute to the city of Fallujah in March of 2005, though this was my first mission, I knew what to expect. The city, virtually leveled from intense fighting that took place just a few short months ago and only recently reopened to the population, would be full of Iraqis that despised us. That was the storyline portrayed by the preponderance of the news before I departed the States. Iraqis wanted us gone, plain and simple. I was mentally prepared and resigned to hostile looks or worse.

What I found was far from this grim expectation. During the day-long trip throughout the city I saw hundreds upon hundreds of kids waving, smiling, and trailing along as we progressed. Every time we stopped, or even slowed, we were surrounded and mobbed by them. While the adults were more standoffish, I saw little hostility in their eyes; most seemed merely intent on cleaning up the rubble of what used to be their homes or businesses and getting on with their lives. Could what I had seen on the nightly news back home have been so far off the mark? Absolutely, as I would learn over the course of my time here.

For the next five months I would spend time outside the wire with Marines who were continually and closely interacting with the Iraqi people, and what I observed was vastly different than what I had expected. This sharp contrast planted the seed in my mind of telling this untold story, a story of cooperation and friendship in the midst of war. A story where, within the much-reported plot of violence and destruction, Marines were also continually demonstrating acts of kindness and decency to a people caught in the middle. Marines who saw their own sons and daughters in the crowds of Iraqi children and just wanted to play a small part in making their lives better.

One example that stands out involved two Marines who were from Regimental Combat Team 8, Sergeant Steven G. Pannell and Lance Corporal Andrew S. Champion. I happened upon them while out at the Fallujah Civil-Military Operations Center in June of 2005. They were near the entrance, where Iraqi civilians gather awaiting access. As they distributed toys and school supplies to the children waiting there with their parents, both Marines obviously were enjoying their simple acts of kindness. Later, I was astounded to learn that just days before both had been on a convoy that was hit by a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and then subsequently attacked with small arms. Both had seen fellow Marines—friends—die, from bullets and burning, in that attack. And yet, here they were, handing out toys to children just blocks from where that attack occurred. If anyone had a reason to be bitter toward the Iraqi people, to look upon them all as the enemy and just count the days until they were on the freedom bird out, it would have been them. But, here they were, outside the compound and at risk of the frequent sniping, handing out toys. This book is for them and those like them. Marines and warriors ready to fight and die for the Corps and country, but also to extend the hand of friendship to strangers in a strange land.

David A. Benhoff  
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps

# Introduction

**W**hile there are, and have been, many different types of Marine Corps units operating in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, this book in no way attempts to highlight all. Nor does it contain high-drama photographs typically associated with war; there are plenty of such photographs of this nature in circulation—far more than those of the type included herein.

On the contrary, the emphasis of this book is the human side of war and therefore the photographs that follow are of a subject matter that best illustrates this: Marines interacting with the Iraqi population at the personal level. This interaction is most often found among units that spend the vast majority of their time “outside the wire,” among the people, working to rebuild, restore, and improve security and infrastructure. Marines with missions related to these constructive aspects of the war generally fall into one of two categories: those conducting civil affairs or those training and developing the Iraqi Security Forces.

The civil affairs Marines interact with the population through two significantly different venues, one stationary in which the Iraqis come to them, and one mobile, where they go to the Iraqis. The first section of this photo-essay book addresses the former, with depictions of activities occurring at one of the civil-military operations centers, while the next section focuses on civil affairs group tactical teams.

The final section addresses those Marines interacting with the Iraqi Security Forces, known as Advisory Support Teams (ASTs) and Military Training Teams (MTTs) in 2005. The ASTs were small groups of Marines embedded with the military component of the Iraqi Security Forces, while the MTTs worked with the police forces. While their activities were dissimilar in some ways, given the differing tactics, techniques, and procedures performed by military and police, the basic goal was the same: ensure the Iraqi Security Forces were professionally trained and employed, and ultimately the sole security provider for their country.

Finally, each section begins with a text lead-in providing further detail on the missions and activities mentioned above, followed by a visual presentation supplemented with outtakes from recorded interviews of the Marines serving among the people. This introduction is deliberately brief in the hope that the following photographs will speak for themselves.

Sgt Steven G. Pannell, back for his third tour in Iraq, cools off some Iraqi children in front of the Fallujah Civil-Military Operations Center.



The civil affairs capability of the Marine Corps normally resides within the Reserve establishment in the form of the Civil Affairs Group (CAG). This capability has been expanded during Operation Iraqi Freedom with the addition of provisional CAGs. As reservists, the CAG members bring to the table a wide variety of civilian education and expertise that can be brought to bear on problems facing the local population.

One area where CAG members have particularly close contact with the people is the Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC). The CMOC serves multiple functions, all facilitating interaction between the military, Department of State, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the local population; it is a hub for information and assistance flow. During 2005, the Fallujah CMOC had a staff of 12 Marines with a focus on reconstruction and governance. The CMOC hosted a wide variety of gatherings, including weekly sheik, town council, urban planning, and reconstruction meetings to deal with the significant rebuilding necessary after the November 2004 offensive.

An important element of what occurs here is information sharing. Local leaders can voice concerns, learn the reasons why Marine units operate in certain ways, and highlight needs of the community. Through

better communications better relations hopefully will develop, relationships that often transform into sincere friendship. As Lieutenant Colonel James K. “Hondo” Haldeman, Fallujah CMOC Director in 2005, put it, “I’m just so privileged...I’m in a unique place and [have] a unique opportunity to have these people come to me and call them my friend.”



*Right and Facing:* After distributing school supplies and toys donated by Marine families back home, Chaplain’s Assistant LCpl Andrew S. Champion walks Iraqi children back to their families.



*“We believe in the mission tremendously...it’s definitely one of those things that you can feel proud of doing because you’re trying to help them—help the Iraqis help themselves.”*

Capt Rodolfo A. Quiles, Economic Development Officer,  
Fallujah CMOC



*Above:* Fallujah city council members discuss business at the Fallujah CMOC.

*Right:* LtCol James K. “Hondo” Halde-  
man facilitates the meeting.



*“Our job is to facilitate. I don’t want to run meetings for the Iraqis...the more they do it themselves, the better. If I work myself out of a job—out of facilitating their problem—that’s better for us.”*

Maj Joey E. Klinger, Governance Development Officer, Fallujah CMOC



*“I was excited when I heard I was coming to the CMOC and I don’t regret it at all. The best part of it is the daily interactions with locals. You see your work everyday. You can physically see that you’re making a difference and that is the excitement of being out here. So, the mortars and small arms you put up with because you know you get to interact with the kids here and the locals.”*

LtCol Beverly M. Baker, Operations Officer, Fallujah CMOC

*Left:* 5th Civil Affairs Group  
Marines outside the Fallujah  
CMOC.



*“The more participation you have from the Iraqis, the better it is because our goal here is to turn all of this back over to the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people and the Fallujans.”*

Maj Joey E. Klinger

*Left:* Iraqis debate issues at the Fallujah CMOC’s weekly town council meeting.

*“Above all else, the real sense of accomplishment is in terms of the relationships that you develop with the citizens here. When they trust you and they understand that you’re doing your best to help them...and they come to you and ask for you by name because they know that you can help them—it’s the greatest professional compliment that you can get.”*

Capt Rodolfo A. Quiles

*Right:* Discussions continue after council meeting, Fallujah CMOC.



Iraqi school children near Karmah rush members of 5th Civil Affairs Group, there to inspect renovations of their elementary school for which CAG had contracted.



In addition to operating the Civil-Military Operation Centers in Iraq, the Civil Affairs Groups (CAG) also operate small tactical six-man teams. This is where the rubber meets the road. It is their job to continually travel throughout the area of operations, usually in a convoy with at most four vehicles, to assess and meet the needs of the local population. Some of their projects include school and police station renovations, repair and upgrade of the water and sewer infrastructure, rubble removal, medical waste clean-up, soccer field construction, and facilitation of local Iraqi government operations.

After accompanying Team 3, Detachment 2, 5th CAG, on several of their missions in Saqlawiyah and Fallujah in 2005, I asked Major Christopher E. Phelps, the team officer-in-charge, to discuss his thoughts about their mission, both positive and negative. While he did note some frustrations, the positives far outweighed these and are best illustrated in his own words: "I wake up every morning...[and] can't wait to get out there and do good things, make assessments, figure out what we've got to do, what do we have to problem solve today, how can we draw on the expertise of the Marines on my team...and I go to bed every night thinking...I can't wait to get up tomorrow and go to work because I love what I do; this job, out of the 17 years I've

been in the Marine Corps, is by far the most frustrating job I've ever had...but it's by far the most rewarding job I've ever had."



*Above:* Maj Christopher E. Phelps spends time with an Iraqi toddler in Saqlawiyah.

*Facing:* An Iraqi boy approaches a CAG team near Karmah.

*“An  
appreciation  
for  
the  
people”*

Maj Charles R. Risio, 5th CAG team leader, describing what he will take with him when he departs Iraq



*“I don’t know if I’m ready to sign up again, having been deployed two times in two years and having four boys under the age of seven at home...I’m missing a lot of their lives but it’s worth it...I do what I do partly because of them.”*

Maj Christopher E. Phelps  
Officer-in-Charge, Team 3, Detachment 2, 5th CAG





*Left, Above, and following two pages:* Marines with Team 2, Detachment 2, 5th CAG encounter Iraqi shepherds, children, while inspecting a local water pump in need of repair near Karmah.





*Above and Facing:* Team 2, Detachment 2, 5th CAG members inspect school renovations on outskirts of Karmah.



*Left:* A typical Iraqi classroom before renovation; school supplies are very sparse.

*Above:* Upon seeing the civil affairs team, an entire classroom empties.



*“The schools are in a major state of disrepair. A lot of schools haven’t seen any money in 20 or 30 years... nothing has been done to them since. There are few schools that don’t have all of the windows broken out. They haven’t seen paint, running water, septic systems...anything.”*

GySgt Wesley Eyer  
Team Chief, Team 2, Detachment 2, 5th CAG

*Left:* 5th CAG Marines discuss progress of ongoing renovations at another school they are overseeing; GySgt Eyer, quoted above, pictured center.

*“They have stories that will tear you up. A life as they know it is something that you and I would not want to imagine...we have one young lady whose entire family is gone from Saddam—gone. Her family is the Marines—that’s it.”*

LtCol James K. Haldeman  
speaking of interpreters assisting Marines in Iraq

*Facing Page:* An arabic speaking interpreter, right, is an indispensable asset to the CAG team as it assesses renovations at another school.





*“I’ve developed a relationship with a large group of people who I can actually look in the eye and call my friend.”*

**LtCol James K. Haldeman**

*Facing Page and Above:* Before the team departs, they take time for some lighter interaction, which ended with one of the school administrators donning Marine battle gear.

*“If we could leave here...having made a positive influence with the younger kids—being able to attend a school that is clean, and the bathroom works, and they have furniture, and a chalk board, and windows that work—if we can leave Karmah or Saqlawiyah with a steady water supply with potable water and a workable [medical] clinic to attend, all or any of these successes, I think we can say we accomplished our mission.”*

LtCol Joseph T. Krumm  
Officer-in-Charge, Detachment 2, 5th CAG



*Above:* A young Iraqi boy walks to school in Karmah.



*Above:* Maj Christopher E. Phelps conducts a convoy brief prior to a mission through Fallujah and Saqlawiyah.

*Below:* Civil affairs patrol through Saqlawiyah enroute to a local elementary school.





*Left:* A civil affairs patrol prepares to depart an infantry company base in Saqlawiyah. Sgt Matthew E. Dreher pictured center.

*Below:* Maj Christopher E. Phelps distributes stuffed animals during a patrol through Saqlawiyah.



*“You can’t do...tactical civil affairs work from Baghdad, from Ramadi, from Camp Fallujah. You have to...embed with those infantry patrols or you’ve got to take your vehicles with your own security and you’ve got to get out there.”*

Maj Christopher E. Phelps



*Pages 40–42: A civil affairs partol through the Saqlawiyah souk (market).*



*Above:* A CAG team enroute to another assessment; when not foot mobile, they typically travel in small convoys and provide their own security.

*“We walked into a medical clinic and in the back lot... literally here was a pile approximately three feet tall, twenty feet by ten feet, of biohazardous waste: blood bags, syringes, gauzes, band-aids...just laying there.”*

Maj Christopher E. Phelps



*Left:* Civil affairs team visits Saqwiliyah medical clinic, where they arranged to have biohazardous waste destroyed through the use of an on-site incinerator.

*Right:* CAG team members provide security during clinic visit.





*“We’re definitely not going to change this place in the short eight months that we’re going to be here, but we can have an impact at the local level. We can improve and help them learn to improve their own quality of life so that when we leave here we can look back and say in our own little way we were able to do some good here.”*

LtCol Joseph T. Krumm



*Above and Right:* Elementary school children in Saqlawiyah anxiously await distribution of school supplies by Team 2, Detachment 2, 5th CAG.



*Pages 50–55:* Anxiousness gives way to satisfaction, as students receive school supplies.







*“The Iraqi people are no different than you or I...they want security...a place to live and to be free to make their own decisions and be in charge of their own destiny...and to be able to provide for their children something more than what they had.”*

Maj Christopher E. Phelps



*Left:* An adolescent Iraqi girl shies from attention, as was often the case.

*Above:* The excitement winds down as the supply distribution ends and the civil affairs team prepares to depart.



*Above:* A CAG team assesses a water pumping station on the Euphrates near Fallujah; this station had no functioning purification system.

*“I think probably the number one trait that any civil affairs Marine can have—whether you’re an officer or enlisted—is you’ve got to be a good listener; you’ve got to sit there and be a sponge and you have to listen to problems...and let me tell you, there are a hell of a lot more problems than there are people who don’t have problems.”*

Maj Christopher E. Phelps



*Right:* Maj Christopher E. Phelps takes time during the assessment to visit with the local Iraqis.

*Left:* In general, Iraqi children love to be photographed; this little guy was no exception.



*“It wasn’t until I came back this time and... talked to the people, walked among the people, listened to their problems, that I had a new realization how broken Iraq was.”*

Maj Christopher E. Phelps



*Left and Above:* Team 2, Detachment 2, 5th CAG enroute to conduct an assessment at another water pumping station.



*“That is the key—just meeting more people and talking to more people and just showing them that, ‘hey, we’re here’—and talk to them personally...that we can do things to help you and your community.”*

Sgt Sean C. Lawlor  
Team 3, Detachment 2, 5th CAG

*Facing Page:* The team discusses the conditions of the pumping equipment with the operator.

*“I know that if I can come back here again doing what I’m doing on this tour, I’ll be back here in a minute—because it is something that needs to be done and is something very important to our whole effort.”*

Sgt Sean C. Lawlor

*Facing Page:* A typical reaction to CAG team arrival; incidentally, at the time of this writing, Sgt Sean Lawlor (quoted above), is indeed back in Iraq for yet another tour.



Marines of MTT 2 supervise practical exercises conducted by Iraqi Security Forces following training at the East Fallujah Iraqi Camp.



**A**dvisory Support Teams (ASTs), as they were known in 2005, were small teams of 10 men that lived with, trained, and advised Iraqi Security Forces. Marines assigned to these billets received three weeks of training provided by the Security, Cooperation, Education and Training Center at Quantico, Virginia, followed by three days of training in Iraq conducted by U.S. Army personnel assigned to the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team. Following this training they were sent to various Iraqi units and embedded within. Their goal was to facilitate, not direct, the functioning of units to which they were assigned. In this role, they were involved in almost every aspect of unit functioning, from mission planning and execution to administrative and logistics.

By far, the most important element for success, conveyed by countless U.S. advisors, was building personal relationships with their Iraqi counterparts. Relationships ensured their advice would be heeded, and was built around sharing information about families, having *chai* (strong, sweet tea around which all socializing occurs) together and getting to know their counterparts as men, not just warriors. While Marines are usually very “cut-to-the-chase” and business-oriented, that approach would have been disastrous for an AST. The Iraqis need to see that you value them before they will

value you and, more importantly, what you have to say. As one AST member succinctly put it, “one of the first things we had to realize is to quit thinking of them as Iraqis and think of them as people.”

Also working with the Iraqi Security Forces were Military Training Teams (MTTs). MTT 2, in Iraq during 2005, worked mainly with the police forces, while ASTs worked with the military; however, their missions had much in common: preparing Iraqis to provide their own security.



*Right:* 1stLt Patrick J. Keane (center), embedded with the Iraqi Security Forces, visits a checkpoint outside of Fallujah manned jointly by Iraqi personnel and Marines.

*Left:* An Iraqi *jundi* (private) mans a post at a Fallujah checkpoint.





*Above, Right, and following two pages:* Iraqi children, at first very timid, ultimately approach Marines awaiting arrival of Iraqi Security Forces to conduct a search for a reported cache site.







*Left and Far Left:* Iraqi police candidates conduct a physical fitness test administered by MTT 2 Marines.

*“We give them a physical fitness test. We have them do push ups and sit ups, pull ups and a 1500 meter run...they all have their own ways of doing push-ups, sit-ups, and pull-ups and, it may not be Marine Corps standards, but the effect is entertaining enough.”*

Sgt Vernon Siders, Military Training Team 2

*“One thing I’ve learned about people, all around the world, is that laughing is probably in the same line as music, like a universal language. No matter where you go, if you can make someone laugh, it tends to take away the frustration of not being able to communicate because you speak different languages.”*

Sgt Vernon Siders



*Above:* Sgt Vernon Siders, right with back facing camera, draws cheers and laughter from Iraqi Security Forces through animated dancing.



*“Our job: we will live, eat, sleep, fight, bleed, and die, with our Iraqi counterparts.”*

Email to AST selectees informing them of their upcoming mission

*Above:* SSgt Tom L. McCarty, AST advisor, assists with ISF training exercise.

*Left:* Iraqi Security Force non-commissioned officer disciplines *jundis*.



*Above:* Iraqi Security Forces take a break during a training exercise.

*“I’ve never met a more friendly or generous group of soldiers...in my nineteen years in the Marine Corps; the third or fourth night we were here they were giving...a going away dinner [for one of the ASTs]...and these people don’t make a lot of money...but they all chipped in and went out in town and bought him a lamb to show him their appreciation for all he had done for them.”*

GySgt Robert M. Freeman, AST with Iraqi Security Forces



*“I’ve got guys who anytime—anytime something happens, they’re jumping in front of me...one guy in particular, weight about one hundred pounds soaking wet with his cammies...he’s right there...trying to be my little human shield. You treat these guys with a little respect, and a little bit of interest and they’ll do anything for you.”*

SSgt Tom L. McCarty, AST with Iraq Security Forces

*Facing Page:* SSgt Tom McCarty trails behind an ISF patrolling exercise in northern Fallujah.

*Pages 86–89:* ISF training continues.



*“They know they’re here to capture and kill bad guys and if they hear that there’s bad guys out there, they go after ‘em. They don’t fear death. They don’t fear ordnance.”*

GySgt William J. Orr, AST with Iraq Security Forces





*“One of the first things we had to realize is...  
to quit thinking of them as Iraqis and think of  
them as people.”*

Maj Benjamin J. Brown, Senior AST



*“You need to get yourself in the mind-set that this is a special forces-type mission, something they normally do, and you need to get out of the mind-set that you’re gonna have anything, that you can rely on any sort of support from anybody, because it’s not there. You have to depend on yourself and depend on the Iraqis and really work well with them.”*

GySgt William J. Orr, describing his marching orders

*Left:* Marine ASTs return to the Iraqi Security Forces command post where they live and work alongside their Iraqi counterparts.

*“For the most part,  
these are just average Joes like anybody else...  
they want to live a comfortable life, they want  
to have a job, they want to raise their kids,  
they want to have a normal work day, come  
home...put their kids to bed and get up and  
do it the next. They’re not any different than  
anybody else.”*

Maj Benjamin J. Brown



*Facing Page:* When the photographer indicated his interest in a group photo, ISF soldiers flew from every direction so as to be included.



*Left and Facing Page:* ISF (police) and Marines man security positions side-by-side at the Fallujah CMOC.



*“If they consider you a brother, what you say holds a lot more credence than if they just consider you somebody that’s working with them.”*

GySgt Robert M. Freeman



*Above and Facing Page:* Marines inspect construction of a new Iraqi police station in Fallujah.



*Above:* Police man security positions alongside Marines at “Blackwater Bridge,” on the Euphrates in Fallujah.

*“It’s like growing a tree. It takes awhile, and while the tree is very young, you can kick it over or pull it up...but if you support it and you keep watering it...it grows and it’s stronger. Then, you can’t knock it over. We’re guiding them, we’re supporting them, we’re watering them everyday. And they’re getting stronger everyday and before long, they’re gonna be strong enough that they’re not gonna get blown over or pulled out by the roots.”*

Maj Howard F. Hall, G-4 Advisor to an ISF Brigade

*“It would be nice to know...one day that they won’t need American support, and that they can operate totally on their own, come up with their own training, come up with their own planning...and hopefully one day...this place can be something special and don’t have to worry about somebody blowing your kids up...or walking into a school and killing a bunch of people. Just, you know, having a feeling of safety, everywhere.”*

SSgt Terrance D. Brinegar, AST member



*Above:* A lone ISF (police) member stands guard outside the Fallujah CMOC, the site of frequent small arms attacks.



*“I like the fact that we’re building something...we’re trying to actually develop and build something that we’ll leave behind that might give the Iraqi people a better way of life.”*

SSgt Clarence E. Stephens, MTT 2



*“I met people and I established important friendships that I am going to miss when I leave here.”*

Sgt Sean C. Lawlor

## Epilogue

**T**he military forces of the United States have now been engaged in Iraq for a full five years. Presently lasting longer than World War II, this fight seems destined to become the longest engagement in our military history, even surpassing the American Revolution and the Vietnam War. The reason for our involvement in Iraq is varied but ultimately it is a struggle to allow a people to choose their own destiny free from terrorism and violent coercion.

The story of the U.S. Marine Corps involvement in Iraq is just now beginning to get told and fortunately, Lieutenant Colonel David A. Benhoff was there to chronicle part of it. Acting in his capacity as a field historian for the History Division, and deftly combining his combat training with his skill with a camera, Benhoff's stunning photography shows a little seen side of the war. Part of the reason for this greater lack of public understanding about the reality of what is going on in Iraq is due to a dearth of media coverage on the "little things" that happen in war that ultimately add up to big things. More media attention has been given to the omnipresent and random violence of the past three years. But other things just as important frequently got overlooked. Things such as Iraqi schoolchildren walking unafraid past bullet pocked-marked buildings but still attending school, intense Arab sheiks meeting with Marine commanders to discuss security concerns, or battle-hardened Marine sergeants performing the simple act of handing out candy to trusting Iraqi children as their smiling parents look on. All of these "little things" add up toward winning a war of trust—a war that will ultimately determine the outcome of the long struggle.

In Iraq, Marines transitioned themselves from a traditional combat force to one that started looking after the "little things"—things they knew add up to overall success. This transition, also known as the "three block war," a term coined by General Charles C. Krulak, the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, requires that Marines not only know how to conduct highly lethal combat operations, but in a moment's notice or even simultaneously, also deliver humanitarian aid or assist in other civic actions often in close proximity to each other. Thus most Marines see that we will win this war one sheik or village at a time. Through patient persistence, despite the interruption of operations by what seems to the outsider a random and mindless violence, Lieutenant Colonel Benhoff has shown Marines winning the war, not necessarily with their rifles, but with the consistent and kind application of presence.

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer  
Director of Marine Corps History

## The Author

Lieutenant Colonel David A. Benhoff, a reservist with the Marine Corps History Division, deployed to Iraq in 2005 as a field historian with II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). During his tour, he traveled throughout the Multi-National Forces - West area of operations in al Anbar Province, recording history in the making. While the main focus of his mission was to conduct and record oral history interviews with Marines and collect historically relevant documents, he capitalized on his personal interest in photography to visually capture the experiences of both Marines and Iraqis as he traveled. As he put it: "The photographs in this book tell an important part of the story, mostly untold. Where the rubber meets the road and Marines are interacting with Iraqis on a personal level, there is genuine cooperation—and even friendship. The photographs portray what occurs the vast majority of the time and I don't think most Americans realize this; it is my hope this book will add to the complete picture by illustrating the 'no better friend' aspect of the fight—a critical element of earning and maintaining the good will of the people and thus our long-term success."



*Left:* LtCol Benhoff interviews Maj Chris Phelps and Sgt Sean Lawlor, both with 5th Civil Affairs Group, Camp Fallujah.



*Above:* Photographer becomes subject, when a young Iraqi boy photographs LtCol Benhoff near Karmah.