U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991
WITH MARINE FORCES AFLOAT IN DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM

HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

COVER: "Air Boss." The painting captures the drama of flight operations on board the USS Nassau. *The Navy "air boss" looks on as a Marine air controller talks an AV-8B onto the flight deck. The Bumblebees of VMA-331 launched the first ever fixed-wing combat strikes from the deck of an amphibious assault ship on 20 February 1991.* (Painting by Col H. Avery Chenoweth, USMC [Ret])

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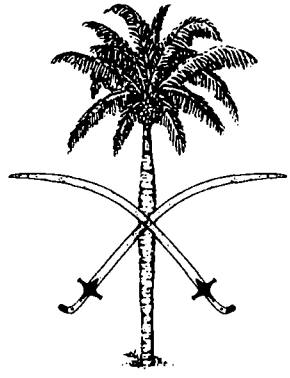

by
Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown
U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Retired

HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
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Foreword

This monograph presents a preliminary account of operations by the embarked Marine units under the operational control of the Commander, Naval Forces, Central Command, in the Persian Gulf from August 1990 to May 1991. It tells the story of the 4th and 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs) and the 13th and 11th Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) which comprised the Marine Forces Afloat during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The term "Marine Forces Afloat" was chosen carefully because although each of these units served in the same theater of operations, they remained separate entities capable of rapidly integrating into a single force or breaking away to conduct independent operations as the situation required.

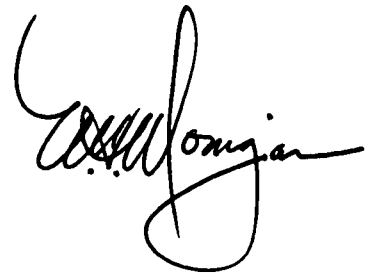
The Marine Forces Afloat came into existence early in Operation Desert Shield when the seaborne 4th MEB joined the forward-deployed 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) in the North Arabian Sea in mid-September. These Marines were later joined by the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade during what would eventually become the longest continuous shipboard deployment by a brigade-sized force in Marine Corps history. For those Marines, the major events of Desert Shield were a series of large amphibious exercises, maritime interdiction operations, and a daring evacuation of the American Embassy at Mogadishu, Somalia. During Operation Desert Storm the U.S. amphibious threat created a strategic distraction that kept Saddam Hussein's attention focused away from the main attack; Marine Aircraft Group 40 flew the first-ever fixed-wing combat strike off an amphibious assault ship; the 13th MEU made two landings; the 4th MEB conducted amphibious demonstrations off the coast of Kuwait; and the 5th MEB participated in ground combat ashore. On its way home the 5th MEB joined Operation Sea Angel, the international humanitarian effort to assist Bangladesh in dealing with the devastation of Cyclone Marian.

This work is one in a series of monographs written by members of Mobilization Training Unit (Historical) DC-7 who deployed to the Persian Gulf. The MTU is a Reserve unit composed of artists, historians, and museum specialists who support the activities of the History and Museums Division in peacetime and stand ready to deploy at a moment's notice in times of crisis. Members of the MTU have covered Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (Persian Gulf), Provide Comfort (Northern Iraq), Restore Hope (Somalia), Restore Democracy (Haiti), and Deny Flight (Bosnia).

While writing this monograph Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Brown was the commanding officer of Mobilization Training Unit (Historical) DC-7. During active service from 1968 to 1971 he was an infantry officer and served with five different Marine divisions including a combat tour in the Republic of Vietnam. Over the next two decades his travels as a Reserve historian took him to every major Marine base in the United States, and overseas to Europe, the Mediterranean, the Far East, and the Persian Gulf region. During Operation Desert Shield he was called to active duty and became Deputy Command Historian, I Marine Expeditionary Force. Rather than return to the United States

at the end of Operation Desert Storm, Lieutenant Colonel Brown volunteered to serve in northern Iraq as the Marine component historian for Combined Task Force Provide Comfort. In civilian life he was a high school history teacher and athletics coach in the Detroit area until his retirement in 1994, and he continues to be an active high school football coach. Lieutenant Colonel Brown has been a frequent contributor to professional journals and is the author of two History and Museums Division monographs, *A Brief History of the 14th Marines* and *Humanitarian Operations in Northern Iraq, 1991: With Marines in Operation Provide Comfort.*

In the pursuit of accuracy and objectivity, History and Museums Division welcomes comments from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and other interested individual.



M. F. Monigan
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Preface

The material in this monograph was derived from oral history interviews and official records of the U.S. Marine Corps. Unless otherwise noted, all unpublished documents consulted in preparation of this study are held by the Archives Section, Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, D.C. Most interviews cited in this monograph were conducted by members of the Marine Corps Southwest Asia Field Historical Team and the Marine Corps Warfighting Center's Battlefield Assessment Team. Tapes of these interviews are held at either the Marine Corps Historical Center or the Marine Corps Research Center, Quantico, Virginia. Official records consulted included unit command chronologies, unit messages and journals, operations orders, and after-action reports. Most technical data were gleaned from "How They Fight" handbooks or information supplied by Mr. Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas, Curator of Material History, and the Marine Corps Air-Ground Museum staff. Background information was found in the public libraries of New Smyrna Beach, Florida, and Novi, Michigan.

The following individuals reviewed the manuscript or provided materials: General Walter E. Boomer, USMC (Ret); Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor, USMC (Ret); Major General Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., USMC (Ret); the late Brigadier General Peter J. Rowe, USMC (Ret); Major General John E. Rhodes, USMC; General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, USA (Ret); Admiral Stanley A. Arthur, USN (Ret); Admiral Henry H. Mauz, Jr., USN (Ret); Vice Admiral John A. LaPlante, USN; Colonel Frank G. Wickersham III, USMC; Lieutenant Colonel William N. Saunders, USMC (Ret); Lieutenant Colonel Marshall K. Snyder, USMC (Ret); Major John T. Quinn II, USMC; Major Steven M. Zimmeck, USMC; Captain William D. Horrup III, USMC; Captain David B. Crist, USMCR; and Mr. Adam B. Seigel.

I would not have been able to go on active duty without the loyal support of Southfield Public Schools Principal James I. Smyth; my excellent substitute, Ms. Marilyn Seeley; and the rest of my colleagues at Southfield-Lathrup Senior High School. Colonel Allan R. Millett's vision and firm hand at the tiller steered MTU DC-7 on the correct course for its later performance on the fields of battle. I owe a special salute to the combat historians of MTU DC-7 who served in the Persian Gulf during Desert Storm: Colonel Charles J. Quilter II; Lieutenant Colonel Charles H. Cureton; Lieutenant Colonel Dennis P. Mroczkowski; Lieutenant Colonel Frank V. Sturgeon; and combat artist Lieutenant Colonel Keith A. McConnell. We became brothers-in-arms in the sands of the Saudi desert and I owe each a greater debt than I can ever repay.

Mr. Charles R. Smith, historian at the Marine Corps Historical Center, has been my project manager, providing assistance, guidance, and deeply appreciated moral support. My most sincere gratitude goes to other current and former staff members of the History and Museums Division: Director Emeritus Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret); Director Colonel Michael F. Monigan, USMC; Colonel Alfred J. Ponnwitz, USMC (Ret); Mr. Benis M. Frank; Dr. Jack Shulimson; Major John T. Quinn II, USMC; Major Steven M. Zimmeck, USMC;

Major Charles D. Melson, USMC (Ret); Captain David A. Dawson, USMC; Mr. Danny J. Crawford; Mr. Frederick J. Graboske; Visual Information Specialist Mr. William S. Hill; and Mr. John T. Dyer, Jr. Special thanks also go to Senior Editor Mr. Robert E. Struder, Composition Services Technician Mrs. Catherine A. Kerns, and Librarian Ms. Evelyn A. Englander.

While this monograph could not have been produced without the assistance of many people, the author is solely responsible for its content including all opinions expressed and any errors of fact or judgment.

Ronald J. Brown
Lieutenant Colonel
United States Marine Corps Reserve (Retired)

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U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991

With Marine Forces Afloat in Desert Shield and Desert Storm

Introduction

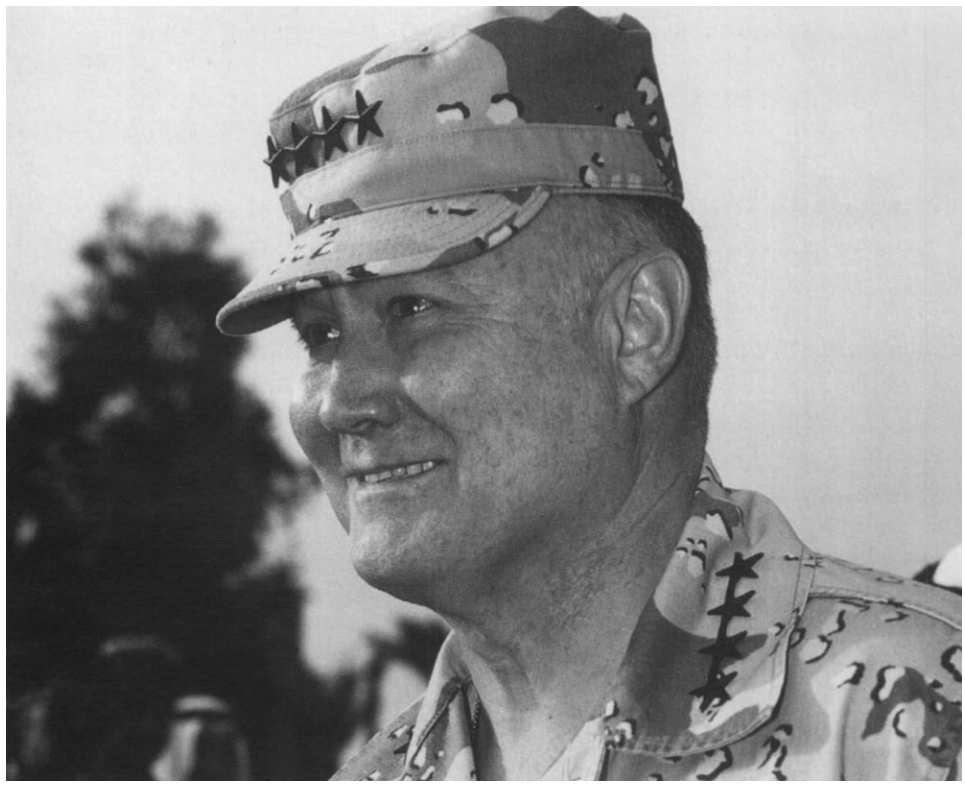
Invasion and Response

In 1990 Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein ordered his powerful army to invade the oil-rich Emirate of Kuwait. In the years since 1979 Saddam had carefully built the most experienced and best equipped military force in the Persian Gulf. The scales of battle were tipped even farther in Saddam's favor as most of Kuwait's 16,000-man army was on leave when the Iraqi onslaught was unleashed. At about 0100 on 2 August, Iraqi armored columns overwhelmed paper-thin border defenses at Abdaly Customs Post and raced south toward Kuwait City. The attack stunned the world and caught the United States by surprise. Central Command Headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida was made aware of the Iraqi incursion at about 0400, but the first official call for American assistance came from Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah about an hour later when he pleaded with the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait for immediate help. Unfortunately, the only American support available was a promise of future aid, and Kuwait was quickly overrun.

After a series of high-level meetings and international consultations, American President George Bush authorized military action to defend the Arabian Peninsula from further Iraqi aggression. On 7 August, Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney ordered General Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to initiate Operation Desert Shield. Marine forces were to become a vital part of the U.S. defense plans. The I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) in southern California, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade (1st MEB) in Hawaii, the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (4th MEB) on the east coast, and the 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (7th MEB) in California's Mojave Desert, were all alerted to be ready to deploy to southwestern Asia. Soon thereafter Seventh Fleet Amphibious Ready Group Alpha, with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) [13th MEU (SOC)] embarked, made ready to sail from the Western Pacific to the North Arabian Sea.

Central Command

In 1990, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, was Commander-in-Chief of Central Command (CentCom), the United States unified command whose area of responsibility included Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran,



Department of Defense Photo (USAF) DF-ST-92-09443

Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, was Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command, during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Schwarzkopf gained amphibious experience working with the Marines in Grenada during Operation Urgent Fury in 1983.

Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. Central Command had five component commands: Army Forces (ArCent), Marine Forces (MarCent), Air Force Forces (CentAF), Naval Forces (NavCent), and Special Operations Command (SOCCent).

During most of Operation Desert Shield and all of Operation Desert Storm, the Marine forces ashore were under the operational control of MarCent, commanded by Lieutenant General Walter E. Boomer, USMC. Embarked Marine units, collectively known as the Marine Forces Afloat (MFA), were under the operational control of NavCent, commanded successively by Vice Admiral Henry H. Mauz, Jr., USN, and Vice Admiral Stanley R. Arthur, USN.

Geography of the Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf is a large crescent-shaped body of water located between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula.* This region is vitally important to the industrialized

*The Persian Gulf is also often called the Arabian Gulf.

nations of the world because the countries located along the Gulf's sandy shores control almost two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves. The shallow Gulf covers an estimated 92,000 square miles. It is about 615 miles long and varies from 210 to 35 miles wide. Sea lanes enter the Gulf through the North Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman, and the narrow Straits of Hormuz. In the summer of 1990 the countries lining the Gulf's southwest coast included the Sultanate of Oman, whose Musandam Peninsula dominated the Straits of Hormuz; the United Arab Emirates (UAE), seven small monarchies arrayed along the southern Gulf coast; Qatar, occupying the flat peninsula jutting into the Persian Gulf; Saudi Arabia, a large country that covered most of the Arabian Peninsula; Bahrain, a tiny island nation linked to Saudi Arabia by an 18-mile causeway; the small, but very rich, emirate of Kuwait; and the powerful but nearly landlocked nation of Iraq.

The strategic importance of the Persian Gulf is that it is the primary shipping

LtGen Walter E. Boomer was dual-hatted as Commanding General, I MEF, and Marine Component Commander, Central Command (ComUSMarCent). Although the Marines afloat were never under his direct operational control, most amphibious contingency plans were generated in support of MarCent requirements.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-02119

point for most Middle East oil. Its biggest tactical limitations are: lack of maneuver space inside the Gulf; the choke point formed by the Straits of Hormuz at the mouth of the Gulf; and the shallow waters along the Gulf's southwest littoral. Because the Gulf was a hub of maritime activity, there were many fine ports available to shipping in 1990. These included Manama (Bahrain), Ad Dammam (Saudi Arabia), Al Jubayl (Saudi Arabia), Doha (Qatar), Abu Dhabi (UAE), Dubai (UAE), and Muscat (Oman).

The nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council made many key installations and bases available to arriving international forces.* The Omani island of Masirah in the North Arabian Sea was the site of a large, modern air base built by the British. Inside the Gulf, Bahrain allowed U.S. naval forces to use its port facilities at Manama and also let the U.S. Marines use Shaik Isa Airfield and Bahrain International Airport.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had state-of-the-art communications and transportation infrastructures. There were modern highways, fine international airports and military airfields, and first-class port facilities. Hard-surfaced highways ran through the desert from Ad Dammam and Dhahran north to the Saudi cities of Al Jubayl, Mishab, and Al Khafji. The Marines were able to use this excellent road network as a main supply route throughout Desert Shield and Desert Storm. King Abdul Aziz Naval Air Base, Jubayl Naval Air Facility, and Tanajib Airfield were all used by Marine aircraft. The large commercial port at Jubayl and a smaller one at Mishab were used as ports of entry by the Marines.

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*The Gulf Cooperation Council included the countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Omam.

The KTO

The prospective battle area was labeled the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO). The KTO included the northeast border area of Saudi Arabia, the entire country of Kuwait, and the southeast quadrant of Iraq. The small emirate of Kuwait, a country with about the same land mass as Hawaii, is mostly featureless desert broken only by an occasional oasis. The dominant land mass is Mutlah Ridge running from Al Jahrah on the western edge of Kuwait City parallel to Kuwait Bay's northern shore. The capital, Kuwait City, is located on the south side of Kuwait Bay.

As oil is the main export, the capital's suburban areas housed refineries, storage facilities, pumping stations, and protected harbors. Kuwait's most notable oil fields are Al Manaqish near the Emirate's "armpit," where the inland east-west border meets the western north-south border; the centrally located Al Burqan;

Umm Gudair at the mid-point of the western north-south border; and Al Wafrah, just east of Kuwait's southwestern "elbow." Two forested agricultural stations, the "Emir's Farm," near Al Burqan, and the "National Forest," at Al Wafrah, interrupt the barren desert landscape. Kuwait's key military installations are Al Jaber Air Base in south-central Kuwait, Ali Al Salem Air Base at Al Jahrah, and the naval base and army barracks complex near Ras Al Qulayah.

Kuwait, once a maritime power, has more than 300 miles of coastline and claimed sovereignty over all nearby islands. The largest and most important of these islands are Bubiyan and Warbah abutting Iraq's Al Faw Peninsula south of the Shatt Al Arab Waterway.* Although Bubiyan and Warbah are low-lying islands covered by uninhabited salt marshes, they block sea access to Iraq's two main ports, Basrah and Umm Qasr. Faylakah Island, once used as a naval base by Alexander the Great, controls entry into Kuwait Bay. Two small islands, Miskan and Auhah, are located at the western and eastern ends of Faylakah respectively.

The Iraqi Threat

Iraq under Saddam Hussein could be described in 1990 as a "Third World" power trying to build a first-class military. In 1990 Saddam possessed the biggest and most experienced military force in the Persian Gulf and seemed unafraid to use it for personal gain. Iraq's population was only 17 million people, but Saddam had the world's fourth largest ground force and the sixth largest air force. Much of Iraq's military equipment was the best in the world. Its long-range weapons included updated versions of Soviet Scud ballistic missiles. Saddam's arsenal also included chemical and biological weapons, both of which he had previously used against the Iranians and the Kurds. Iraq's military forces had seen combat against Israel in 1973, battled Iran from 1980 to 1988, and had been fighting Kurdish guerrillas intermittently since 1961.

Iraq's armed forces consisted of *General Headquarters*, the *Republican Guard,* a sizable *National Army*, the *Popular Army* militia, a modern air force, and a small navy. It was estimated that Iraq had more than a million men under arms by January 1991. The Iraqi Army was a curious mixture of British military traditions and Soviet-style weapons. Iraqi warfighting doctrine stressed the superiority of defense in depth using firepower attrition tactics. Mechanized forces were used to conduct counterattacks.

Saddam's ground forces consisted of two major elements, the *Republican Guard* and the *National Army*. The elite *Republican Guard* was a well-equipped land force whose loyal members were selected for political reliability. Its units operated outside of the army chain of command, serving a dual role as both Saddam's personal guard and as Iraq's offensive shock troops. The *Republican Guard Force Command* had eight divisions and was apportioned into two corps,

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Ownership of these islands had long been a sore point between Kuwait and Iraq and was one of the issues that led to Saddam's invasion.

one corps responsible for the defense of Baghdad and the other a mobile strike force. The strike force, which included the *8th Special Assault Division*, was considered the most potent Iraqi offensive threat.* It was this strike force that invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and later became Saddam's strategic reserve. The *Republican Guard* became the focus of the main U.S. military effort during Operation Desert Storm. As such, it was the target of an intense bombing campaign and its destruction was a primary objective of the U.S. VII Corps.

The Iraqi navy was a small defensive force made up of only a few combat ships, but it included modern fast missile patrol boats. Iraq's coastal defenses included large caliber guns, dual-purpose antiaircraft guns, a variety of undersea mines, and antiship missiles.[1]

The Iraqi army was divided into seven corps. On the eve of the Coalition attack

*The *8th Special Assault Division* was similar to the Soviet *Spetsnaz*; it included highly trained parachute, airmobile, amphibious, and commando units and the Iraqi equivalent of U.S. Special Forces.

in January 1991, the *II* and *III Corps* were assigned the coastal areas of Kuwait and Iraq. The *II Corps* was located on Iraq's Al Faw Peninsula and along the coast of northern Kuwait. It mustered four infantry divisions, one armored division, and one mechanized division. The coast from Kuwait City to the Saudi border was the responsibility of *III Corps,* which included nine infantry divisions, one mechanized division, and one armored division.[2]

Coastal defense was the responsibility of the Iraqi *Marine Infantry.* Although called "Marines," these forces were not elite amphibious assault units.* Instead, these units were organized very much like U.S. Marine defense battalions during World War II.[3] Their mission was to defend shore installations, coastlines, islands, and oil rigs. Each unit had a headquarters, coastal artillery, antiship missiles, antiaircraft guns and missiles, and a small mechanized infantry force. Iraqi Marine units defended Basrah and Umm QASR Naval Bases and were stationed on Warbah, Bubiyan, and Faylakah Islands and Persian Gulf oil rigs.

America's Amphibious Forces

Fighting units of the U.S. Marine Corps were organized into Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs), flexible combined arms teams that united command, combat, aviation, combat support, and service support elements under a single commander. Although they varied in size and composition, each MAGTF had four common elements: a command element (CE); a ground combat element (GCE); an aviation combat element (ACE); and a combat service support element (CSSE). There were four types of Marine air-ground task forces in 1990: Marine expeditionary forces (MEFs), Marine expeditionary brigades (MEBs), Marine expeditionary units (MEUs), and contingency MAGTFs (CMAGTFs).**[4] The largest of these organizations were MEFs which normally included a Marine division, a Marine aircraft wing, and a force service support group. Marine expeditionary brigades usually included a regimental landing team, a Marine aircraft group, and a brigade service support group.*** The smallest permanent MAGTFs were MEUs built around a battalion landing team, a composite helicopter squadron, and a MEU service support group. Contingency MAGTFs were special purpose forces, usually smaller than MEUs, formed for specific missions.****

Marine air-ground task forces could stand alone or be used as building blocks to create a larger combat unit. Existing doctrine called for large Marine forces to

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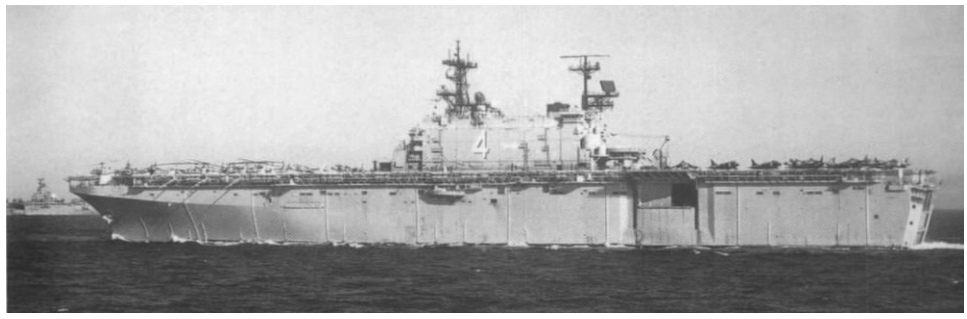
*Iraq's elite amphibious assault force was the *Special Boat Force, 8th Special Assault Division.*

**Designations have since changed, now all MAGTFs smaller than MEUs are called special purpose forces (SPFs).

***Landing teams are task organized to include ground combat and combat support units (infantry, artillery, combat engineer, armor, antitank, and assault amphibian units).

****Contingency MAGTFs were labeled using initials and numerical designations; such as CM-88 or CMAGTF 1-91.



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A port view of the Tarawa*-class amphibious assault ship* Nassau *(LHA 4) includes an* Iwo Jima*-class amphibious assault ship underway. The* Nassau *would be designated the flagship of the amphibious task force.*

be created by "compositing," whereby the command elements of two or more units merged to create a single headquarters when more than one unit deployed into a single combat arena. This practice ensured unity of command and eliminated redundant command functions. It had been prior practice for Marines to deploy as brigades but to fight as expeditionary forces. This doctrine had historical precedents. In 1950 the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade joined another brigade-size element to fill out the 1st Marine Division just before landing at Inchon. In Vietnam, III Marine Amphibious Force was comprised initially of the 3d and 9th Marine Amphibious Brigades. In Saudi Arabia the 1st and 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigades were combined to form I Marine Expeditionary Force.[5]

Marines comprise only one half of the "Blue-Green Team" that constitutes America's amphibious arm. The ships and sailors that carry the Marines to the fight are collectively known as the "Gator Navy." In 1990 the Gator Navy consisted of more than 60 amphibious ships organized into three amphibious groups and eleven amphibious squadrons. Theoretically, there were enough ships in the Gator Navy for a Navy amphibious force to lift an entire Marine expeditionary force. The division of amphibious shipping between the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets to support a wide variety of operational commitments and to meet maintenance requirements, however, made such a large deployment impractical.* A Navy amphibious group of about two dozen ships was needed to transport the assault echelon of a Marine expeditionary brigade to an amphibious area of operations. It was standard peacetime practice to deploy three-to-five-ship amphibious squadrons, designated amphibious ready groups, or ARGs, when forward deployed, with Marine expeditionary units embarked to the Mediterranean and the Western Pacific.**

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*Both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets usually had at least one amphibious squadron continuously forward deployed; amphibious groups would periodically deploy in support of major training exercises or be activated during times of crisis.

**At that time, ARGs were designated as ARG Alpha (west coast), ARG Bravo (Okinawa), and MARG (Mediterranean).

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-92-07207

A CH-53E Super Stallion lifts cargo from the underway Gunston Hall *(LSD 44). These Anchorage-class dock landing ships would see service with Marines in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere.*

Contemporary amphibious doctrine recognized four types of amphibious operations: assaults, landings from the sea to make forcible entry onto a hostile shore; raids, surprise attacks from the sea of short duration with limited objectives; withdrawals, the removal of friendly forces from a hostile shore; and demonstrations, actions to deceive the enemy using a seaborne show of force. The Navy-Marine Corps team was also proficient at two ancillary amphibious actions, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) and sea-based humanitarian relief operations (HROs).

Amphibious ships sent to the Persian Gulf included *Tarawa*- and *Iwo Jima*-class assault ships, *Austin*- and *Raleigh*-class dock transports; *Whidbey Island*- and *Anchorage*-class dock landing ships, *Charleston*-class cargo ships, and *Newport*-class tank landing ships. Support vessels included hospital, aviation support, crane, container, cargo ships, and tankers. Navy landing craft included LCUs (landing craft, utility), LCMs (landing craft, mechanized), and LCACs (landing craft, air cushion). The newest assault craft was the high speed LCAC, a versatile turbine-driven hovercraft that could race ashore at more than 40 knots and carry one tank, four light armored vehicles (LAVs), two 155mm howitzers, or about 60 tons of cargo. Because LCACs flew over, rather than plowed through, the water they could use many beaches not suitable for other surface craft. Seventeen LCACs were deployed to the Gulf.

The Marines provided assault helicopters and amphibious vehicles. Most Marine helicopters used in the Gulf were updated versions of aircraft introduced

in the 1960s. Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight medium transport helicopters were first used during the Vietnam Conflict. Bell Textron UH-1 Huey ("Iroquois") utility helicopters, also dating from the Vietnam Era, were the primary light support aircraft. The heavy lifters were Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallions and their variants, the CH-53D, RH-53D, and CH-53E.* The triple-engine Sikorsky CH-53E Super Stallion was the only helicopter able to transport M198 howitzers and light armored vehicles. Close-in fire support was provided by Bell Textron AH-1 Super Cobras. Close air support came from a unique short-take-off/vertical landing airplane, the McDonnell Douglas AV-8B Harrier II "jump jet."

Marine AAV7A1-series assault amphibious vehicles—traditionally known as "LVTs" or "amtracs", but more commonly called "AAVs" or "Hogs" by Marines in the Gulf—carried assault troops to the beach and then served as armored personnel carriers while ashore. Other major Marine ground combat weapons embarked included M60A1 tanks, light armored vehicles (LAVs), M101A1 105mm and M198 155mm howitzers, and M220E4 humvee-mounted TOW anti-tank missiles.**

Raiders of the Lost ARG

Background

In the summer of 1990, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) [13th MEU(SOC)] was sailing on board the ships of Seventh Fleet Amphibious Ready Group Alpha in the Western Pacific. Unknown to these Marines at the time, the cruise would last almost four months longer than the normal six. This extended tour of duty and the vast distances the cruise would cover, coupled with the MEU's special operations raid capability and the fact it was embarked on board the ships of an amphibious ready group, earned the 13th MEU(SOC) the pseudonym "Raiders of the Lost ARG," a play on words based on a contemporary movie title—*Raiders of the Lost Ark*.[6]

The 13th MEU(SOC) was comprised of MEU Headquarters, Battalion Landing Team 1/4 (BLT 1/4), Marine Composite Helicopter Squadron 164 (HMM(C)-164), and MEU Service Support Group 13 (MSSG 13). Amphibious Squadron 5 (PhibRon 5) comprised Amphibious Ready Group Alpha during this deployment. ARG Alpha included the amphibious assault ship USS *Okinawa* (LPH 3), amphibious transport dock USS *Ogden* (LPD 5), dock landing ship USS *Fort McHenry* (LSD 43), tank landing ship USS *Cayuga* (LST 1186), and amphibious cargo ship USS *Durham* (LKA 114).[7]

Floating Marine battalions have been part of America's naval tradition since

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* These included CH-53D, RH-53D, and CH-53E models.

**Humvees were 4x4, 5,200-pound, high mobility, multipurpose, wheeled vehicles used much like their ubiquitous jeep predecessor.

1898, and at least one battalion landing team has been assigned to the Pacific Fleet since 1961.* In 1990, Marine expeditionary units shared this duty on a rotational schedule. When forward deployed, Marine forces were designated "Landing Force Seventh Fleet." Navy Amphibious Ready Group Alpha usually carried a MEU from the west coast while Amphibious Ready Group Bravo usually embarked an Okinawa- or Hawaii-based MEU. These amphibious forces cruised the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean

Special Operations

Units carrying the designation "Special Operations Capable" were flexible combined-arms combat teams trained, equipped, and organized to conduct 18 special amphibious operations: day/night amphibious raids; limited objective attacks; non-combatant evacuations; show of force operations; reinforcement operations; security operations; mobile training team missions; civil affairs; deception operations; fire support coordination; counterintelligence; initial terminal guidance; electronic warfare; tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel; clandestine recovery operations; military operations in urban terrain; special demolitions; and *in extremis* hostage rescues.

In order to accomplish such a wide variety of tasks, Marine expeditionary units had been augmented by special units and trained for special operations since 1985. Command elements received a force reconnaissance detachment, an air and naval gunfire liaison company detachment, a counter-intelligence detachment, a force imagery interpretation unit detachment, an interrogator-translator team, and a radio battalion detachment. In 1990, the ground combat element included four rifle companies instead of the normal three. The artillery battery was armed with both M101A1 105mm and M198 155mm towed howitzers and its fire control assets were enhanced.** A wide variety of combat support units were also integrated. The aviation combat element included a composite aircraft squadron, an air defense detachment, and an air support squadron detachment to provide a "mini-DASC" for air control.*** Non-deployed fixed-wing refueler/transports and attack aircraft were placed on special standby status to support MEU operations. The combat service support element was tailored to meet anticipated logistics needs and maintained 15 days of supply called landing force operational readiness material.

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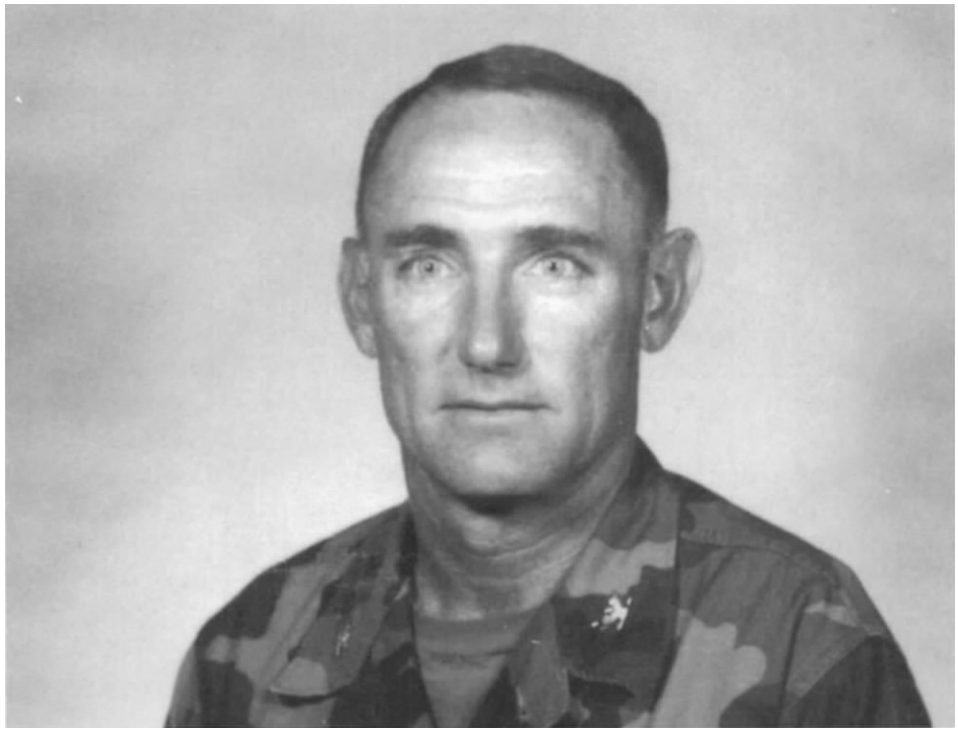
*The most famous of these were the Special Landing Forces (SLFs) used for combat and contingency operations durimg the Vietnam Conflict.

**The M101A1 105mm howitzers could be lifted by CH-46 and CH-53D helicopters; the heavier M198s had to be lifted by CH-53E.

***A DASC (direct air support center) processes air support requests, coordinates aircraft employment, and controls assigned aircraft.



Col John E. Rhodes commanded the 13th MEU(SOC) during its lengthy Persian Gulf deployment. The 13th MEU(SOC) was given the affectionate sobriquet "Raiders of the Lost ARG" to acknowledge its special operations capability, the extraordinary length of the deployment, and the long distance it traveled.

As part of the special operations package, special training and deployment schedules were put into effect. Six months of intense training was followed by a six-month deployment. The Marines refined individual and collective combat skills during the training phase. Their goal was to conduct amphibious operations during periods of limited visibility, acting without radio or electronic emissions, prepared to move after only short notice.[8] They were able to conduct day or night amphibious operations within six hours by using a special rapid planning cycle.

Organization of the 13th MEU(SOC)

In August 1990, the 13th MEU(SOC) was commanded by Colonel John E. Rhodes, a highly decorated naval aviator who flew helicopters in Vietnam in 1968-69 and participated in non-combatant evacuation Operations Eagle Pull and Frequent Wind in 1975. His previous commands included Marine Air Base Squadron 36 and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 163. Colonel Rhodes had commanded the 13th MEU since July 1989.[9] The ground combat element was Battalion Landing Team 1/4, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel George W. Flinn. Battalion Landing Team 1/4 included Headquarters and Service Company; Weapons Company; four rifle companies; Battery B, 1st Battalion, 11th Marines; Detachment 13, 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion; 3d Platoon, Company A,

1st Reconnaissance Battalion; 1st Platoon, Company A, 3d Assault Amphibian Battalion; and 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion.[10]

The aviation combat element was task organized to provide the MEU with the six functions of Marine aviation: air reconnaissance; antiair warfare; assault support; offensive air support; electronic warfare; and control of aircraft. It was a composite helicopter squadron built around Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164 (HMM-164), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Guy M. Vanderlinden. The squadron was created using assets from Marine Aircraft Group 16 (MAG-16) at MCAS Tustin and Marine Aircraft Group 39 (MAG-39) at MCAS Camp Pendleton. The Tustin contingent included HMM-164 and detachments from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 (HMH-466), Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16 (MALS-16), Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, and Marine Air Traffic Control Squadron 38. Marine Aircraft Group 39 provided detachments from Marine Light Attack Squadron 267 (HMLA-267), Marine Air Support Squadron 3, Marine Air Control Squadron 1, and a 3d Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion (3d LAAD) detachment. Embarked aircraft included 12 CH-46Es, 4 CH-53Es, 4 AH-1Ws, 4 UH-1Ns. Five Stinger missile teams were also deployed.[11]

MEU Service Support Group 13 (MSSG 13), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bradley M. Lott, was task organized to provide combat service support

The MEU's command element included, front row, from left: Maj Marshall K. Snyder; SgtMaj Anthony Reese; Col John E. Rhodes; LtCol Rollin G. Napier; Maj Russell O. Scherck; and Maj Steven J. Cash. Back Row, from left: Capt C. Wright; Capt Timothy M. Dunn; Maj Phillip R. Hutcherson; and LtCol John A. Clauer.

Photo courtesy of LtCol Marshall K. Snyder

Amphibious Squadron 5 underway in the Persian Gulf. PhibRon 5 carried the 13th MEU(SOC) in the ships Fort McHenry *(LSD 43),* Durham *(LKA 114),* Cayuga *(LST 1186),* Ogden *(LPD 5), and* Okinawa *(LPH 3).*

beyond the organic capabilities of the ground and aviation combat elements. This support included supply, maintenance, engineer, medical and dental, material handling, transportation, food, military police, financial, and personnel services. Formed from the 1st Force Service Support Group (1st FSSG) at Camp Pendleton, MSSG 13 included detachments from: Headquarters and Service Battalion, 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 7th Motor Transport Battalion, 7th Communications Battalion, 1st Landing Support Battalion, 1st Medical Battalion, 1st Dental Battalion, 1st Supply Battalion, and 1st Maintenance Battalion. The MSSG included combat service support equipment and sufficient supplies to support a two-week shore deployment. The logistics plan called for using a sea-based concept whereby most maintenance was conducted on board ship, only a small mobile combat service support detachment went ashore, and supply reserves remained afloat.[12]

Training and Deployment

The 13th MEU(SOC) underwent an intense training program before deploying. Phase I was 10 weeks of concentrated work on individual skills and small unit tactics. Phase II lasted six weeks and worked on staff integration using command post and joint service exercises.

On 20 June 1990, the MEU left California for the Western Pacific. On 5 July, it came under the operational control of III MEF, and on the 12th, ARG Alpha made a port call at White Beach, Okinawa, where the Marines got a chance to

stretch their legs after a 22-day trans-Pacific voyage. Four days later, the MEU arrived in the Philippines to conduct Exercise Valiant Usher 90-7 in conjunction with Contingency MAGTF 4-90, which was already there on a "presence" mission. The situation in the Philippines was tense. There had been demonstrations outside U.S. installations to protest continued American presence. Three U.S. servicemen, including Marine Sergeant John S. Fredette, had been slain by terrorists in May. This political turmoil was compounded by a natural disaster which struck at 1626 on 16 July. A severe earthquake, measuring 7.7 on the Richter Scale, rocked the island of Luzon, killing 647 people. From the 18th to the 31st, selected members of the MEU assisted disaster relief operations while the remainder continued training at Zambales.

Soon after operations began in the Persian Gulf on 7 August, Colonel Rhodes received a warning order to be ready to move to the area, but at that time the 13th MEU(SOC) was still needed in the Western Pacific because of to the situation in the Philippines. On 13 August, the MEU departed Subic Bay for a scheduled port call at Hong Kong. Two days later the MEU and PhibRon 5 were alerted to be ready to depart the Pacific and deploy to the Indian Ocean. They departed Hong Kong on the 20th for Subic Bay to load additional personnel and equipment. The five-ship flotilla sailed from Subic Bay on the 22d and arrived on station in the North Arabian Sea on 7 September. Following a temporary presence mission in the Persian Gulf to demonstrate the Coalition's amphibious capability, the MEU returned to the North Arabian Sea to meet the incoming 4th MEB in mid-September.[13]

Embarkation of the 4th MEB

Ordered to the Persian Gulf

On 1 August 1990, the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade was less than four weeks away from its annual deployment to northern Europe to participate in North Atlantic Treaty Organization Exercises Teamwork and Bold Guard 90. Forces had been allocated, loading plans were complete, and the ships were rapidly filling with blank ammunition and MRE (Meal, Ready-To-Eat) combat rations. Suddenly, the loading was halted and all plans were scrapped when several unanticipated international events in the next week radically changed the 4th MEB's course of action.

Although most of the Marine forces originally earmarked for duty in the Persian Gulf were from the west coast, the east coast-based 4th MEB was selected to become Central Command's amphibious strike force because it was the Marine brigade most ready to deploy by sea. After evaluating the situation in the Persian Gulf and reviewing the forces available, General Schwarzkopf requested that the 4th MEB be added to the CentCom force list. This tasking passed from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Admiral Leon A. Edney, Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Command, through Admiral Paul D. Miller, Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet, who in turn passed it on to Lieutenant General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic. General Mundy informed

Major General Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., Commanding General, 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade at Norfolk to prepare for deployment. In an ironic twist of the chain of command, General Jenkins then tasked General Mundy, also the commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) at Camp Lejeune, with supplying the troops to fill out the 4th MEB.

Marines have traditionally proclaimed their ability to deploy to "every climate and every place," and the accuracy of this claim was tested in the summer of 1990. During one of the hastiest deployment redirections in history, the Marines of Norway-bound 4th MEB stowed their cold weather gear then readied themselves for sweltering desert heat virtually overnight. Ironically, it was not the invasion of Kuwait but another contingency that initially had the greatest impact

MajGen Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., commanded the 4th MEB. Jenkins was the senior Marine officer afloat throughout Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

on 4th MEB planning. American citizens and other foreign nationals in the Liberian capital of Monrovia were put at risk when rebel forces tightened their noose around that embattled city. The 22d MEU(SOC) was waiting off the west African coast, but it appeared reinforcements might be needed. At 4th MEB Headquarters, Little Creek Navy Amphibious Base, Norfolk, Virginia, Lieutenant Colonel Michael M. Bullen, the MEB's intelligence officer, established a crisis action response team (CART) to monitor and evaluate events in Liberia. He prudently ordered his staff to keep an eye on developments in the Persian Gulf as well. The intelligence section worked round-the-clock, prepared daily situation briefs, and developed data files about both Liberia and the Persian Gulf. This turned out to be a fortuitous action.[14]

The 4th MEB had a proud heritage that included a distinguished combat record in World War I where it fought as the 4th Marine Brigade. In 1962 the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade stood ready to invade Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Three years later the 4th MEB participated in the 1965 Dominican Republic intervention. Less than a decade later the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade (4th MAB) sortied into the Mediterranean in response to an international crisis triggered by the Arab-Israeli October War of 1973. Since the mid-1970s the 4th MEB had been earmarked for NATO service along western Europe's northern flank.

The 4th MEB was commanded by 52-year-old Major General Harry W. Jenkins, Jr. A graduate of San Jose State College in California, he held a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin. His military schooling included the Amphibious Warfare School, the Marine Command and Staff College, and the Naval War College. Commissioned in 1960, he commanded a rifle company in Vietnam, and later led the 2d Marines. In 1989, Brigadier General Jenkins was assigned concurrent duties as Commanding General, 4th MEB, and Commanding General, Landing Force Training Command Atlantic. He was promoted to Major General on 1 August 1990.[15]

At first, the invasion of Kuwait drew little attention at Norfolk because the 4th MEB staff was busy with Teamwork/Bold Guard and the possible deployment to Liberia. Movement to the Persian Gulf seemed unlikely because of the 4th MEB's historical orientation on Europe and the fact the I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) at Camp Pendleton was the designated Marine contingency force for the Persian Gulf. By mid-week, however, it was apparent that large storm clouds loomed on the horizon in the Persian Gulf so Lieutenant Colonel Bullen had a Persian Gulf situation map prepared and his daily intelligence briefs included the latest information about developments in Kuwait and Iraqi movements. The 4th MEB operations section also assembled information to support contingency plans should they become necessary.[16]

On 4 August, FMFLant notified Major General Jenkins that the 4th MEB command element might be sent to Liberia. Accordingly, designated personnel were given shots and were told to be ready to depart on short notice. The next day, the 22d MEU was committed and the Liberian crisis eased, but by then the Persian

Gulf situation had worsened.* On 7 August, designated C-Day to mark the commencement of operations, Jenkins received a warning order indicating the 4th MEB might be sent to the Persian Gulf. Three days later, the 4th MEB was ordered to deploy to Southwest Asia.**

Deployment Plans

General Jenkins, his chief of staff, Colonel William W. Scheffler, and the rest of the 4th MEB staff had their work cut out. The first order of business was to make an estimate of the situation. Using a time-honored formula, General Jenkins assessed the 4th MEB's mission, enemy capabilities, terrain and weather in the objective area, the troops and fire support available, and the time allocated before issuing his concept of operations.

The 4th MEB's mission was open-ended; be prepared to conduct either amphibious operations or sustained operations ashore. After a careful review of the situation, General Jenkins directed that the 4th MEB be specifically tailored to engage a numerically superior armored force that possessed chemical and biological weapons in a desert environment.[17]

The 4th MEB command element quickly got down to the business at hand. The personnel section, headed by Major John R. Turner since 13 July, estimated requirements for units and personnel to augment the 4th MEB and prepared to handle a large influx of new arrivals. The 4th MEB's personnel strength rose from 188 to 8,442 in only 12 days. Operations officer Colonel Robert P. Mauskapf and his staff dissected the Desert Shield operations plan. Soon, the operations section was formulating plans, orders, and letters of instruction to be disseminated to the 4th MEB's major subordinate elements. The MEB's logistics section, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Gary W. Collenborne, made the difficult transition from planning for a limited training exercise in Europe to supporting a combat deployment of unknown length in the Persian Gulf. "Logistics flexibility" was the watchword as the 4th MEB geared up for the largest contingency-driven amphibious deployment since the Korean Conflict.[18]

Fielding the 4th MEB, an already arduous task, was made more difficult because the initial force list greatly exceeded the amphibious lift available. Time was also a crucial factor. Two major subordinate units did not report to Major General Jenkins until 12 August, less than a week before the first sailing date. Despite the hardships, General Jenkins reported the 4th MEB fully constituted and ready to deploy on the 14th, only four days after receiving the deployment order.

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*The Liberian contingency eventually led to non-combatant evacuation Operation Sharp Edge.

**USCinCCent Deployment Order 100600ZAug90 called for I MEF CE, 1st MEB, and 4th MEB to reinforce 7th MEB; one RLT was to be deployed on board ship.

Task Organization

II Marine Expeditionary Force was tasked to provide the necessary forces. The ground combat element of II MEF was the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune. The 2d Marine Aircraft Wing was the aviation combat element. Its headquarters was located at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, as were most of the fixed-wing squadrons. Most of the helicopter squadrons operated from Marine Corps Air Station New River, located near Camp Lejeune. The 2d Force Service Support Group at Camp Lejeune was the II MEF combat service support element.*

The existing 4th MEB command element received 470 additional personnel. The 2d Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Group provided the 2d Remotely Piloted Vehicle Company; detachments from the 2d Force Reconnaissance Company, 2d Radio Battalion; and 2d Intelligence Company teams from the Marine All-source Fusion Center, 5th Counterintelligence Team, 2d Topographic Platoon, and 2d Force Imagery Interpretation Unit. The Communications Section, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Glenn R. Williams, received new equipment and personnel to enhance its capabilities. This included a deployable world-wide Marine command and control system (WWMCCS), global positioning system (GPS), and position location reporting system (PLRS) master stations, two multi-channel satellite communications systems, and a wide variety of technical enhancement equipment.

The 2d Marine Division assigned Regimental Landing Team 2 (RLT 2) to the 4th MEB. Colonel Thomas A. Hobbs commanded RLT 2, which included Headquarters Company; the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines; the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines; the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines (Reinforced); Companies B and D, 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion; Company A, 2d Assault Amphibian Battalion; Company A, 2d Tank Battalion; Company A, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion; Company A (-), 2d Reconnaissance Battalion; and Truck Company Detachment, Headquarters Battalion, 2d Marine Division. When embarked, RLT 2 mustered 3,526 personnel including 198 Marine officers, 3,125 enlisted Marines, 17 Navy officers, and 186 sailors. Its combat support included 22 tanks, 18 155mm howitzers, 48 AAVs, and 52 LAVs.

The 4th MEB aviation combat element was Marine Aircraft Group 40 (MAG-40). Colonel Glenn F. Burgess commanded MAG-40, which mustered 2,792 personnel when it reported to the 4th MEB on 12 August 1990. Marine Aircraft Group 40 included: Marine Attack Squadron 331 (VMA-331), the first Marine squadron assigned McDonnell Douglas AV-8B Harrier IIs; Marine Medium Helicopter Squadrons 263 and 365 (HMM-263 and -365); Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 (HMH-461); Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron

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*The 2d MarDiv, most of the 2d MAW, and most of 2d FSSG were deployed to the Gulf by Jan91.

269 (HMLA-269); Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 14; Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron 28; Marine Air Control Squadron 6; Marine Wing Service Support Squadron 274; Marine Wing Communications Squadron 28; Detachment B, Marine Air Support Squadron 1; and Battery A, 2d Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion. The MAG-40 aircraft list included 20 AV-8B Harriers, 15 Bell Textron AH-1 Sea Cobras, 24 Boeing Vertol CH-46E Sea Knights, 16 Sikorsky CH-53E Sea Stallions, and 6 Bell Textron UH-1N Hueys.

The combat service support element was Brigade Service Support Group 4, commanded by Colonel James J. Doyle, Jr. It mustered 1,464 personnel.

Marine Corps Commandant Gen Alfred M. Gray, Jr., foreground, and MajGen Harry W. Jenkins, Jr. on board the Nassau *listen to a pre-sail briefing by the 4th MEB staff. Not long thereafter, the 4th MEB departed for the Persian Gulf via the Suez Canal.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DM-ST-91-04421

Logistics and support detachments assigned to BSSG 4 came from 2d Military Police Company, 2d Medical Battalion, 2d Dental Battalion, 2d Maintenance Battalion, 2d Supply Battalion, 8th Communications Battalion, 8th Motor Transport Battalion, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2d Landing Support Battalion, and Headquarters Battalion, 2d FSSG. Brigade Service Support Group 4 was placed under the operational control of the 4th MEB on 11 August.[19]

Embarkation Issues

In the haste to accomplish so many things so fast, not all went smoothly. The 4th MEB had to address a number of sticky issues. Troop allocation, equipment lists, and task organizations had to be adjusted constantly to meet changing requirements. An amphibious shipping shortage caused problems. The limited time available caused predictable embarkation and loading problems. Aviation plans had to be completely reworked and new forces allocated. There was a shortfall of critical supplies and the existing repair parts supply allocation was inadequate for the task at hand.

Amphibious Group 2 (PhibGru 2), commanded by Rear Admiral John B. LaPlante, was designated to carry the 4th MEB to the Gulf. A shipping crisis ensued because the 4th MEB force allocation required about two dozen amphibious ships, but PhibGru 2 could only muster the nine ships originally scheduled for the Teamwork/Bold Guard exercises. Ship maintenance cycles, recent deployments, and the overall condition of the aging amphibious fleet severely limited the number of amphibious ships at hand. This ship shortfall was to have detrimental consequences throughout the 4th MEB's overseas deployment.*

After four days of intense negotiations, four more amphibious ships were finally made available.[20] Although 13 ships were better than 9, the amphibious lift available was not sufficient to embark the 4th MEB and all its gear. A shortfall of at least seven amphibious ships prevented loading all assault echelon cargo on board amphibious shipping. This forced the 4th MEB to load the overflow on board Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships. Unfortunately, these MSC ships were not intended for amphibious assaults and were neither self-sustaining nor capable of in-stream offloading. This solution provided sufficient cargo-carrying capacity, but significantly impacted potential amphibious operations because it severely limited the number of landing sites.

According to amphibious doctrine the assault follow-on echelon (AFOE) is carried on board Military Sealift Command ships, often called "black bottoms." The AFOE consists of troops, vehicles, aircraft, equipment, and supplies which—although not needed to initiate an assault—are required to sustain the assault force ashore. The AFOE must be in the objective area no later than five days after an assault begins. The black bottom ships that carry the AFOE are usually manned

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*No amphibious command ship (LCC/AGF) was assigned to the ATF and this hampered command and control and limited combat capabilities; Stewart, "PhibOps," pp. 16-19.

by civilian crews and are owned or chartered by the MSC.*

As usually happens in emergency situations, requests for support far outstripped the resources available. It was soon obvious that the 4th MEB's plans to use MSC ships to haul overflow assault and follow-on materials were not panning out. The Army and the Marines were competing for the few available common-user pool ships. There was great irony in the fact that task-organized, combat-ready units were losing ship space to units that were not organized for immediate combat. This happened because it took great attention to detail and lengthy planning sessions to determine proper loads and ship configurations for a combat deployment, but units which required only transportation and did not have to combat load could register their general needs with the joint deployment system much faster.

The reasons for the "ship crunch" were lack of time, lack of resources, and shipping priorities. The U.S. Transportation Command (TransCom), the unified command that controlled the common-user ships and planes that supported all Services, was overloaded. Contingency plans called for a minimum of 30 days' warning, but TransCom received less than six days notice. Ship schedules and loading priorities were established by matching time-phased force and deployment data with the transportation assets available and the desires of Central Command.

As part of its Teamwork/Bold Guard exercise package, the 4th MEB had requested use of MSC vehicle container ship MV *American Eagle* (T-AK 2044). Consultations with higher echelons confirmed the ship was still available so the 4th MEB planned to use the *American Eagle*'s 145,000 square feet of cargo space to carry vital equipment and supplies. On 14 August, however, the *American Eagle* was suddenly assigned to carry other forces to the Gulf. The loss of the *American Eagle* made it impossible for the 4th MEB to deploy adequate forces and supplies to sustain itself. On 16 August, only one day before the first amphibious ships sailed, the MSC-owned vehicle cargo ship MV *Cape Domingo* (T-AKR 5053) and MSC-leased vehicle cargo ship MV *Strong Texan* (T-AKR 9670) became available. Eventually, the MSC-leased ships *Bassro Polar*, *Aurora T*, and *Pheasant* also were assigned to support the 4th MEB.**

Major General Jenkins directed that the new embarkation plans were to build on the existing Teamwork/Bold Guard framework. He wanted maximum combat power loaded within the constraints of the 13-ship amphibious task force. Although the embarkation effort focused on the assault echelon, lack of space resulted in much of the assault echelon cargo and all of the assault follow-on ech-

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*Within the Strategic Sealift Command the only ships owned by the Navy are those in the Naval Inactive Fleet, fast sealift ships, and hospital ships; the Department of Transportation Maritime Administration owns the Ready Reserve Fleet and aviation support ships.

**These vehicle cargo ships were not USN vessels, hence, had no numerical designators.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DM-ST-91-04419

Personnel depart from two Marine UH-1N Iroquois helicopters on the flight deck of the Nassau *as it lies anchored off the coast of North Carolina near Morehead City. The* Nassau *would carry units of the 4th MEB to the Persian Gulf.*

elon cargo being relegated to commercial ships. It was recognized at that time that the assault overflow and follow-on supplies on board commercial ships would not be loaded in a manner suited to support combat operations, but there was no other choice if sailing deadlines were to be met.

Combat loading problems haunted General Jenkins for months to come. To meet the two-week target date for sailing, standard embarkation and documentation procedures had to be abbreviated, particularly in the case of late-arriving MSC-leased ships. Adding to the confusion was the wide dispersal of loading points. The amphibious ships were loaded at Morehead City, North Carolina, but the MSC ships were loaded at Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal located near Wilmington, North Carolina, about 100 miles to the south. Lack of time and a shortage of trained embarkation personnel prevented the 4th MEB from closely supervising the loading at Sunny Point.* The hurried nature of the embarkation, combined with communications difficulties at sea, resulted in confusion about ship loading and specific-item placement that could not be resolved until the shipping reconfiguration at Jubayl in October and November.[21]

Insufficient port space at Morehead City resulted in a phased embarkation of the ATF. Amphibious Group 2 was divided into three transit groups, each with a

* 2d FSSG, not 4th MEB, embarkation personnel loaded the MSC ships at Sunny Point.

different sailing date. The requirement to move combat forces to the Gulf area as fast as possible prohibited an ATF rendezvous at sea. This, along with the uncertain tactical environment in the Persian Gulf, led General Jenkins to split the 4th MEB command element. The USS *Nassau* (LHA 4) was the ATF flagship and carried the "alpha" command group made up of General Jenkins and most of the 4th MEB staff. The USS *Guam* (LPH 9) carried the smaller "bravo" command element. Representatives from each principal staff section were assigned to the *Guam* to ensure adequate redundancy with regard to command, control, personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, and communications matters.[22]

Aviation Issues

Marine Aircraft Group 40 was originally task organized for Exercises Teamwork/Bold Guard to be held in Norway and West Germany during September and October. The short duration and limited training opportunities dictated a small aviation package, and minimal aviation maintenance and supply packages were planned. Most fixed-wing aircraft were to fly to Europe and operate from airfields in Norway.* Ten AV-8B Harrier IIs were scheduled to deploy on board the USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH 2). Rotary-wing aircraft, 12 CH-46Es, 4 AH-1Ts, and 4 UH-1Ns, were slated for the flagship *Nassau.*

Deployment to the Persian Gulf precipitated major aviation changes and necessitated complete revision of maintenance, aviation supply, and logistics plans. Non-Harrier fixed-wing aircraft were dropped from MAG-40.** The new aircraft mix included 20 Harriers, 24 Sea Knights, 16 Super Stallions, 3 Sea Cobras, 12 Super Cobras, and 6 Hueys. Due to an urgent requirement for tank-killing helicopters in Saudi Arabia the 12 AH-1W Super Cobras of HMLA-269 were airlifted directly to the Gulf instead of being embarked as had been planned.*** At the last minute, two North American OV-10 Bronco light observation aircraft were loaded on board the *Iwo Jima* for transit to the Gulf.

Aircraft deck spaces were meted out using maintenance considerations. The Harriers, Hueys, and Sea Cobras were assigned to the *Nassau.* Both Sea Knight squadrons were placed on board the *Guam.* Twelve Super Stallions were embarked on board the *Iwo Jima,* and two of each were assigned to the USS *Trenton* (LPD 14) and the USS *Raleigh* (LPD 1). All of MAG-40's aviation command and control equipment was embarked on board the USS *Spartanburg County* (LST 1192). The aircraft maintenance support ship USNS *Wright* (T-AVB

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*These aircraft included 12 McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Horners, 10 Grumman A-6E Intruders, and 3 Grumman EA-6B Prowlers.

**They were first absorbed by MAG-70, which later became part of the 3d MAW.

***When released by 3d MAW in Dec90, the AH-1Ws returned to MAG-40 and were embarked on board the *Raleigh* and *Shreveport.*

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-SC-91-00613

Adm Leon A. Edney, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Command, greets members of the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade as they stand in formation on the pier.

3) carried 77 rotary-wing vans, 191 fixed-wing vans, and 324 intermediate maintenance activity Marines. The *Wright* was specially configured with its rotary-wing vans accessible so in-stream maintenance support was available if aviation maintenance departments were overburdened. Operation Desert Shield marked the first time aircraft maintenance support ships were used during contingency operations.[23]

Supply Issues

One critical supply issue was the unavailability of consolidated training equipment pool (CTEP) supplies. The CTEP is used to outfit units deploying to harsh environments with special clothing, equipment, and supplies. For Desert Shield, the CTEP included "chocolate chip" desert camouflage utility uniforms, desert night clothing, and protective goggles. In spite of herculean efforts by supporting establishments, adequate supplies could not be obtained prior to embarkation. Many 4th MEB Marines left for the Gulf without desert uniforms or equipment. Fortunately, these items were not immediately needed. Critical CTEP items were later shipped with follow-on supplies.

A crucial problem was map availability. The Defense Mapping Agency Crisis Action Center was unable to meet the 4th MEB's requirements because its warehouse stocks had been depleted. The 4th MEB received a shipment of planning

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-SC-91-00614

Members of the 4th MEB prepare to board the Shreveport *(LPD 12) at Morehead City. The 4th MEB had less than two weeks notice to cancel a planned exercise in Northern Europe and mount out for a combat deployment to the Persian Gulf.*

maps, but it was only a fraction of the original order.* The ground combat element was hardest hit. RLT 2 had only a few maps and its subordinate units had none. Another problem was repair parts allocation. The existing repair parts supply block had been created to support Teamwork/Bold Guard and contained only specifically requested parts to support a short training deployment to northern Europe. Lack of time and ever-shifting equipment lists prevented the 4th MEB from building a new repair allocation, therefore the ATF sailed with only the original Teamwork/Bold Guard block on board. While underway the 4th MEB logisticians designed a specific repair parts supplement and requested that these additional materials be sent as part of the follow-on supplies.[24]

Major General Jenkins felt supply shortages and uncertainty about MSC ship configuration were his major concerns during the initial stages of Operation Desert Shield. He estimated about three-quarters of his time was devoted to logistics matters which were essential for the day-to-day sustainment of the 4th

*The Defense Mapping Agency was overwhelmed by requests for Gulf region maps; the agency wanted to supply 1:100,000 scale maps but was overridden by higher authority and was forced to prepare 1:50,000 scale maps, a process that required four times the material and slowed distribution. Ironically, during Desert Storm many users found 1:50,000 maps unsuitable and relied instead on captured Iraqi 1:100,000 copies of agency maps.

MEB.[25] Despite these problems, however, the 4th MEB had performed a nearly impossible task. It had formed from scratch and embarked almost 8,500 personnel in less than two weeks.

4th MEB Moves to the Persian Gulf

The 4th MEB Departs

To facilitate loading the amphibious task force at the crowded piers of Morehead City, Admiral LaPlante directed that Amphibious Group 2 be broken into three transit groups, each with a different sailing date. The problem with this was that the ATF had no plans to rendezvous at sea and would not reunite until it reached the North Arabian Sea in mid-September. At first, General Jenkins felt this sailing arrangement would be a minor annoyance, but not a major headache. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The ripple effects of this task force configuration had a major impact on 4th MEB operations for the next three months.

Transit Group 1 was composed of five amphibious ships: USS *Gunston Hall* (LSD 44); USS *Shreveport* (LPD 12); *Spartanburg County*; USS *Portland* (LSD 37); and *Trenton*. This group departed Morehead City on 17 August and sailed for the Gulf region via the Mediterranean Sea, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea. Its final destination was Masirah Island in the North Arabian Sea just off the coast of Oman. The estimated sailing time was about two weeks. As Transit Group 1 moved east, operational control was passed to three different unified commands: Atlantic, Europe, and Central. Four-ship Transit Group 2, consisting of the *Nassau*, the *Raleigh*, the USS *Pensacola* (LSD 38), and the USS *Saginaw* (LST 1188), began sailing the same route on 20 August. Transit Group 3, made up of the *Guam*, the *Iwo Jima*, the USS *Manitowoc* (LST 1180), and the USS *LaMoure County* (LST 1194), departed the next day. The timely embarkation of the 4th MEB was a tribute to the unsung Marines, sailors, and civilians of the supporting establishments without whose hard work the ATF could not have sailed. Only 12 days passed from receipt of the movement order until the last hatch was secured and the amphibious task force was on its way.

Communications Enroute

Several days steaming time separated the transit groups, so face-to-face meetings between General Jenkins and his subordinate commanders were not practical. The only alternative was to pass important information using messages. As the transit groups spread farther apart, however, the increased distance precluded use of inter-ship messages. All ATF message traffic was then routed through one of three Naval Communications Area Master Stations (NavCAMS).*[26] Unfortunately, movement from one communications area to another necessitated

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*The ATF successively used NavCAMS Lant, NavCAMS Med, and NavCAMS WestPac as it traveled to the Gulf.

increased message handling and often resulted in significant delivery delays.

Three problems caused a communications gridlock: insufficient planning time; greatly increased intelligence traffic; and the sudden influx of many operational commands to overload the system. At one point, the Mediterranean NavCAMS had a backlog of more than 18,000 messages; "immediate" messages took four days to reach their destination, "priority" messages required 7-10 days, and some "routine" messages were not delivered for three weeks or more.[27] Many messages never arrived. Long after the 4th MEB arrived in the Gulf, missing messages continued to cause confusion. Inquiries about enroute message traffic were too often answered by quizzical looks or empty-handed shrugs from intended recipients.

The 4th MEB's communicators attacked this problem two ways. The most successful solution was to use WWMCCS, a gargantuan computer network that instantly linked the 4th MEB to any other Marine command or agency. A communications work-around was quickly established using WWMCCS operators at Fleet Marine Force Atlantic (Norfolk), Camp Lejeune and MCAS Cherry Point (North Carolina), and Headquarters Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.). WWMCCS operators at these sites became 4th MEB intermediaries using alternative communications to contact units that did not have a WWMCCS terminal. This innovative use of WWMCCS solved most communications problems with higher headquarters, but did not allow General Jenkins to keep in touch with 4th MEB's subordinate elements.

While all three ATF transit groups were in the Atlantic, Major General Jenkins used a special command channel to speak to his subordinates. This worked well until Transit Group 1 entered the Mediterranean and crossed into a new unified command zone. Transit groups were restricted to the frequencies used in their specific communications zone, hence, a transit group in one zone could not talk directly to a group in another zone. Voice transmissions were difficult and the NavCAMS was hopelessly backlogged. Effective and reliable intra-MEB communications were not restored until all three transit groups were reunited in the North Arabian Sea in mid-September.[28]

The communications gap affected the 4th MEB's personnel and logistics sections. Major John Turner, the MEB's personnel officer, was unable to receive timely, accurate personnel reports. The message backlog also hampered advising embarked Marines about births, deaths, or family emergencies, but in no case did a Marine fail to receive important family news in as timely a manner as conditions permitted.[29]

Ship Configuration Issues

Although the ATF ships had been combat loaded using the latest pre-embarkation information, the intelligence and operational pictures constantly changed as the ATF moved toward the Persian Gulf. Pre-embarkation combat loading plans were driven by the requirement to conduct a full-scale amphibious assault upon arrival in the amphibious objective area. Other amphibious missions developed

while the ATF was enroute, so new load plans had to be formulated but without detailed knowledge of existing loads, reconfiguration plans had to be general and could not progress much beyond the conceptual stage.

The five MSC ships that supported the 4th MEB were not loaded until after the ATF sailed. Embarked personnel and material reports did not provide the depth of information needed to plan reconfiguration. Lieutenant Colonel Gary Collenborne, the MEB's logistics officer, was not certain what had been loaded, where it was located, or precisely when it would arrive. The only solution was to board each ship, conduct a detailed inspection, and properly record the exact location of each item carried. This was going to be a massive job that required prior notification of each ship's master and their respective embarkation sections. This could not be done until the MSC ships arrived in the Gulf, several weeks after the ATF was already on station.

Intelligence Issues

The 4th MEB intelligence resources were pooled with those of PhibGru 2's intelligence section. Fully integrated joint intelligence centers (JICs) were activated on board the *Nassau*, the *Guam*, and the *Shreveport*. The *Nassau* JIC was the principal intelligence production center for the ATF. As such, the *Nassau* JIC fused all intelligence sources, managed intelligence collection, and constantly updated target information. Most of the Marine all-source fusion center detachment, two imagery interpreters, the 4th Interrogator-Translator Team

A Marine on board the amphibious transport dock ship Raleigh *(LPD 1) watches as the dock landing ship* Gunston Hall *(LSD 44) steams alongside.*

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-02113

Headquarters and one subteam, and a six-man topographical detachment were assigned to the *Nassau* JIC.

The establishment of a "Blue-Green" JIC was nothing new, but one feature of the *Nassau* JIC was unique: the incorporation of a Marine all-source fusion center (MAFC). Operation Desert Shield provided the first time that a MAFC detachment had been assigned to a shipborne MAGTF during a combat deployment. The MAFC Marines were the 4th MEB's experts on enemy tactics and the Iraqi order of battle. They produced finished intelligence including reports and estimates, selected studies, and a daily intelligence summary. The *Nassau*'s print shop eventually reproduced 1,500 copies of the 4th MEB's recognition guide for Iraqi armored vehicles, aircraft, and weapons systems prepared by MAFC analysts, and the 4th MEB's Arab linguists made indispensable contributions to the intelligence collection effort.

A smaller version of the *Nassau* JIC was established on board the *Guam* to service the 4th MEB Bravo Command Element and Amphibious Squadron 2 (PhibRon 2). The *Guam* JIC also supported both Marine helicopter squadrons and the rifle battalion on board. A much smaller intelligence center was established on board the *Shreveport* to serve RLT 2 and PhibRon 6.

Movement to the North Arabian Sea

The two-week transit was not intended to be a sightseeing tour, but many of those embarked got rare opportunities to see parts of the world they had only dreamed of in civilian life. The first milestone for each transit group was passage through the historic Straits of Gibraltar. This was soon followed by a day-long journey through the Suez Canal, passing between Egypt's exotic and historic sights to the west and the barren Sinai Peninsula to the east. After leaving the Suez Canal, the ATF sailed down the Red Sea and through the Bab Al Mandeb Strait that passes between Yemen and Djibouti.

Admiral LaPlante requested a delay in the Red Sea to consolidate the ATF but permission was denied by Vice Admiral Henry H. Mauz, Jr., Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command (ComUSNavCent), who cited the urgent need for amphibious forces in the Persian Gulf. Separate transit groups sailed through the Gulf of Aden and into the North Arabian Sea. Transit Group 1 came under the operational control of Central Command on 3 September, Transit Group 2 followed on 6 September, and Transit Group 3 was transferred to Central Command on 9 September.* Pacific-based Amphibious Ready Group Alpha, with the 13th MEU(SOC) embarked, arrived in the North Arabian Sea on 7 September. The entire 4th MEB, including the 13th MEU(SOC), united when the last ships of the ATF closed Masirah Island on 16 September.

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*Although originally under operational control of CentCom, the ATF was later chopped to NavCent.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-02122

A CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter of HMH-464 lands on the flight deck of the Raleigh *(LPD 1) as other ships of the amphibious task force steam in formation behind.*

The MSC ships carrying some of the assault echelon and all of the assault follow-on echelon supplies arrived at Masirah between 17 September and 21 October. The MV *Cape Domingo*, carrying 63 vehicles, a 15-day supply of roundout ammunition, and other cargo, was the first MSC ship to arrive. It departed Sunny Point on 23 August and made landfall at Masirah on 17 September. The MV *Strong Texan* brought 2 M60A1 tanks, 3 M198 155mm howitzers, 68 vehicles, and other cargo on 1 October. The MV *Bassro Polar* arrived a week later with 3 AAVs, 3 M60A1 tanks, 1 M198 howitzer, 16 TOW-mounted humvees, and 39 other vehicles. On 21 October, the MV *Aurora T* and MV *Pheasant* brought ammunition, rations, lumber, and more than 10,000 pallets loaded with follow-on supplies.[30]

The Situation in Saudi Arabia

There were three probable avenues of Iraqi advance into Saudi Arabia from Kuwait. The most likely axis of attack was straight down the coastal highway that ran from Kuwait City to the Saudi industrial-port complex at Dhahran. It was the shortest route, offered the best road network, and led directly to the coastal oil fields and port cities which were Saudi Arabia's economic and strategic hearts. Southern movement along this highway threatened the resort town of Khafji, the port at Mishab, an airfield at Ras Tannurah, the vital road junction at Abu Hydriah, the modern port at Al Jubayl, King Abdul Aziz Military Air Base at Ras Al Ghar, the cities of Ad Dammam and Dhahran, and the causeway to Bahrain.

Two alternate attack routes were located farther inland. The central route went from Wadi Al Batin—located at the confluence of Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi

Arabia—south, from where an attacking force could threaten either Riyadh or Dhahran. The other attack route featured a western approach to Riyadh through the desert. This route was the most direct for an attack on the Saudi capital, but it was the most difficult to support logistically and offered no targets of economic or military importance.

At the request of Saudi King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz, and acting in concert with its Western European Union allies and the forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the United States launched Operation Desert Shield to defend the Arabian Peninsula. The first American ground force to arrive in Saudi Arabia was the airlifted 2d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, which began landing on 9 August. This force was first charged with the defense of Ad Dammam and Dhahran. The paratroopers of the 4th Battalion, 325th Infantry (Airborne), moved north on 12 August to defend the port city of Al Jubayl until the Marines could take over. Jubayl was located on the Gulf coast about halfway between Dhahran and the Kuwait border. It was a vital communications link and logistics hub, the site of a well-developed commercial port—reputedly the finest in the Middle East—and a modern airport. Jubayl would later become the primary Marine point of entry and the home of I MEF Headquarters.

The 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade flew in from California and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade soon followed from Hawaii. These fly-in forces linked-up with tanks, LAVs, AAVs, and other heavy equipment and supplies carried on board ships of the Maritime Prepositioning Force at the port of Jubayl. By early September the Marine forces in country included more than 30,000 personnel. The I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters was the command element, the 1st Marine Division was the ground combat element, the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing was the aviation combat element, and the 1st Force Service Support Group was the combat service support element.* Lieutenant General Walter E. Boomer served concurrently as Commanding General, I MEF (CG I MEF) and Central Command Marine Forces component commander (ComUSMarCent).

The Marines were assigned to defend a coastal region of Saudi Arabia from Dhahran north just south of Ras Al Mishab. These units were soon arrayed in a defensive arc north of Jubayl. General Boomer elected to use a mobile defense-in-depth. The forward tripwire was located south of Khafji. This small outpost was backed by a series of fall-back defensive positions with the main line of resistance located in an area near Manifah Bay known as Cement Ridge. He planned to use delaying tactics whereby Marine mechanized combined-arms task forces would slow the Iraqi advance and string out Saddam's combat power along the coastal highway. This would funnel attacking Iraqi armored columns into choke points where only a single road ran through the dry marsh beds, or *Sabkhas*, that were too soft to support movement by heavy vehicles. Stalled along this solitary route the Iraqis would be vulnerable to attack from the air and interdiction from

*The British 7th Armoured Brigade ("Desert Rats") also served with I MEF during most of Operation Desert Shield.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-00563

VAdm Henry H. Mauz, Jr., commander of the Seventh Fleet, assumed command of Central Command's naval forces in early August.

the sea.* General Boomer's ace in the hole would be a surprise amphibious assault.

Desert Shield Amphibious Forces

Although the first Marine units deployed by air rather than by ship, General Schwarzkopf understood an amphibious presence would threaten Saddam's exposed seaward flank. Accordingly, the 4th MEB was ordered to the Gulf where it was scheduled to join the 13th MEU(SOC) and Contingency MAGTF 6-90 to form the Marine Forces Afloat (MFA).** The amphibious task force carrying these landing forces would number more than two dozen ships and the landing force would consist of about 12,000 Marines. Major General Jenkins would be the senior Marine officer afloat.

When the ATF arrived in the region, General Jenkins reported to CentCom by message. General Schwarzkopf assumed operational control of the 4th MEB on 7 September, and on the 17th, passed it to Admiral Mauz (ComUSNavCent).[31]

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*The potential effectiveness of such a strike was shown when Iraqi armored columns near Mutlah Ridge were destroyed from the air on 27Feb91.

**The deployment order specified one brigade, one special operations capable MEU, and an RLT; Okinawa-based CMAGTF 6-90 was composed of an RLT CE and one BLT.

During most of Operation Desert Shield, the amphibious task force was designated Task Group 150.6 and the Marine landing force, Task Group 150.8. At no time during Desert Shield or Desert Storm did the 4th MEB come under the direct operational control of Lieutenant General Boomer, but much of the 4th MEB contingency planning was done in support of I MEF/MarCent requirements.

In early August, Admiral Mauz, at that time commander of the Seventh Fleet, was named Commander, Naval Forces, Central Command (ComUSNavCent). On the 14th, the USS *Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), an amphibious command ship that had been converted into the Seventh Fleet command ship, sailed from Yokosuka, Japan, for Manama, Bahrain. Admiral Mauz, accompanied by his advance command group, arrived by air in Bahrain the next day, assumed command of NavCent, and made his quarters on board the USS *LaSalle* (AGF 3) until the *Blue Ridge* arrived on 1 September. Enroute, the *Blue Ridge* stopped at Subic Bay in the Philippines where it picked up a landing force planning cell from III MEF.

The senior Marine on the NavCent staff was Colonel Frank G. Wickersham III, a combat veteran with more than three years of sea duty and two-and-a-half-years of amphibious experience. Wickersham was the Fleet Marine Officer, and although not holding flag rank, was the third senior line officer on the NavCent staff.[32] Fleet Marine Officers are special staff officers assigned to each of the numbered fleet commanders and serve as the primary embarked advisors on Marine doctrine.

The fact that MarCent and NavCent were both in the same theater of operations meant that there were two major "maritime" forces under General Schwarzkopf's operational control. Both operated with the majority of their forces inside the Northern Arabian Gulf/Kuwait Theater of Operations, but they remained independent. CentCom never published orders or assigned missions that established formal command relationships between the two, so both commanders remained co-equal throughout Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Although most inter-force issues were resolved in a satisfactory manner, all cooperative efforts were based on personal and professional relations between the commanders and their respective staffs.[33]

This chain of command created problems for the Marine Forces Afloat, since both the 4th MEB and I MEF had to work through NavCent. The ATF was often stationed in the North Arabian Sea, far from I MEF Headquarters at Jubayl and Central Command Headquarters at Riyadh, further complicating the chain of command. Although the landing force was under the operational control of NavCent, the command ship *Blue Ridge* was often located more than 400 miles away. This made face-to-face contact among Admiral Mauz, Lieutenant General Boomer, Admiral LaPlante, and Major General Jenkins difficult.

A major command relationship concern was what was termed "the missing link" by post-conflict analysts. There was no "three-star" Marine presence in Riyadh to articulate amphibious capabilities or their potential impact on tactical or strategic deployments by CentCom forces.[34] Neither the MarCent nor NavCent commanders operated from Riyadh and there was no specific amphibious representative at CentCom Headquarters. This last issue was singled out by

senior planners as a key factor in the employment of the Marine Forces Afloat. One planner likened this situation to the 4th MEB "having been swallowed up in a black hole" because it was so seldom mentioned during CentCom briefings.[35] This situation was not the result of an intentional slight or poor planning, rather it resulted from the twin dictates of place and circumstance.

Lieutenant General Boomer, the senior Marine officer, had been dual-hatted as CG I MEF/ComUSMarCent. Obviously, he was most often located at I MEF Headquarters, not at Riyadh, because his highest priority was preparing I MEF for combat, not acting as a spokesman for amphibious operations.*[36] Major General Jeremiah W. Pearson III, the MarCent Deputy Commander, was located at Riyadh, but his primary duty was to act as liaison between I MEF and CentCom, not to represent the Marine Forces Afloat which were under NavCent operational control. On the Navy side, Admiral Mauz was most often at sea and his deputy in Riyadh had many duties in addition to representing the amphibious forces.

Major General Robert B. Johnston, CentCom Chief of Staff, and Brigadier General Richard I. Neal, CentCom Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, both Marines, kept a watchful eye on amphibious issues, but the nature of their joint responsibilities kept them from becoming outspoken advocates for the amphibious forces.** Brigadier General Neal asserted that "it became apparent there was no spokesman for...[the] Marine Forces Afloat [at CentCom]."***[37] The bottom line was that amphibious planning at Central Command took a back seat because there was no single representative in Riyadh whose primary mission was to oversee and brief amphibious options.****

Initial Desert Shield Amphibious Plans

On 31 August, Desert Shield Amphibious Operations Order 1-90 was issued. This document was the foundation upon which 4th MEB Desert Shield contingency plans were based. The Marine Forces Afloat were designated the theater reserve to be committed only at the direction of General Schwarzkopf. They were

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*This theoretical weakness was noted by both Gen Schwarzkopf and Gen Boomer but had been placed on the back burner for practical reasons, neither man wanted to interpose a new Marine three-star general between them because they enjoyed an excellent working relationship.

**This does not imply they did not take an active role, BGen Rowe asserted that BGen Neal was instrumental in getting four extra ships assigned to PhibGru 3 for the 5th MEB deployment; 5th MEB Staff intvw.

***Neal's appeal to CMC for more representation later resulted the establishment of MarCent(Fwd).

****The Seventh Fleet FMO proposed creating a functional "maritime component commander" for Navy-Marine operations. Wickersham comments.

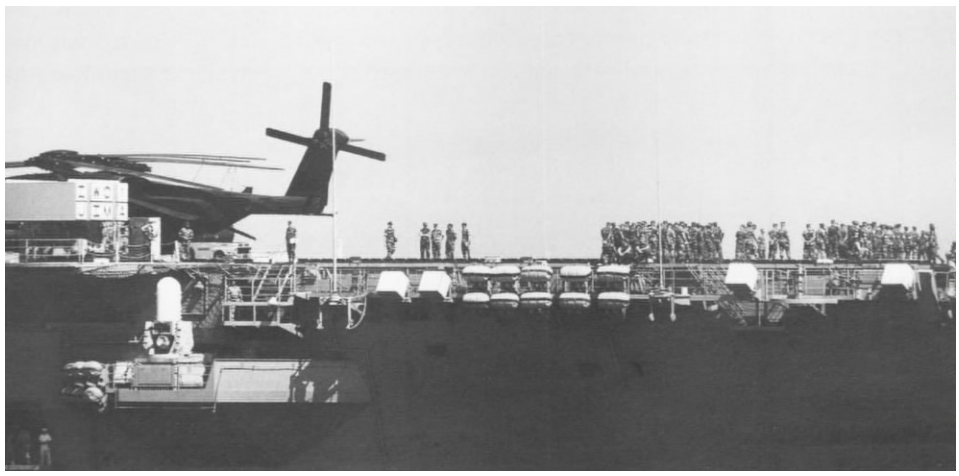
tasked to be ready to conduct independent or unified amphibious operations, or to reinforce CentCom after an administrative landing.[38]

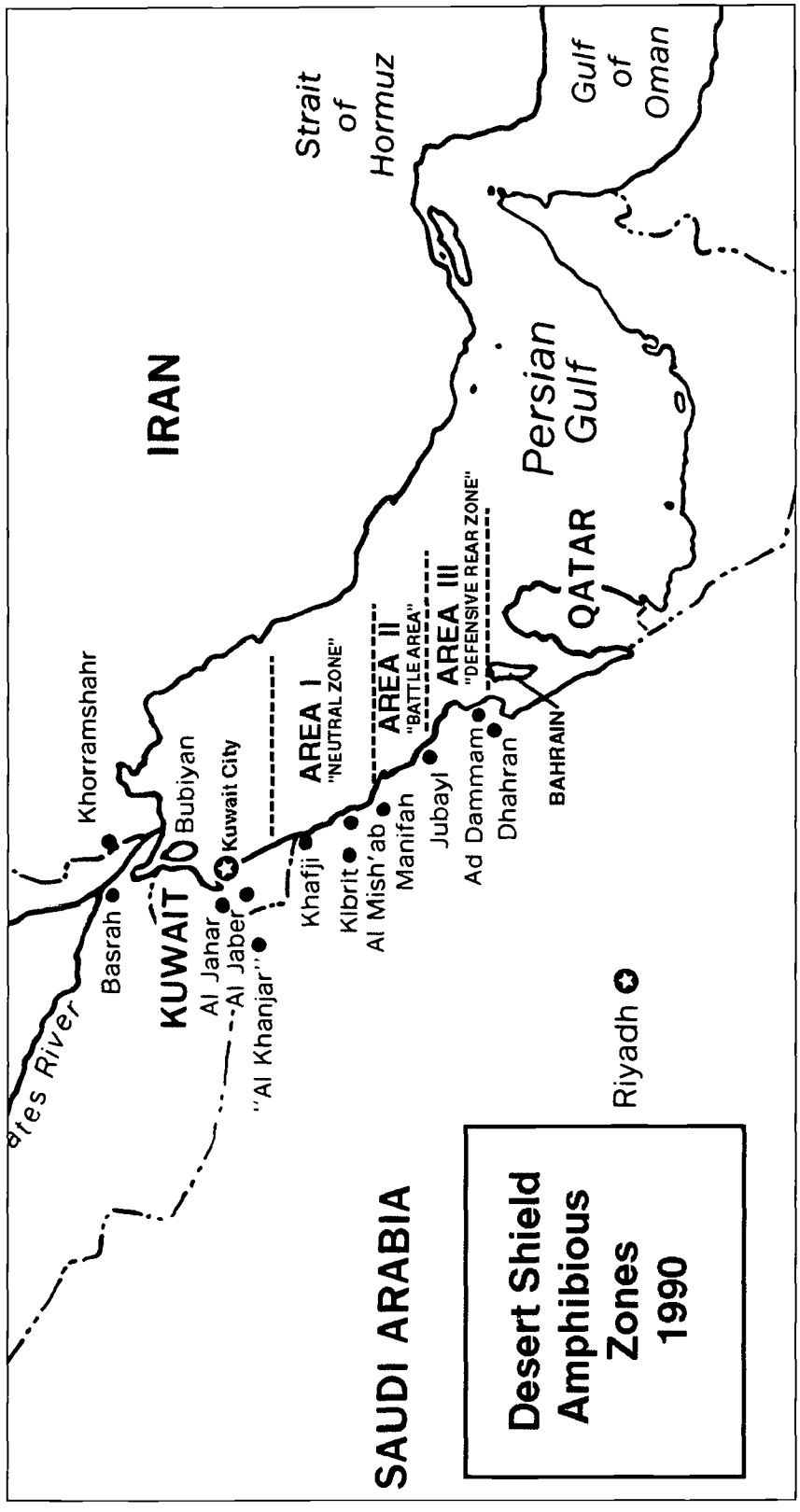
Amphibious planning actually began before the 4th MEB or the 13th MEU(SOC) arrived in Southwest Asia. On 12 August, Rear Admiral Stephen S. Clarey, Commander, Amphibious Group 3, and a small staff flew from San Diego to Bahrain from San Diego. Admiral Clarey's primary duty at the time was to oversee Maritime Prepositioning Force operations at Jubayl. Upon arrival, he reported by phone to Rear Admiral Grant A. Sharp, CentCom Director of Plans and Policies and acting commander of Central Command's naval component at Riyadh, who was filling in until Admiral Mauz could arrive from the Pacific. During the call Admiral Sharp gave Admiral Clarey an important additional duty: "I need you to press ahead and develop an amphibious deception plan."[39] He thought it was imperative to make the Iraqis believe the Americans were contemplating offensive action from the sea and he hoped an amphibious threat would slow the Iraqi advance or weaken their forces by making Saddam siphon off assault troops to defend the coast.

Admiral Sharp's tasking quickly became a joint-Service effort. A special planning cell was formed that included Admiral Clarey and Marine Brigadier General Russell H. Sutton, Director, Operations Division, Plans, Policy, and Operations, Headquarters Marine Corps. The first plan, PhibOp 1-90, called for a five-ship ARG and an embarked MEU(SOC) to be the demonstration force. Because Saddam refused to allow more than 12,000 westerners living in Iraq and Kuwait to leave, this force also had to be ready to conduct non-combatant evacuations or *in extremis* hostage rescues on short notice. These plans were, however, quickly overcome by events. Following a coordination meeting between General Boomer and Admiral Mauz on 19 September, amphibious planning took a different track. The concept of operations was changed to include a wider variety of amphibious operations by a brigade-size force and special operations, such as raids, NEO, and

Marines gather on the deck of the amphibious assault ship Iwo Jima *(LPH-2) upon the vessel's arrival at port in Bahrain.*

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-03150




Strait of Hormuz
Gulf of Oman
IRAN
Persian Gulf
Khorramshahr
Bubiyan
KUWAIT
Kuwait City
Basrah
Al Jahar
Al Jaber
"Al Khanjar"
AREA I
"NEUTRAL ZONE"
Khafji
Kibrit
Al Mish'ab
AREA II
"BATTLE AREA"
Manifah
Jubayl
AREA III
"DEFENSIVE REAR ZONE"
Ad Dammam
Dhahran
BAHRAIN
QATAR
SAUDI ARABIA
Riyadh
Desert Shield Amphibious Zones 1990

demonstrations by smaller units.

The amphibious area of operations proposed in PhibOp 1-90 was divided into three sectors. Amphibious Area I stretched south from Mina Saud in southern Kuwait to Ras Al Mishab in northern Saudi Arabia. This area, sometimes called the "neutral zone," was the one best suited for a deep offensive strike. Amphibious Area II ran from Mishab down the coast to Manifah Bay. This was the most likely battle area and, therefore, received the most attention. Amphibious Area III, which extended from Manifah Bay to Ad Dammam, included most of Saudi Arabia's large ports and coastal urban areas. Area III was designated the defensive rear zone.

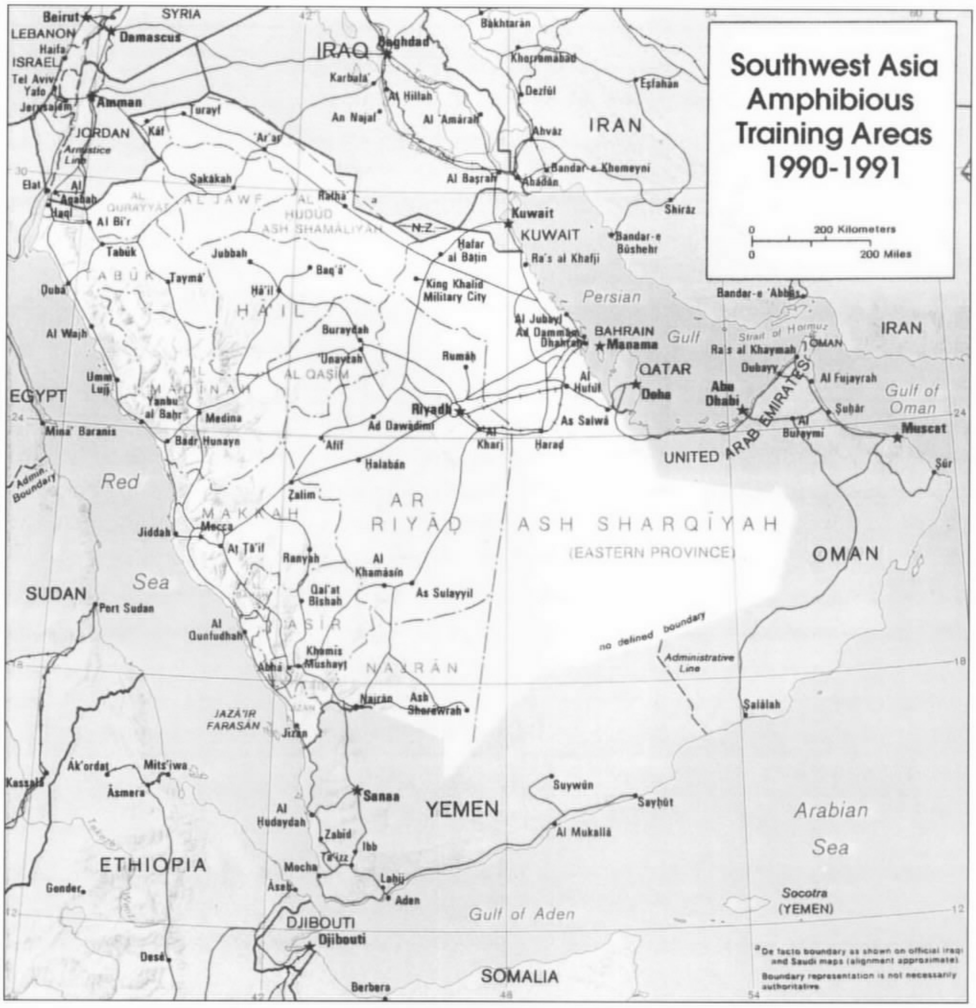
The concept of operations called for the ATF to be broken into three elements, with at least one inside the Gulf at all times. Each element had to be capable of independent action, but still had to be ready to conduct a consolidated amphibious assault with little advance notice. The 13th MEU(SOC) was assigned to Amphibious Group Alpha and was designated the theater amphibious special operations force. The remaining amphibious forces were to be split into Amphibious Groups Bravo and Charlie.

Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 6-90 (CMAGTF 6-90), commanded by Colonel Ross A. Brown, sailed from Okinawa on board the ships of Pacific-based Amphibious Ready Group Bravo to provide the regimental landing team specified in the original deployment order. Brown's MAGTF was composed of Regimental Landing Team 4 Headquarters, Battalion Landing Team 1/6, and a combat service support detachment; there was no aviation combat element attached. The ships of ARG Bravo (Task Group 76.4) were the *Dubuque* (LPD 8), the *Schenectady* (LST 1185), and the *San Bernardino* (LST 1189).[40] Both ARG Alfa and ARG Bravo were placed under Admiral Mauz' operational control on 8 September.

Planners originally envisioned Regimental Landing Team 4 (RLT 4) would be incorporated into the 4th MEB and the ships of Task Group 76.4 would be transferred to PhibGru 2. This would give Major General Jenkins two regimental command elements to simplify command and control when amphibious task groups carrying elements of the 4th MEB were separated. This never happened. After arriving in the Persian Gulf, RLT 4 was sent ashore to become the I MEF rear area security force on 13 September.* The ships of TG 76.4, likewise, did not join PhibGru 2 as planned, but became sea-based mobile logistics platforms until they departed the Persian Gulf in November.**

*RLT 4 was later relieved of the RAS mission by the 24th Marines and fought as Task Force Grizzly.

**This created problems because the *Dubuque* was tasked as the mine countermeasure helicopter platform, a job that later required two ATF LPHs and significantly degraded the ATF's amphibious assault capability.


Southwest Asia
Amphibious
Training Areas
1990-1991
200 Kilometers
200 Miles
IRAQ
Baghdad
IRAN
KUWAIT
Kuwait
Persian
Gulf
BAHRAIN
Manama
QATAR
Doha
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Abu Dhabi
Gulf of Oman
Muscat
OMAN
Riyadh
AR RIYAD
ASH SHARQIYAH
(EASTERN PROVINCE)
JORDAN
Amman
SYRIA
Damascus
LEBANON
Beirut
ISRAEL
EGYPT
Red
Sea
SUDAN
Port Sudan
ETHIOPIA
YEMEN
Sanaa
Aden
Gulf of Aden
DJIBOUTI
Djibouti
SOMALIA
Arabian
Sea
Socotra
(YEMEN)
Jiddah
Mecca
Medina
no defined boundary
Administrative Line

4th MEB Contingency Plans

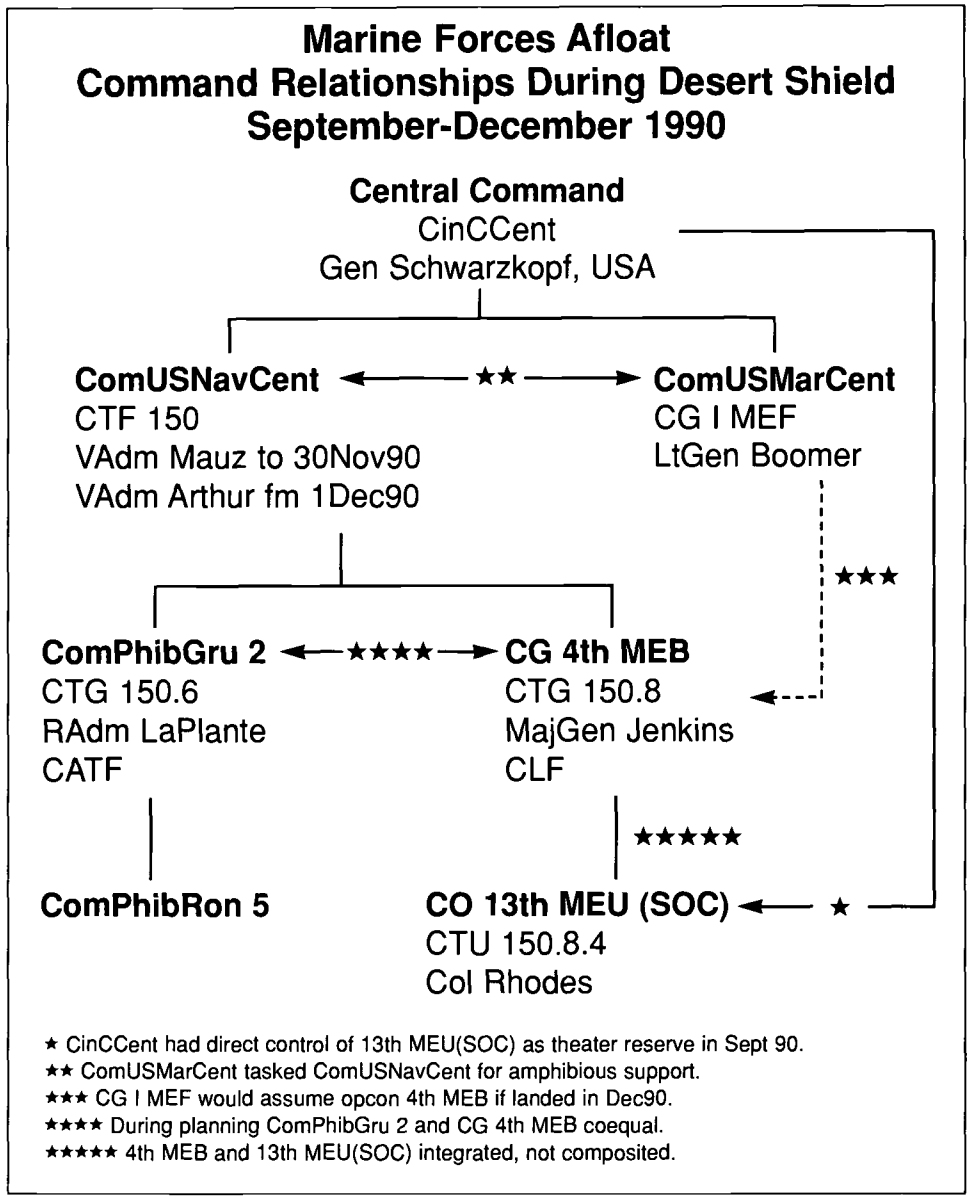
Lacking detailed knowledge of the amphibious objective area and without a clearly defined mission, General Jenkins ordered the 4th MEB staff to prepare a very general 10-option contingency amphibious package. Without adequate force lists or specific target information, these plans could only be very broad options that tried to take into account a wide variety of missions and used all possible force structures. These flexible plans were designed to demonstrate the MEB's combat capabilities, to provide a base for future training, and could be easily amended to fit actual combat situations.

Option One was a MEB-level, surface-heavy amphibious assault to be used if there was a significant antiaircraft threat. Two rifle battalions would land in assault amphibious vehicles and the LAI battalion would use LCACs. Follow-on heliborne forces would be used to reinforce and expand the beachhead. The 13th MEU(SOC) was fully integrated into the 4th MEB in this scenario. Option Two used a similar force mix, but called for a deep vertical envelopment followed by an overland link-up. This option was designed to be used if antiaircraft defenses were light or had been attrited by pre-assault bombardment. Option Three was a heliborne assault by the 13th MEU which would link-up with the surface-landed forces, then become the landing force reserve. Option Four was a MEB-level surface and heliborne raid with the 13th MEU deployed elsewhere. Option Five was a helicopter raid by one of the MEB's battalion landing teams. Option Six was a MEB-level raid by a mechanized combined arms combat team. The landing forces, which would include LAVs, would use AAVs and LCACs for ship-to-shore movement. Option Seven was a raid by the MEU reinforced by a 4th MEB BLT. Option Eight was an amphibious artillery raid using an artillery battalion command element, a mix of firing batteries, and infantry security elements. Option Nine was the independent use of the MEU to accomplish any of the 18 standard special operations capabilities. Option Ten was a MEB-controlled airfield seizure by a battalion-size force using surface and helicopter transportation. The 13th MEU was not included in this option.

Blue-Green Operational Issues

Amphibious warfare, by its very nature, is not solely a Marine operation but requires close cooperation within the Blue-Green Team. Responsibility for planning, rehearsal, and execution is shared by both Navy and Marine commanders. This was especially true in the Gulf. Within the amphibious task force there was a single joint planning cell for amphibious operations. Admiral LaPlante recalled that: "Harry Jenkins and I kept nothing from one another and collaborated fully on all planning [and] input to higher authority." He also asserted that "decisions which were even peripherally related to [amphibious warfare] were...jointly arrived at."[41]

On 25 September, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Alfred M. Gray, Jr., and Lieutenant General Robert F. Milligan, Commanding General, Fleet



Marine Force Pacific, visited Admiral Mauz on board the *Blue Ridge* during an inspection tour of Marine forces in the Persian Gulf. Future amphibious plans were discussed. General Gray was briefed about the upcoming landing exercise to be held at Ras Al Madrakah, Oman. He also inquired about existing NavCent contingency plans, and soon thereafter nudged Major General Jenkins to discuss this matter. The 4th MEB staff quickly began revising the 10-option generic plans created during the trip over.

Unfortunately, ATF-NavCent relations were not smooth during the initial stages of Operation Desert Shield. Probably the most controversial issue was how to employ the landing force. As Admiral Mauz asserted: "I wanted to see an

amphibious landing as much as anybody...[t]he trouble was, there was no good place to do a landing."[42] General Jenkins, on the other hand, felt NavCent "displayed little interest in developing a naval campaign that went beyond the level of presence."[43]

The first amphibious operations order was not a classic initiating directive as called for by joint amphibious doctrine. It did not state specific missions or set priorities, but simply listed the entire spectrum of amphibious operations. The 4th MEB attempted to rectify this by creating a plan that detailed 10 amphibious employment options ranging from specific special operations to major amphibious assaults. On 28 September, Admiral LaPlante and General Jenkins submitted this plan to Admiral Mauz. They heard no more about it and no initiating directive resulted.[44] Colonel Wickersham, the Fleet Marine Officer, noted that the lack of an initiating directive was due to the fact the ATF had no specific mission assigned by either CentCom or NavCent.[45]

Another problem was that the landing force was fragmented rather than unified and there seemed to be no clear vision of how to employ large amphibious forces.* The 13th MEU(SOC) was used as a separate landing force because it had undergone special operations training and was task organized for independent operations. The 4th MEB, at that time, had not yet undergone training ashore, its ships were not combat loaded, and the aviation and ground combat elements had not worked together. Thus, the 4th MEB was not yet a cohesive amphibious force. The division of the 4th MEB into two separate units, however, made less tactical sense. General Jenkins would have to create redundant command elements, fragment his ground combat element, separate the aviation combat element, and reconfigure amphibious shipping. This time-consuming process would create control, supply, and maintenance problems while reducing the 4th MEB's striking power.

Critics called this propensity to divide amphibious forces into small groups a "MEU mentality" and felt it showed a lack of understanding of the inherent power of large amphibious forces.[46] They felt it degraded combat effectiveness because it interrupted tactical integrity, required extensive reorganization, and begat a myriad of command and control difficulties. Critics also noted that there seemed to be a perception at higher headquarters that there was no viable amphibious mission in the Persian Gulf. As one naval officer asserted: "the Amphibious assault...[was always]...a supporting attack."[47] On the other hand, when the ATF arrived in the Gulf region, General Schwarzkopf's mission was the defense of Saudi Arabia, not offensive operations; the primary utility of the 4th MEB, therefore, would be to reinforce I MEF.

An offensive amphibious role was not very likely. As Admiral Mauz noted,

*Adm Mauz felt differently about this point. He claimed the function of the MFA was to be CentCom strategic reserve, pose enough of a threat to cause Saddam's resources to be diverted to coastal defense, and conduct raids once hostilities began. (Mauz comments).

there was no good place to land. Even a cursory look at the terrain of the Persian Gulf shows a lack of strategic depth. It was less than 50 miles from Kuwait's southern border to the Marine main line of resistance, not enough space for an Inchon-style amphibious turning movement. At that time, therefore, the most likely amphibious options were either raids against Iraqi communication lines or reinforcement of land forces. Small amphibious groups were well suited for such operations because they increased deployment options, eased unloading at limited dock spaces, and enhanced rotational use of the Gulf's limited maintenance facilities.

4th MEB Plans and Training

Operational Issues

While the 4th MEB was mounting out, the 13th MEU(SOC) was diverted from its planned Western Pacific cruise and ordered to the Gulf. When the two units joined forces a unique command relationship developed between the 13th MEU and the 4th MEB. Admiral Mauz wanted an independent amphibious presence in the Persian Gulf at all times, so the MEU was never actually placed under the operational control of 4th MEB.[48] Colonel Rhodes later recalled that "13th MEU(SOC) was never chopped from III MEF to 4th MEB [but this was] no problem...as I knew General Jenkins was my de facto and on-scene Marine flag."[49] The 4th MEB and the 13th MEU were "associated," rather than "composited." Instead of merging the two command elements into a single headquarters, they retained their respective command elements. When in close proximity, the 4th MEB acted as the command element for both units. The MEU's organic ground, aviation, and support elements remained on board the ships of ARG Alpha regardless of its location.

After the 4th MEB and the 13th MEU linked-up in the North Arabian Sea, there were three pressing problems: developing standard operating procedures common to both units; formulating plans to cover combat contingencies; and conducting unified training to create a hard-hitting, combat-ready amphibious strike force. To accomplish the first of these goals, General Jenkins ordered training to begin immediately after the ATF arrived at Masirah. On 16 September, the 13th MEU and the 4th MEB conducted a supporting arms coordination and communications exercise.[50]

Amphibious Plans

Amphibious plans focused on three designated amphibious objective areas: Area I, Mina Saud to Mishab; Area II, Mishab to Manifah Bay; and Area III, Manifah Bay to Dammam. Priority of planning was dedicated to Area II to support I MEF, whose the main line of resistance would be centered on a key terrain feature, "Cement Ridge," located north of Jubayl. At that time, the Marine Forces Afloat were the theater reserve and could be used for either an amphibious assault or to reinforce ground forces according to the desires of General Schwarzkopf.

According to established amphibious doctrine Admiral LaPlante and Major General Jenkins remained co-equal while planning amphibious operations in support of Operation Desert Shield. They created a joint plan that outlined two amphibious assaults, a series of raids, and an administrative offload.[51] Amphibious assaults could be used to relieve pressure on I MEF or to interdict Iraqi supply lines, raids would draw attention and force the Iraqis to divert forces to defend the vulnerable coastline, and an administrative landing at either Ad Dammam or Al Jubayl would be used if the landing force was ordered to conduct operations ashore.

Each of these plans used the same basic assumptions: there would be no naval or air threat to the ATF; Iraqi forces would not have time to prepare elaborate defensive positions; offshore mines and barriers would be cleared before the ATF entered the objective area; and outside air and naval forces would protect the ATF during its movements and operations. During the early stages of Desert Shield, it was envisioned that coalition forces would have complete control of the air space over the Kuwait Theater of Operations and that Iraqi forces would be too busy attacking to prepare defenses or plant mines.[52]

After arriving in the Gulf, the 4th MEB staff pulled out the enroute contingency plans and modified them to reflect the current situation. Amphibious Option 1 became a surface assault with helicopter reinforcement using RLT 2 and the 13th MEU(SOC). This plan was deemed the most likely to be executed because it reduced the surface-to-air threat by using the landing force to clear the beach and suppress enemy fire. After a beach lodgement was established, heliborne forces would land inside the force beachhead line to reinforce units already ashore. Combat support units would land "on call" with vehicle-mounted TOW antitank missiles coming ashore first, followed by antiaircraft missiles and field artillery. The 4th MEB forward command element would then come ashore. Ground reinforcements and other equipment and supplies were reserved for later waves.

Option 2 was a simultaneous surface/air landing by the 4th MEB and the 13th MEU(SOC). Battalion Landing Teams 1/2 and 3/2 would come ashore in AAVs and conventional landing craft. The 13th MEU would conduct a deep heliborne assault using four landing waves. The 2d LAI Detachment would use LCACs to land. Consideration was given to landing the LAI as a pre-assault force or in a scheduled wave, depending on enemy dispositions. The LAVs had three employment options: they could be used to support RLT 2; be used as a screening force; or be sent to reinforce the heliborne force quickly. Planners estimated it would take seven hours to complete the landing of all scheduled and on-call waves. The raid plans were a compilation of Amphibious Options 4, 5, 6, and 7 which called for forces that varied in strength from one company to two battalions. The planners had no specific mission, limited knowledge of enemy forces, and no assigned landing zone so their raid plans used only very general employment concepts. Hydrography problems throughout the Gulf littoral required reliance on helicopters, LCACs, and AAVs for the ship-to-shore movement of raid forces.[53]

Training Issues

The Sultanate of Oman was strategically located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It was a member of the pro-West Gulf Cooperation Council, and Sultan Qabus Bin Said had previously offered bases and training areas to support military exercises by Western countries.* General Jenkins immediately initiated liaison with the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) to make arrangements to secure training areas and to coordinate a combined training program with Arab forces. Planning sessions at Muscat were attended by Navy and Marine representatives, officers of the SAF, and the American Defense Attache's Office. Liaison meetings were held on board the *Nassau* on 17 and 18 September to work out specific plans for an upcoming landing exercise in Oman. Two locations were identified, one at As Sirab and another at Ras Al Madrakah. Although located about 95 miles south of Masirah, Madrakah was selected. The training area was populated by nomadic Bedouin tribes so detailed liaison with Arab representatives was very important to avoid misunderstandings or confrontations between the Americans and the Bedouins.[54]

It was not known how long the ATF would remain in the North Arabian Sea so amphibious rehearsals were scheduled to increase in scope and complexity using as many of the 10 amphibious options as possible. Major General Jenkins ordered that each landing would include or be followed by extensive individual and unit training, particularly live fire. Vehicle and equipment maintenance could be performed while on shore as well. The landings also presented a good opportunity to inspect, prioritize, and rearrange supplies on board the amphibious ships.

Exercise Sea Soldier I

The first scheduled exercise was named "Camel Sand" by the Americans and "Jundee Al Bahr" by the Omanis, but after it was discovered that "Jundee Al Bahr" translated as "Sea Soldier," that title was adopted for this and three subsequent exercises. Sea Soldier I was conducted from 29 September to 5 October. It was designed to test landing plans, acclimatize Marines to the harsh desert environment, fire weapons up to 25mm, improve desert navigation and survival skills, and practice night operations.

The landing plan incorporated both the 4th MEB and 13th MEU(SOC) to land a mechanized force at night using helicopters and surface craft. The assault waves went ashore as planned, but the on-call waves could not use conventional surface craft because of rough seas and poor surf conditions in the landing area. This resulted in cancellation of all surface landings except those using LCACs and helicopters, which became the primary ship-to-shore means for the rest of the exercise. Company D, BLT 1/4, 13th MEU(SOC), honed its special operations skills during a final night raid code-named "Knight Strike."

Although Sea Soldier I was difficult to organize, it challenged the MFA's flex-

*Masirah Island had been the staging base for ill-fated Operation Eagle Claw, the attempted Iranian hostage rescue by American forces in 1980.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-4032

MajGen Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., and RAdm John B. LaPlante, right, amphibious task force commander throughout the deployment to the Persian Gulf, go ashore for a first-hand look during exercise Sea Soldier.

ibility and improved its rapid response package. Helicopters flew not only the daily missions listed in the air tasking order, but they also responded to unscheduled requests to deliver rations, water, fuel, ammunition, and other supplies to the landing force. Although it was not known at the time, this experience would later prove valuable because beach gradients along the Persian Gulf littoral would not

support surface craft (LCU and LCM) displacements, therefore, future amphibious operations would have to rely on helicopters and LCACs for ship-to-shore movement.

On 6 October, General Jenkins conducted an exercise debrief on board the *Okinawa*. The conclusion was that despite unfavorable weather conditions Sea Soldier I was a success. The Marines gained valuable experience in land navigation, equipment maintenance, tactics, and desert survival skills. More than 2,400 personnel and about 390 vehicles went ashore. Logistics support problems, however, meant the CH-46s and CH-53s had been used so much they required a post-exercise maintenance stand down to ensure future availability. The inability to move large items ashore resulted in cancellation of plans to reload the ships of the ATF so this immediately became an exercise goal for Sea Soldier II which was planned for the next month.[55]

Unfortunately, the cost of realistic training is often high. Such was the case for the Marine Forces Afloat. On 8 October, two UH-1N helicopters from HMLA-267, attached to the 13th MEU(SOC)'s HMM-164 on board the *Okinawa*, collided while conducting night training. Both aircraft were lost with all hands, a total of eight Marines: Captain William D. Cronin; Captain Gary S. Dillon; Captain Kevin R. Dolvin; Captain William J. Hurley; Sergeant Kenneth T. Keller; Sergeant John R. Kilkus; Corporal Timothy W. Romei; and Lance Corporal Thomas R. Adams.*[56]

Exercise Sea Soldier II

With the lessons and shortfalls of Sea Soldier I fresh in their minds, Marine planners soon began working on Sea Soldier II. This exercise was an expanded and more complex version of Sea Soldier I that combined Amphibious Options 1 and 3. Sea Soldier II, held from 30 October to 8 November, had eight training objectives: exercise air command and control systems; integrate PLRS navigation systems into ground operations; expand night fighting ability; push combat service support forward; conduct casualty treatment and evacuation procedures in a chemically contaminated environment; broaden the scope of ship-to-shore movement; integrate carrier-based aviation into ATF fire support; and conduct field maintenance on embarked vehicles and equipment.

Sea Soldier II was a surface-heavy assault by RLT 2 to establish a beachhead then use helicopters for reinforcement. The 13th MEU(SOC) conducted a pre-assault helicopter insertion to seize a mock airfield and establish an artillery fire support base. A three-day ground exercise followed the landings. This exercise featured a series of cross-country moves, screening maneuvers by the LAVs, and night attacks against specified objectives. This was the first employment of the Mobile Electronic Warfare Support System and its operational control element in

*MAG-39 dedicated a monument honoring these eight Marines at MCAS Camp Pendleton in 1993.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-92-06922

M-60 battle tanks are driven off a utility landing craft from the amphibious assault ship Nassau *as 4th MEB Marines conduct an amphibious beach assault.*

support of contingency amphibious operations. The control element operated from high-mobility, multi-purpose, wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs).

This time the weather cooperated and the majority of the equipment was brought ashore, providing the opportunity to conduct much needed maintenance and to combat-load some ships. More than 3,100 Marines came ashore and 690 major end items were debarked. The decision to push operations inland necessitated special logistics considerations. Extra fuel and water had to be delivered to the assault units. The joint Navy-Marine planning staff decided to use LST-mounted causeways to get water and fuel carrying trucks ashore. Although extensive vehicle maintenance on shore was originally planned, only primary preventive maintenance could be performed because of critical repair parts shortages. The time at sea and two major exercises in two months had been hard on the equipment. At the end of Sea Soldier II, equipment readiness was at its lowest ebb and combat efficiency was suffering due to the degraded condition of many end items. Repair parts had been properly ordered, but supply channels could not move the items quickly enough to the units which needed them. The lack of repair parts and slow response by the supply pipeline were major concerns for Major General Jenkins.[57]

The tactical plans for Sea Soldier II were driven by the way the ships were loaded because it had not been practical to reconfigure them during Sea Soldier I. This created problems because supply requests could not always be met due to the way the ships had been loaded, but constant data updates and close supervision by combat cargo officers ensured the Marines ashore were provided for as soon as possible.

Working out medical evacuation procedures was one of the primary training objectives. To do this, reliable communications had to be established by means of a medical regulating net that connected the beach evacuation station, regimen-

tal and battalion aid stations, primary casualty receiving stations, and treatment ships. The biggest issue was establishing proper links between medical personnel, air controllers, and the Direct Air Support Center. Problems in this area pointed to the need for more planning and coordination to ensure dependable medical evacuation procedures.

One of the highlights during the training period was a medical civic action program (MedCAP) to service the Bedouins of the region. The Sultan and higher headquarters granted permission to conduct MedCAP operations and the Omani military liaison team furnished personnel to overcome language and cultural barriers. Two hundred and ninety-two patients were treated. The success of the MedCap resulted in plans to expand such activities in the future.[58]

Sea Soldier II was the first opportunity to integrate naval air support. Navy aircraft from the *Independence* (CV 62), airplanes from the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing at Shaikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain, and VMA-331's Harriers were all used to support Sea Soldier II. This thoroughly tested the ATF's air command and control procedures and adjustments were made where necessary.[59] The most notable logistics achievement of the exercise was the formation of mobile combat service support teams. They were composed of refuelers, recovery vehicles, and maintenance teams. These teams were able to go ashore early and provide combat service support to units in forward areas. Reembarkation did not go as smoothly as had been hoped. Deadlined equipment made the backload difficult, but embarkation officers were able to reconfigure at least some of the ships to conform with combat loading plans.[60]

Overall, Sea Soldier II was a success. The 13th MEU and the 4th MEB were able to work together, outside air resources were utilized, medical evacuation plans were tested, and limited maintenance was performed. It was obvious, however, that further training by all elements was needed. The exercise ended in uncertainty because the 13th MEU was scheduled to depart in November, so elements of the 4th MEB had to be trained to conduct special operations, heretofore assigned to the 13th MEU(SOC). The exact status of the 4th MEB was also in doubt.*

Combined Training

In addition to amphibious operations, plans were made to cross-train with Arab forces, specifically those of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Small unit training was conducted at Al Hamra in the UAE during late October and November. Colonel Wickersham, the Fleet Marine Officer, and American Embassy representatives made initial contact with Emirate diplomats and soon liaison and reconnaissance teams were sent to the UAE. Bilateral training began

*The 11th MEU(SOC) was scheduled to replace the 13th MEU(SOC) as LF7F in late Dec90 or early Jan91; the 5th MEB was to replace the 4th MEB at an undetermined date.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-92-07371

A rough terrain forklift unloads supplies from a utility landing craft of the Nassau *as troops, supplies, and vehicles hit the beach during the Sea Soldier training exercises.*

on 30 October when Company B (Reinforced), BLT 1/4, embarked on board the *Cayuga*, deployed to the UAE. Lack of information about the Hamra area forced the landing force to come ashore about 30 miles from the training area. After a mechanized cross-country motor march Company B joined UAE forces for live fire, maneuver, and combined arms exercises. Aircraft from the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing at Bahrain supported these ground exercises.[61]

In mid-November, a composite rifle company from RLT 2 continued training at Al Hamra. In early December, a light armored infantry company and an artillery battery conducted extensive live fire training at Al Hamra. The training included gunnery practice, day and night field firing, artillery and mortar fire direction and control, displacement, hasty positioning and firing, tactical control of close air support and delivery aircraft, and extended night operations. In early January, the survey ship USNS *Chauvenet* (AGS 29) charted the waters at Al Hamra, allowing more extensive use of the firing ranges by MFA units. These ranges provided live fire training for tanks, artillery, and mortars that had not been fired during the preceding months. Host nation support by the government of the UAE was invaluable because the one-ship, single-unit training scheme made Marine units ashore dependent on the UAE for water, fuel, and motor transport.[62]

The training at Madrakah and Al Hamra was a vital part of the MFA preparations for combat. These opportunities smoothed the rough edges and allowed the units of the MFA to work together, forging a combat-ready integrated landing force able to conduct a wide variety of amphibious missions.

4th MEB Logistics

Background

It is a military axiom that "amateurs discuss maneuvers, but professionals talk

logistics." The 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade deployment to the Persian Gulf is a good case in point. General Jenkins identified logistics as his number-one problem during the first three months of Operation Desert Shield.[63] Once the 4th MEB arrived in Southwest Asia, the major logistics issues became force sustainment, maintenance and repair, and ship reconfiguration. These problems were not the result of poor planning, lack of attention, or staff incompetence. They were caused by the press of time, lack of ships, supply shortages, and enroute communications problems.

The amphibious task force assembled in the North Arabian Sea between 11 and 16 September 1990. All three transit groups and ARG Alpha gathered in the vicinity of Masirah Island just off the coast of Oman.[64] Masirah was the site of several military installations, including a large, modern air base. Access to it by U.S. forces was quickly granted by the Sultan of Oman, a long-time friend of the United States. The Military Airlift Command established a logistics channel to the island when the ATF began using the modern harbor. The anchorage was a familiar sight to U.S. naval forces. Navy carrier battle groups often used it as a logistics hub, and it had been the staging point for ill-fated Operation Eagle Claw in 1980.* Marines had also used the island for small unit training in the past.

Force Sustainment

Force sustainment was an almost all-consuming task. The lack of combat logistics ships was a problem. Fleet logistics ships provided replenishment and fuel at sea. Planners wanted to earmark three such ships to support the 18 ships of the ATF, but the ship crunch made itself felt. Only two combat stores ships were available, the USS *Mars* (AFS 1) and the USS *San Jose* (AFS 7). Unfortunately, these two replenishment ships were not sufficient to sustain the entire ATF. Masirah Island, therefore, had to become the focus for supply operations.[65]

Eventually, a three-day resupply routine was hammered out using trial and error. Flight schedules were formulated after available ships and aircraft were identified. Tuesdays and Saturdays became "airhead days." At least one amphibious ship and its aircraft were assigned to move passengers, mail, and cargo from the airhead to the task force. The preceding day was routinely set aside to consolidate materials and organize the flights. The next day was used for distribution to the ATF. This system eventually became standard operating procedure in the North Arabian Sea.

The embarked helicopters of MAG-40 and HMM-164 were used to ferry supplies to the ships of the ATF from Masirah. It was necessary to create an air tasking order (ATO) to coordinate movement of transport and cargo helicopters to and from the ships of the ATF efficiently and safely. Representatives of MAG-40, 4th

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*Eagle Claw was the codename for the attempted rescue of American hostages in Iran that ended in tragedy at Desert One.

MEB air planners, and Navy Tactical Air Control Squadron 22 (TACRon 22) conducted a prolonged series of discussions over the proper control and use of aircraft and air space. Unfortunately, not all players were using the same page of the playbook, so resistance to a consolidated air tasking order took four months to resolve.[66]

At first, TACRon 22 committed Marine helicopters to resupply missions without regard for other tasks assigned them. More than 60 percent of Marine transport helicopter flight time was devoted to airhead operations, reducing the time available for other missions. The previously high state of aircrew training had deteriorated during the long transit and was being further degraded by canceled flights or when precious training time was used for resupply or transport missions.[67]

Eventually, all hands agreed a consolidated air tasking order was the only practical way to provide effective management of aircraft, time, and space. Although adopting an ATO was a good start, there were still problems. Late requests meant delays in publication of the ATO, an issue that was finally resolved by requiring 72 hours advance notice. This forced units to pre-plan training and logistics support missions carefully. Diverse demands and limited training time were then melded in the ATO. Although this requirement was never popular, air planning officers became more proficient as time went on. Soon, the best possible use was being made of limited flight deck, aircraft, and aircrew resources.[68]

A centralized process for ordering and receiving supplies was adopted because it ensured accountability while easing storage and distribution burdens. This was a real problem because when individual ships were detached from the ATF or were away from the North Arabian Sea, they could neither receive nor distribute supplies from Masirah. Virtually every 4th MEB unit was dispersed at some time, and most units had elements on board more than one ship to facilitate load spreading. The ships were so tightly packed that space was very limited and this made it difficult to receive and stow arriving materials. Confusion about the volume and type of supplies arriving at Masirah on any given day added to the logistics burden. Repeated attempts to acquire such information in a timely manner were not successful.[69]

A major improvement in logistics support was establishment of new Department of Defense supply system addresses to identify units, commands, and activities by ship. Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, II MEF, and the Marine Corps Logistics Base at Albany used these new addresses to expedite delivery of critical materials and mail. These items were sent directly to the ship in which a unit was embarked. Brigade Service Support Group 4 received supplies sent through normal channels, then made final distribution using centralized supply procedures.[70]

Maintenance and Repair

As the logistics pipeline opened up and supplies began to flow more smoothly, proper distribution and use of maintenance and repair parts became the major

logistics concerns. Requested repair parts arrived at BSSG 4, which then distributed them to requesting units on board the ships of the ATF. Unfortunately, a supply logjam was created because it was difficult or impossible to use these parts for their intended purpose. The 4th MEB had more than 4,200 end items embarked in only 13 ships. Every nook and cranny on these ships was tightly filled. This lack of adequate work space delayed or prohibited proper maintenance and repair.

Afloat equipment maintenance was a difficult task for which no real solution was ever found. As time passed, slight load shifts permitted first-echelon maintenance and vehicle ignition to be performed on a weekly basis. Second-echelon maintenance and advanced repairs, however, were virtually impossible. The only practical answer was to make maintenance the focus of combat service support efforts when the landing force was on shore or when a ship made an infrequent port call. Although these measures left much to be desired, they kept the 4th MEB's equipment operational throughout its Gulf deployment.

Reconfiguration of Shipping at Jubayl

Major General Jenkins was well aware that the short time frame from alert to departure and the lack of a well-defined mission required the 4th MEB to sail with ship-loading configurations that would have to be adjusted after arrival. The hurried departure of the 4th MEB and the lack of designated shipping resulted in less than optimum loading of supplies. Critical sustainment materials and repair parts were not combat loaded and would be inaccessible if needed for immediate combat operations. None of the five MSC ships were designed to conduct in-stream or over-the-beach operations, so port facilities were necessary for speedy unloading. Each of the MSC ships was manned by small civilian crews. Three of the five were under foreign registry, so they could not be used in a combat zone.* Unless these ships could be unloaded and their cargo reconfigured or transferred, vital supplies and equipment would be unavailable to support amphibious operations.[71]

Lieutenant Colonel Gary W. Collenborne, the 4th MEB's assistant chief of staff for logistics, was very concerned about assault echelon and assault follow-on echelon materials carried on board Military Sealift Command ships. After arrival in the Gulf, Lieutenant Colonel Collenborne ordered a study group to locate alternate shipping and determine where reconfiguration could best be accomplished. After an in-depth study, the staff recommended using Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) ships to replace the MSC vessels. The ships of Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron 2 had been previously unloaded in Saudi Arabia and were operating as part of the common-user pool. Intense negotiations and the strong support of Admiral Mauz, Lieutenant General Boomer, and Commodore Richard A. Crooks, Commander, Military Sealift Command, Southwest Asia, allowed the 4th MEB to acquire two of these ships.[72]

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*These ships were the *Aurora T*, the *Bassro Polar*, and the *Pheasant.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DM-ST-92-00104

Harbor tugs maneuver a Maritime Prepositioning ship (MPS) toward a pier at the Saudi Arabian port of Al Jubayl. During Operation Desert Shield MPS ships were integral to the rapid deployment of credible combat power.

The MV *PFC William B. Baugh, Jr.* (T-AK 3001) and MV *1stLt Alex Bonnyman, Jr.* (T-AK 3003) were assigned to support the 4th MEB. Both were converted Maersk Line combination container and roll-on/roll-off (RO/RO) vehicle cargo ships. Although not combat-capable amphibious ships, these RO/ROs could conduct limited in-stream offloading. Each had 120,080 square feet of vehicle storage space and could carry 332 standard freight containers, 1,283,000 gallons of bulk fuel, and 65,000 gallons of potable water. Ramps and cranes provided limited self-unloading capabilities.[73]

The 4th MEB logistics staff looked at ports in Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia to find out which ones could handle the ships' size and draft. They also had to determine if there was storage and staging space to accommodate offloaded cargo. Obviously, port space was at a premium because a massive strategic lift was in mid-stream and thousands of tons of supplies and equipment were pouring into the Gulf region daily. On 9 October, the commercial port at Al Jubayl was selected and diplomatic clearances were soon obtained.

By early October, the *Bonnyman* and *Baugh* had arrived in the North Arabian Sea and the reconfiguration process could begin. Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Dickerson, Jr., the 4th MEB's assistant logistics officer, was selected to assemble and lead a special port operations group (POG) consisting of 397 Marines and sailors. This ad hoc work group included drivers, material handling equipment operators, landing support personnel, ammunition technicians, military police, engineers, mechanics, corpsmen, cooks, and administrators. The POG headquarters was located in a warehouse at the commercial port compound. More than 200 POG personnel lived and worked in that area, and 175 more were billeted at Haii

(Camp) Five, a foreign workers cantonment located about 15 miles away.*[74]

It was planned to unload the five MSC ships, identify and inventory supplies and equipment, prioritize the cargo, then combat load the MPF ships so needed supplies and equipment would be readily accessible. From 13 October to 5 December, the POG reconfigured the *Spartanburg County*, down-loaded the *Bassro Polar*, *Strong Texan*, *Cape Domingo*, *Aurora T*, and *Pheasant*, then loaded the *Bonnyman* and *Baugh*. The *Bonnyman* was selected to become the 4th MEB's "floating warehouse" carrying sustainment supplies. The *Baugh* was tactically loaded with assault echelon supplies and equipment. Excess ammunition, fortification materials, and other supplies were transferred to I MEF.

Although the basic plan was followed, some changes in schedule and sequence occurred. The *Cape Domingo* was partially unloaded to gain access to cargo that was then loaded on the *Spartanburg County*, however, rather than finish the offload, the *Cape Domingo* was backloaded to make room for other high priority items that were transiting the port at the same time. The *Bassro Polar*, originally the last ship scheduled for offloading, was moved ahead of other ships to avoid a $30,000 per day penalty if its charter contract expired. The Marines had been unaware of this penalty until just days before it was to take effect, but the POG's flexibility and rapid response saved American taxpayers thousands of dollars.[75] To save shipping space, General Jenkins elected to move several embarked units, all their equipment, and some follow-on supplies ashore and transfer responsibility for them to I MEF. This decision allowed the remaining supplies and equipment, except for some ammunition, to fit on board the *Baugh* and *Bonnyman*.

The Joint Communications Support Element, Battery B, 2d LAAM Battalion, and 2d RPV Company were transferred to I MEF. Their personnel had been embarked on board amphibious ships and their equipment was on board MSC follow-on ships. The Marines were flown to Jubayl Naval Air Facility, then were sent to the commercial port to reunite with their equipment. Morale, recreation, and welfare equipment and about 90 percent of class IV (fortification material) supplies were transferred to I MEF. These reductions eliminated the need to lease warehouse space.[76]

The MV *Bonnyman* was designated the 4th MEB's primary sustainment platform, hence, it was the first MPF ship to be loaded. This was the first tactical backload of an MPF ship since the program's inception in 1984. The *Bonnyman*'s cargo space was dedicated to combat service support equipment and sustainment assets. The ship was configured to act as a floating warehouse, therefore, concern for ease of issue-guided decisions regarding storage of all types of supplies and equipment was no longer a factor. The POG embarkation specialists studied many possible configurations to determine which best coupled good storage and fast unloading. This proved a difficult task because most plans either wasted too much space or resulted in unsafe conditions. The *Bonnyman*'s flight deck could

*While the Marines were using it, Haii Five was dubbed "Camp Gray" to honor the Commandant.

not be used to lift supplies by helicopter because the ship's cranes could not service the landing platform, and stevedores could not safely carry loads up to it. The cranes also prohibited helicopter operations from the weather deck. This meant the only feasible access to supplies was through the side ports. The ship's cranes could lower supplies into landing craft which would then distribute them to other ships or shuttle them ashore to support amphibious operations.

To support this unique plan, the deck adjacent to the side ports was turned into the main floor of this huge sea-based warehouse. This presented some real challenges because supply containers had to be firmly secured, but still be readily available. To overcome obstacles presented by the ship's raised tie-down points, 4"x4" blocks of wood were spaced over the entire deck, then boxes were staged on top of these wooden foundations. Additional beams were attached to the box tops to provide support. These beams were affixed to the boxes so the Marines could remove front panels for easy access to their contents. Cables were also used to secure the boxes to the deck. Once the ship's master approved this plan, the new floating warehouse began to take shape.[77]

Class VII (medical) and IX (repair parts) supplies were stored in boxes that could be accessed by simply lifting their lids. Most other supplies could be easily hand-carried through the access aisles to the side ports. Secondary repairable items, such as tank and truck engines and vehicle transmissions, were heavy items that were not man-portable, so they were either crated or containerized to facilitate movement using hand jacks and forklifts.

Unfortunately, the bulk of class I (subsistence) supplies, CTEP (desert clothing and equipment) supplies, and chemical protective overgarments (CPOGs) did not permit warehouse-style storage. Instead, they were placed in 20'x8'x8' containers which were arrayed along the weather deck with their hatches facing outboard. This allowed rations, CTEP, and CPOGs to be issued directly from containers to landing craft for further distribution.

Another reconfiguration issue was backloading break-bulk supplies and storing them on board the MPF ships. Break-bulk supplies are items stored inside standard embarkation boxes or secured to 4'x4' pallets. Most of the 4th MEB's sustainment supplies were break-bulk items. Neither the *Bonnyman* nor the *Baugh* were designed to store break-bulk supplies. Carrying break-bulk cargo would hamper in-stream unloading and restrict other operations, so these assets would have to be containerized. This created a major funding problem. Most of the 273 containers removed from the MSC ships were leased, not owned, by the Marine Corps. If they were used, the Marine Corps would have to continue paying civilian contractors, a prohibitively expensive proposition. Lieutenant General Boomer directed all Marine units in Saudi Arabia to return Marine-owned containers to Jubayl, not an easy task since many of these containers had been filled with sand and were integrated into unit defensive positions. When Marine-owned containers arrived, the port operations group loaded break-bulk supplies and released the commercial containers back to their respective owners.

Supplies had to be loaded, blocked, braced, and inspected before being reembarked. As a final touch, the group ensured all equipment was cleaned and

inspected by agriculture agents, then certificates of inspection were issued to ship's masters before the containers were loaded. The entire storage and inspection process required more than a month of back-breaking labor and inventive use of limited lumber supplies, but at last 748 containers were loaded on board the *Baugh.*

Another key reconfiguration issue was ammunition storage. The 4th MEB sailed with most of its class V (ammunition) cargo inside the magazines of the amphibious ships. Bulky class V material, such as Hawk missiles, and ammunition reserves were carried on board the MSC ships. Major General Jenkins decided to retain only 15 days' ammunition on hand, therefore, only that amount was reloaded on the MPF ships at Jubayl. The remaining ammunition was turned over to I MEF for storage. The port operations group unloaded 6,083 short tons of ammunition from the MSC ships and moved it from Jubayl inland to ammunition supply points using 223 tractor-trailer loads.

The ammunition required to meet the 15-day commitment was containerized and placed on board the *Bonnyman.* This made in-stream offloading possible. To save time and labor, the group exchanged ammunition from the MSC ships with I MEF, which provided containers already filled with similar ammunition loads that had been unloaded from the MPF ships that supported the Marine fly-in echelons. For those items not already loaded, I MEF provided empty containers and work gangs made up of Marines and Seabees specially trained to block and brace ammunition loads. One hundred twenty-four ammunition containers were inventoried, secured, and loaded on board the *Bonnyman.*[78]

The reconfiguration was an excellent opportunity to check maintenance and operability of equipment. The group conducted detailed inspections and performed preventative maintenance on all major end items. The inspection teams discovered many vehicles had flat tires and most batteries were either dead or very weak after sitting dormant for more than two months. Most of the rest of the equipment was in very good shape, except for some items stored on the weather decks where they had been exposed to the elements and had rusted or corroded during the long voyage from the United States to Saudi Arabia. The worst case was a forklift that had rusted solid. Its engine refused to turn over and the transmission would not disengage. This item was removed by crane from the *Cape Domingo,* and was left with the 1st FSSG maintenance detachment at Jubayl.

When maintenance was required, group Marines did their best, but were often hampered by the lack of repair parts. The 1st Force Service Support Group, although inundated with requisitions and taxed by the needs of other Marine units in Saudi Arabia, lent a helping hand. The 4th MEB was not authorized to draw supplies or parts from 1st FSSG at Jubayl, but extenuating circumstances led to an understanding whereby critical repair parts, if available, could be "loaned" by the 1st FSSG to the 4th MEB. This allowed the 4th MEB to keep combat essential equipment in operation. The 4th MEB, however, could not back order items not on hand. This slowed port operations group maintenance until the repair part blocks carried on board the MSC ships were broken out. Luckily, the situation was rectified in December.[79]

During its stay at Jubayl, the group became adept at answering unexpected "pop-up" calls for support. Ingenuity, flexibility, and hard work enabled it to accomplish difficult tasks in surprisingly short periods of time. A total of 13 pallets of critical repair parts and three tank engines were shipped to Masirah from Jubayl. During Exercise Imminent Thunder, 11 tanks and a tank retriever were sent to Jubayl for repair. The tankers, group Marines, and mechanics from 1st FSSG teamed up to fix them in only three days. One tank could not be fixed due to a lack of repair parts, so a replacement was issued from the task force's operational readiness float. When the LCUs departed Jubayl to rejoin the ATF they carried 11 fully operational M-60 tanks and one tank retriever, each freshly painted desert tan. Two hundred gallons of desert tan paint for use on other equipment were included in the return load.[80]

The only insurmountable problem encountered by the group was deterioration of some B-rations (dry foodstuffs and staples) carried on board the *Aurora T.* These food items were stored on pallets that had been used as blocking and bracing material for other loads. During transit some plastic protective wrapping was torn, water seeped in, and the cardboard packing had deteriorated. These rations spoiled as the *Aurora T* made its long hot voyage through the Mediterranean, Red, and Arabian Seas. A medical inspection determined which rations were not suitable for repacking. These were destroyed and the remaining loose rations were used by I MEF.[81]

The group's stay at Jubayl had been an unquestioned success. For the first time, 4th MEB logisticians knew the exact location of the 4th MEB's equipment and supplies, all of which had been combat loaded for easy access. Equipment had been checked and repaired before being reembarked. Unnecessary gear had been offloaded and transferred or stored ashore. New tactical loading techniques had been pioneered. Logistically, the 4th MEB was ready to mount a fully supported amphibious assault.

Maritime Interdiction Operations

Multinational Interdiction Operations

United Nations Resolution 661 of 5 August 1990 placed a trade embargo on Iraq. To support this resolution U.S. and other coalition naval forces formed a multinational Maritime Interdiction Force (MIF). The MIF's tasks were to locate, challenge, stop, and search Iraqi ships in the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Persian Gulf. The MIF eventually numbered more than 80 ships from 17 countries. Between August 1990 and March 1991 more than 7,000 ships were challenged and more than 1,000 stopped and boarded. Marines from the 13th MEU(SOC) and the 4th MEB played an important role in these operations between October and December.[82]

The United States first proposed international maritime interdiction in August. Four days later President Bush warned Saddam not to breach the embargo. On 13 August, Great Britain and Australia joined the U.S. to form the MIF. Eight days

later other members of the Western European Union also joined the MIF. United Nations Resolution 665 of 25 August 1990 authorized the MIF to use all measures necessary to enforce the embargo.

The MIF was an impressive international collection of the free world's most modern weapons and warships including naval forces from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Canada, Australia, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Qatar. The U.S. contributed two carrier battle groups, two surface action groups, two Marine maritime special purpose forces, and about three dozen ships. The American interdiction force was under the operational control of the U.S. Middle East Force, commanded by Rear Admiral William M. Fogarty on board the *LaSalle*.*

On 17 August, maritime interdiction operations began. The rules of engagement dictated that ships sailing from Iraq were to return to their port of origin, while those carrying prohibited items to Iraq were given the option of returning to their port of origin or sailing to selected non-prohibited ports. The first inquiry took place when the U.S. Navy frigate *John L. Hall* (FFG 32) challenged the Iraqi tanker *Al Fao*. The ship was allowed to proceed without being stopped. The guided missile cruiser USS *England* (CG 22) made the first successful Persian Gulf intercept when she stopped two Iraq-bound ships. The USS *Reid* (FFG 30) fired the first shots of the embargo trying to stop the *Al Khanaqin* which ran to Yemen rather than be boarded.[83]

During the first few weeks there was little resistance to the interception efforts. This state of affairs came to a halt on 4 September when the master of the Iraqi cargo ship *Zanoobia* refused to cooperate. Until that time the U.S. maritime interdiction operations were being conducted by joint-Navy/Coast Guard boarding parties. The Navy contingent usually included at least one commissioned officer, a boat handling party, and a security element. The U.S. Coast Guard provided four-man Law Enforcement Detachments. Headed by a commissioned officer, these Coast Guard teams were familiar with maritime law, merchant shipping procedures, legal documents and ship's manifests, and ship search procedures. In the case of the *Zanoobia*, the boarding team had to restrain the master, take control of the helm, and divert the ship to an alternate port. This incident clearly showed the need for combat teams trained for forcible entry of a ship underway so the MIF called in the Marines.

13th MEU(SOC) Interdictions

Every MEU(SOC) includes a maritime special purpose force (MSPF), a joint-Navy/Marine team of about 50 men specially trained and equipped to conduct underway special missions. Stealthy ingress, quick deployment, and decisive

*Subordinate to CinCCent via ComUSNavCent, ComUSMEFor was responsible for air defense inside the Gulf, MIO, and combined naval activities until Jan91.

Members of the Navy/Marine Corps maritime special purpose force on board the Ogden *(LPD-5) go into action as the Iraqi ship* Al Mutanabbi *refused to stop after being challenged.*

action are the hallmarks of these teams. They are trained for small boat operations, scuba diving, close quarters battle, and fastrope insertions. Using fastrope techniques, a 10-man team can rappel from a hovering helicopter in about 30 seconds.

In October, the Iraqi ships *Al Wasitti* and *Tadmur* refused to slow or allow inspection teams to board so helicopter insertions were used to gain control of the ships. On the 6th, Admiral Mauz notified Admiral LaPlante and Major General Jenkins that elements of the ATF and the MFA were going to reinforce the MIF. Because of their special training and equipment, ARG Alpha and the 13th MEU(SOC) were tasked to provide a heliborne maritime interdiction force (HMIF). The MEU's MSPF included Marines from 1st Force Reconnaissance Company and a Navy SEAL detachment on board the *Ogden*. On 10 October, the *Ogden* detached from the ATF to plan, rehearse, and conduct boarding operations. The training program included a full-scale underway boarding exercise that was held on board the MV *Overseas Alice* (T-AOT 1203).[84]

The HMIF went into action when the Iraqi ship *Al Mutanabbi* refused to stop after being challenged on 13 October. The team made a fastrope entry, quickly gained control of the ship, and provided security for naval inspection and law enforcement teams from other ships. The next boarding came on the 22d when

the HMIF boarded the *Al Sahil Al Arabi*. This was necessary when the Iraqi master refused to return to Iraq as he had earlier promised a boarding party from the USS *O'Brien* (DD 975). When the *Al Arabi* refused to stop despite warning shots the HMIF went into action from the *Ogden*. Thereafter, the *Al Arabi*'s master became a model of cooperation.

On 28 October, the final test for the MEU's HMIF came when it took control of the 157,000-ton Iraqi ship *Amuriyah* bound from Aden to Basrah. The Australian frigate HMAS *Darwin* (F 04) made contact with the Iraqi ship near Masirah Island and was soon joined by the USS *Reasoner* (FF 1063), the *Ogden*, and the British frigate HMS *Brazen* (F 91). The Iraqi ship's master at first ignored, then later delayed, answering calls from the *Reasoner*. Finally, the *Reasoner* warned the *Amuriyah* to comply or be boarded. There was no response. Fifteen minutes later the *Darwin* and the *Reasoner* fired warning shots across the *Amuriyah*'s bow. The stubborn Iraqi ship, however, continued its course. Low-level passes by F-14s and F/A-18s failed to deter the *Amuriyah* so it was time for direct intervention.

An HMLA-267 Sea Cobra drew the Iraqis' attention when it approached the ship then hovered to provide close-in fire support. While the Iraqis focused on the gunship, a CH-46 from HMM-164 delivered the boarding team. The team descended using fastrope techniques, captured the bridge, and took control of the engineering spaces. The *Amuriyah* was brought to a halt to allow an international inspection team on board. The swift, decisive intervention of the 13th MEU(SOC) MSPF brought this incident to a conclusion without the use of deadly force. "Sound judgement and judicious use of force resulted in a successful boarding with no injuries suffered by either the crew or the boarding party."[85]

4th MEB Interdictions

An HMIF from the 4th MEB was formed in November to replace the one from the 13th MEU which was scheduled to depart. This process began on 15 October with the debrief of the *Al Mutanabbi* boarding team. Using this experience as a guide, Major General Jenkins had a new force list made and ordered that a training syllabus be developed. The Marine force reconnaissance detachment and PhibGru 2 Navy SEALs were chosen for this assignment because of their previous training in close quarters battle, fastrope experience, and organic special weapons and equipment. Both units were assigned to the *Trenton*. Two CH-46s were earmarked as fastrope insertion platforms. Two UH-1Ns were designated to provide visual aerial reconnaissance, in-flight command and control, and airborne sniper platforms.

The training period began on 16 October. The boarding force conducted two days of shipboard movement and close quarters battle training on board the *Trenton*. Training on the 19th included sniper practice, fastrope practice, and additional close quarter training. The next morning was devoted to training analysis and lessons learned were compiled. During the afternoon of the 20th, HMIF members planned a full-scale rehearsal to begin the next day.

On 24 October, a realistic exercise was held on board the amphibious cargo ship *Durham*, where an Arabic-speaking officer played the role of an uncooperative ship's master. Two days later, the USNS *Andrew J. Higgins* (T-AO 190) was the exercise target. After the HMIF insertion exercise ended, the *Higgins*' crew instructed the boarding force about methods to stop merchant vessel engines and pointed out likely tactics for obstructing a heliborne insertion. After this final rehearsal the new 4th MEB MSPF and ready to support the MIF.

During November, the 4th MEB HMIF continued proficiency training to keep its sniper, close quarters battle, and fastrope skills honed. This unit celebrated the Marine Corps' 215th birthday by conducting a full-scale interdiction exercise. The *Trenton* joined the Australian frigate HMAS *Adelaide* (F 01), the USS *Curts* (FFG 38), and the USS *Oldendorf* (DD 977) for this exercise. The USNS *Walter S. Diehl* (T-AO 193) acted as the target. During the exercise the 4th MEB HMIF was confronted by obstacles to foul primary landing points. The flight coordinator in the lead escort helicopter warned the transport commander, who quickly changed the insert point. The ship's crew relished their roles as uncooperative Iraqis. This exercise proved to be an excellent dress rehearsal for the HMIF's first takedown in December.[86]

The 4th MEB HMIF's greatest challenge interrupted the 1990 Christmas holidays. On 9 December, the Iraqi training ship *Ibn Khaldoon* sailed from Tripoli. Despite the fact it was an Iraqi warship, the *Ibn Khaldoon* had been leased by the Arab Women's League and was hailed as a "peace ship" carrying an international delegation of women activists bringing milk and medicine to the children of Iraq.* The passenger list included more than 20 reporters from various countries. Obviously, the *Ibn Khaldoon* was the focus of international attention and its capture was going to be a true test of the embargo's effectiveness.

The *Ibn Khaldoon* incident was a blatant attempt to turn world opinion against the joint efforts. The possibility of an international incident in plain view of the world press created real problems for the HMIF. It was reported that women activists, some of whom would be holding small children, intended to resist the inspection team. The HMIF was thoroughly briefed as to the dangers and importance of non-confrontational achievement of its mission. The 4th MEB HMIF aircrews would have to be alert for hostile acts which might be camouflaged by the crowd. The HMIF boarding team had to gain control of the ship quickly while minimizing contact with the crew and passengers. Restraint was going to be very important to keep this explosive situation from blossoming into a full-blown incident.

Planning began on 17 December. Two days later, the 4th MEB HMIF command element transferred from the *Nassau* to the *Shreveport* to coordinate training efficiently. Two UH-1Ns (HMLA-269) and a four-man team from the 2d Radio Battalion accompanied the command element. Three aircraft from HMM-263 transferred from the *Guam* to the *Trenton* to join the 4th MEB HMIF elements

*The post-capture search revealed several tons of contraband on board.

already on board. On Christmas day, a plenary session and intelligence update was held on board the *Shreveport*. That afternoon the *Diehl* once again acted as the target ship for another boarding exercise.

The international flotilla sent to intercept the *Ibn Khaldoon* included the *Diehl*, *Trenton*, *Shreveport*, and *Oldendorf*, as well as the USS *Fife* (DD 991) and the Australian frigate HMAS *Sydney* (F 03). At 0545 on 26 December the *Ibn Khaldoon* was warned to slow down and prepare to be inspected. As expected, the *Ibn Khaldoon* refused to cooperate. Left with no choice, the 4th MEB HMIF was launched at 0615. The first UH-1N reported a large crowd on deck, but noticed no active threat. The team made a fastrope insertion just forward of the superstructure, quickly moved to their assigned points, and took control of the bridge and engine rooms. The Marines cleared the crowd from the flight deck and moved the passengers inside the superstructure. Several altercations between the Marines and the ship's crew required the use of force, including warning shots, however, the Marines were firmly in control by 0640. A platoon from the 2d Military Police Company was brought on board to assist with crowd control. By mid-afternoon all 4th MEB HMIF personnel had been extracted. The *Ibn Khaldoon* was detained pending further diplomatic action. Saddam's great propaganda ploy was a miserable failure. In fact, the situation took a pro-Coalition turn when life preserving actions by a medical team from the *Trenton* saved a Swedish woman who suffered a heart attack.*[87]

On 30 December, the 4th MEB HMIF conducted its final boarding. The interdiction force included the *Trenton*, the *Fife*, the *Sydney*, and the British destroyer HMS *London* (D 16). At 0615 an airborne boarding party was at its orbit point about 10 miles from the Iraqi tanker *Ain Zallah*. When the ship refused to cooperate, the 4th MEB HMIF was inserted and took control without incident. Surface boarding parties soon arrived to search the ship. After no contraband was found the *Ain Zallah* was allowed to continue its journey. This incident closed the book on Marine participation in maritime interdiction operations during Desert Shield.[88]

Marine actions during this period were fraught with danger and were conducted under close scrutiny by both higher authority and the world press. The operations, particularly the capture of *Ibn Khaldoon*, were conducted with firmness and restraint and were speedily accomplished. The Marines involved in these duties earned the highest praise from Admirals Mauz and Arthur and Major General Jenkins.

4th MEB Amphibious Exercises

The 13th MEU(SOC) Departs

In late October 1990, the Marine Forces Afloat faced an uncertain future. The 13th MEU(SOC) was nearing the end of its overseas tour and was scheduled to

*An Iraqi-made propaganda film was shown in Yemen, but received no wider distribution

return to the United States. This departure would reduce Marine amphibious combat power by about one-third and meant the 4th MEB would need to formulate and practice new landing plans. Exercise Imminent Thunder gave the 4th MEB a chance to test its plans in November. A follow-up exercise, Sea Soldier III, was then conducted to rectify problems raised during Imminent Thunder.

On 29 October, General Gray and Lieutenant General Robert Milligan visited the *Okinawa* to bid the 13th MEU(SOC) farewell. The next day Colonel John Rhodes received orders for the MEU to depart the Gulf and head for home. Later, on board the *Nassau*, Gray and Milligan met with Major General Jenkins for a closed-door discussion about the status of the 4th MEB and to prepare for a Thanksgiving visit by President Bush.[89] The 4th MEB was left as the only landing force when the MEU departed the Gulf on 4 November. The 11th MEU, then training at Camp Pendleton, was scheduled to replace the 13th MEU, but it was not clear when the 11th MEU would arrive in the region. As a precaution, the 13th MEU assumed a holding position off the coast of Oman after exiting the Strait of Hormuz. Four days later the MEU sailed for the Pacific.*

On 10 November, the 13th MEU departed the CentCom operational control, but was ordered to ModLoc near the tip of India.** While there Colonel Rhodes received a three-line message from Admiral Mauz, ordering the MEU "go to Subic, obtain maintenance and upkeep on the ships and equipment, continue specialized training, [and] be prepared to return to the Gulf for combat operations."[90] The MEU arrived at Subic Bay on the 19th to conduct Exercise Valiant Usher 91-1A. While in the Philippines, ARG Alpha and the 13th MEU were placed on strategic alert and had to be ready to sail for the Gulf within 72 hours if needed.[91] Although the exact situation in the Persian Gulf remained somewhat cloudy, it was obvious to all hands that the MEU's homecoming was going to be delayed.

The departure of the 13th MEU(SOC) left Jenkins with substantially reduced combat power. The 4th MEB lost one-third of its ground maneuver units, one-third of its helicopter lift, and one-fourth of its attack helicopters. The 4th MEB, however, remained a potent force that mustered 7,996 personnel, 22 tanks, 32 TOW-mounted humvees, 18 howitzers, 52 LAVs, and 20 AV-8B Harriers. A 4th MEB maritime special purpose force was created to conduct special operations and trained with the 13th MEU(SOC) MSPF before the later unit sailed.[92]

Imminent Thunder

General Schwarzkopf directed the 4th MEB to participate in Exercise Imminent Thunder, the first major joint/combined training activity to integrate

*General Gray wanted to keep the 13th MEU(SOC) in theater to give the 11th MEU additional training time, but Navy rotation schedules conflicted with this so a compromise sent ARG Alpha to the Philippines until a final decision could be made.

**ModLoc is short for "modified location" where the ATF sails within a designated area (this procedure is called "drilling holes in the ocean" by old salts).

multinational air, ground, and naval forces fully during a single exercise. Imminent Thunder was an amphibious rehearsal to test theater-wide fire support plans, allow the 4th MEB to practice a brigade-size landing, and work out procedures for an inland link-up of Coalition forces. The training goals stressed fire support coordination, communications procedures, joint and combined interoperability, and tested landing plans.[93]

Although of limited scope and of short duration, this well-publicized exercise had an underlying diplomatic goal. Its location and intent had ominous overtones that sent an unmistakable message to Saddam that the Coalition was serious about his withdrawal from Kuwait. Imminent Thunder was first slated to take place near Ras Al Mishab, a Saudi port located less than 20 miles from Kuwait. Mishab was well within Iraqi missile range and its close proximity to Iraqi forces made Lieutenant General Boomer, the senior Marine commander, wary. He warned his subordinates not to let a small incident grow out of control. His instructions stated his intent that the Coalition, not the Iraqis, would control the agenda. These admonitions, however, became moot points when the exercise site was moved to Ras Al Ghar, located about 90 miles south of Mishab.

This change of venue shifted Imminent Thunder away from the Iraqi threat, but placed it directly in sight of the world media. Closely scrutinized by the international press, the exercise became one of the most widely reported events of Operation Desert Shield. Television viewers in the United States and Iraq watched LCACs bobbing up and down amid huge white-capped breakers, while news analysts speculated about when and where an amphibious assault would strike. This led to later accusations by members of the media that they had been duped by General Schwarzkopf and became unwilling participants in what eventually became one of the most successful deceptions in military history. While in hindsight, this claim may seem valid, such an assumption is clearly wrong when placed in proper context. An amphibious assault was still an important element

Marines of Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, move out on a mission after disembarking from an HMM-263 CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter during Exercise Imminent Thunder.

Department of Defense Photo (USAF) DF-ST-92-07534

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-0619

Marines of Company A, 2d Amphibious Assault Vehicle Battalion, arrive on the beach by landing craft from the Nassau.

in Desert Storm operational plans at that time.

In addition to its political message, Imminent Thunder was important for operational reasons. Air, ground, and amphibious forces from several nations needed to hone their skills and this exercise offered a unique opportunity to practice as a team. Imminent Thunder had five phases: command and control of aircraft assets to isolate and prepare the landing area; integration of ATF and outside air assets during the amphibious assault; link-up and reinforcement operations of the landing force and ground forces; cross training by Arab and Marine forces; and a detailed critique and development of follow-up training plans.[94]

The 4th MEB was a major player in four of Imminent Thunder's five phases. General Jenkins' training objectives were to execute an over-the-horizon amphibious assault using helicopters and LCACs; develop and exercise link-up procedures with I MEF and Coalition ground forces; conduct cross-training with Coalition forces; operate smoothly in a jointcombined environment; conduct mass casualty evacuation drills; and fully integrate fire support plans with Air Force, Navy, I MEF, and Coalition forces.

The exercise began on 15 November and ended on the 21st. Phase I was a test of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing's ability to support the L-Day air tasking order and did not directly involve the 4th MEB. Phase II merged outside support assets with those of the amphibious task force and the landing force and included 4th MEB aviation assets. This phase tested the interoperability of NavCent, MarCent, and CentAF. Fire support coordination, air control, and deconfliction procedures inside the amphibious objective area were checked, as were inter-Service over-the-horizon communications links and joint communications procedures.[95]

Plans called for landing LAVs and artillery in LCACs while a heliborne force captured an inland airfield. A battalion landing team would then make a reinforcing surface assault using AAVs. Once ashore, the seaborne force would consolidate, move inland to join the heliborne force, and secure the beachhead until a combined U.S.-Saudi mechanized force arrived from the south.

Unfortunately, not all went smoothly. On L-Day, the 4th MEB was on station and ready to execute both the helicopter and surface assaults as planned, but the weather did not cooperate. The initial launch was made in high swells and heavy surf, a dangerous sea state that could needlessly damage equipment and jeopardize personnel safety. Although a combat landing could have been made, the surface landings were canceled because the exercise objectives did not warrant the inherent risk to equipment or personnel.[96]

On 15 November, aircraft from the MEB participated in a large, 115 sortie, air effort. These actions were controlled by an airborne command and control center and were coordinated with simulated naval gunfire from the battleship USS *Missouri* (BB 63). This portion of the exercise included use of remotely piloted vehicles by air and firepower control parties on the shore. During a subsequent critique session weaknesses were identified and suggestions for improvement noted.

The mass casualty evacuation went well. This part of the exercise included casualty handling procedures, combat search and rescue missions, medical evacuation to shore facilities and the hospital ship USNS *Comfort* (T-AH 20), and tested patient tracking procedures. Follow-on training consisted of cross training by I MEF and Saudi Marines that included live firing of TOW missiles, air and ground mobility operations, and breaching operations against mock Iraqi defens-

A Marine LAV-L exits the ramp of a Navy LCAC during amphibious exercises at Ras Al Madrakah, Oman. LCAC-8, one of 17 LCACs with the Marine Forces Afloat, was assigned to the Gunston Hall.

Photo Courtesy of Captain William D. Harrop III, USMC

es. An extensive MedCAP was conducted concurrent with the cross training. Highlight of the exercise was President Bush's participation in the 4th MEB's Thanksgiving services on the 23d.[97]

The post-exercise critique was held at I MEF Headquarters at Jubayl. It uncovered several operational flaws. There were communications and deconfliction problems that hampered inter-Service operations. The need for more effective control measures was underscored. Hopes to use a helicopter assault force as a maneuver element did not work out. At the close of the conference, plans for a 4th MEB amphibious exercise at Madrakah were refined to correct the noted flaws.

Despite poor weather, Imminent Thunder was judged a successful training exercise. Valuable lessons in fire support coordination, land navigation, and communications were learned. The 2d Topographic Platoon detachment used its time ashore to update the 4th MEB's 1:50,000 maps and the intelligence section presented up-to-date enemy order of battle briefs to Generals Gray and Milligan. The chance to get off the ships was appreciated by all hands. At the end of the exercise the AH-1W Super Cobra helicopters of HMLA-269 which had been attached to the 3d MAW for the initial phase of Operation Desert Shield were returned to 4th MEB and were embarked on the *Shreveport* and the *Raleigh*.[98] While the postexercise conference was held, the 4th MEB embarkation section assembled serial assignment tables and loaded the ships for upcoming Exercise Sea Soldier III.

Training at Al Hamra

In early December, Company D, 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalion, and Battery A, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, debarked from the *Gunston Hall* and conducted five days of intense training at Al Hamra in the United Arab Emirates. Company D worked on 25mm and coaxial gunnery while operating in a wide variety of mission-oriented protective posture levels. Battery A perfected artillery and mortar fire direction center procedures and conducted quick firing and hasty displacement procedures associated with artillery raids. Small arms and crew-served weapons were battle-sighted. Integrated unit training included extended ground operations featuring night movement techniques and tactical control of close air support and air delivery aircraft.[99]

Sea Soldier III

Sea Soldier III was a rehearsal for a brigade-size night landing using heliborne and surface assaults. Training realism was of paramount importance, so the 4th MEB intelligence section, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Michael M. Bullen, used a 60 x 100-foot sand table to represent specific landing areas in Kuwait. The model was detailed to show, individual buildings, minefields, barriers, and barbed wire. Index cards were used to identify enemy units and mark the latest Iraqi dispositions.

The training objectives were: conduct a limited visibility amphibious assault

using strict electronic emissions control; establish aviation assault support ashore; improve aviation night vision capabilities; and phase the brigade command element ashore without interrupting operations. Additional objectives were to conduct: a force-on-force field training exercise; demolition and mine clearance training; detailed vehicle and equipment maintenance; a mass casualty evacuation in a simulated chemical contaminated environment; and extensive medical and dental civic action projects.

Sea Soldier III was the largest landing exercise to date. More than 3,500 troops and 1,000 vehicles were brought ashore at Ras Al Madrakah from 8 to 18 December. The assault was conducted during hours of darkness with the landing force observing an electronic blackout. After a force-on-force exercise to capture inland objectives ended, an extensive maintenance standdown was instituted. The final stage of training was a phased withdrawal to amphibious shipping.[100]

Logistics was an important part of Sea Soldier III, particularly debarkation and maintenance. The landing saw expanded use of causeway operations to support vehicle and equipment debarkation. A helicopter detachment was moved ashore to provide assault support. A limited offload of follow-on supplies from the MSC ships *Bonnyman* and *Baugh* was made to practice the use of roll-on/roll-off ships to support landing operations. It was found that embarked equipment was badly in need of both preventive and corrective maintenance. A large shipment of spare parts arrived and were passed quickly to using units in the landing force. The final touch was adding a coat of desert tan paint to cover the existing woodland camouflage before the vehicles and equipment were reembarked.

The 4th MEB conducted both a medical exercise and a medical civic action program. The exercise was designed to evaluate patient accountability and reporting methods, to simulate care in forward treatment areas, to refine communications procedures, and to practice triage and evacuation procedures. The scenario simulated all types of casualties: wounded; non-battle deaths; chemical casualties; and killed-in-action. All procedures were done in a simulated nuclear-chemical-biological contaminated environment. Patients were decontaminated, evaluated, and evacuated from battalion and regimental aid stations to the beach evacuation station, then to designated care-providing ships as applicable. The MedCAP treated 688 patients in four days and was so successful that the Sultan of Oman sent a "well done" through diplomatic channels.[101]

Assembling the 5th MEB

Background

In the early summer of 1990, the I Marine Expeditionary Force was located at Camp Pendleton, California. The 7th MEB, designated the I MEF fly-in brigade, was located at Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, in California's Mojave Desert. The 5th MEB was at Camp Pendleton where it served as the seaborne brigade of I MEF. Contingency plans called for the 5th MEB to draw its ground combat element from the 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton; the aviation combat element, Marine Aircraft Group 50, would use 3d

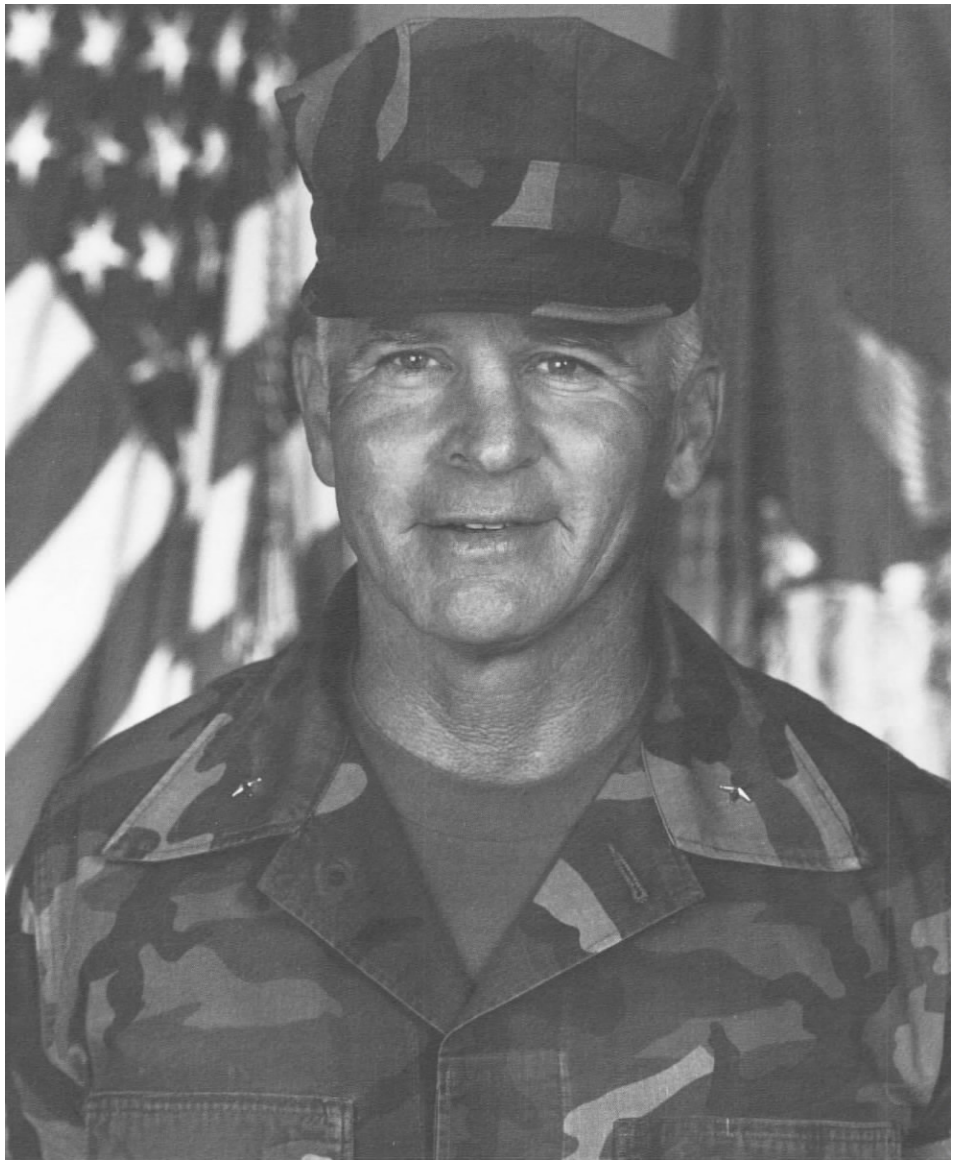
Marine Aircraft Wing units at Tustin, El Toro, and Camp Pendleton; and Brigade Service Support Group 5 (BSSG 5) would use detachments from the 1st Force Service Support Group at Camp Pendleton to provide logistics support.

The modern 5th MEB was the descendant of the 5th Marine Brigade which was sent to France near the end of World War I.[102] During the Cold War several provisional 5th MEBs were intermittently activated for training exercises and combat contingencies. A hastily formed 5th MEB sailed through the Panama Canal to join the 4th MEB in the Caribbean during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. An interim 5th Marine Amphibious Brigade (5th MAB) was activated at Camp Pendleton in 1969 to fill the gap between the deactivation of the 5th Marine Division and the return of the 1st Marine Division from Vietnam.*[103] A permanent 5th MAB was created on 1 July 1985 as part of a major reorganization of the Fleet Marine Forces. In 1988 the 5th MAB was redesignated the 5th MEB. In addition to its training and operational responsibilities, the 5th MEB had administrative control of three Marine expeditionary units that rotated duties as the Landing Force Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific about every six months.

In June 1990, Brigadier General Peter J. Rowe assumed command of the 5th MEB after serving as the assistant division commander of the 1st Marine Division for almost a year. In keeping with the amphibious nature of the MEB, General Rowe was "dual-hatted," serving concurrently as Commanding General, 5th MEB, at Camp Pendleton, and Commanding General, Landing Force Training Command Pacific, at the Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, California. A native of Stamford, Connecticut and a graduate of Xavier University, he saw combat in Vietnam. After returning to the United States, General Rowe received a Master's Degree from San Diego State University in 1973, earned the Velasquez Award at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in 1977, and graduated from the Naval War College with "highest distinction" in 1980.[104]

On 1 August 1990, the 5th MEB command element was standing down after returning from a training exercise in Florida. Most of the staff were on leave and those scheduled to remain after the annual personnel turnover were assigned to the I MEF command element. In mid-July the 5th MEB command element had been sent to join General Schwarzkopf, the Central Command staff, and other Service component representatives for a grueling eight-day command post exercise at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Exercise Internal Look 90 was designed to test newly developed Central Command Operations Plan 1002-90. When General Schwarzkopf took over Central Command, he was unhappy with the existing contingency plans which viewed a Soviet invasion of Iran as the most likely threat to American interests in the region. He felt the end of the Cold War and political changes inside Iran made Iraq the most likely threat to stability in the Persian Gulf. In response, General Schwarzkopf drew up an exercise scenario in which Iraqi-like Red Forces threatened the Arabian Peninsula and its vital oil reserves. The Central Command Blue Forces were tasked to defend northeast

*The term "Amphibious" was used in place of "Expeditionary" from 1965 to 1988.



BGen Peter J. Rowe commanded the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade during its deployment to the Gulf. The 5th MEB participated in Exercise Sea Soldier IV, landed to become I MEF reserve, conducted combat clearing operations in the Al Wafrah National Forest, and assisted humanitarian relief operations by Joint Task Force Sea Angel in Bangladesh.

Saudi Arabia and to protect Al Jubayl, Al Kobar, Ad Dammam, and Dhahran. At the time no one realized how quickly the diplomatic situation would begin to mirror the imaginary one created for Exercise Internal Look. Before the end of the exercise staff officers would complain they were having a hard time keeping the Internal Look scenario and actual Iraqi movements straight.[105]

Not long after the 5th MEB command element returned to the west coast, history repeated itself for the third time in a half-century. When the I MEF depart-

ed for the Gulf region it seemed to be a carbon copy of what happened when the 1st Marine Division went to Korea in 1950 and again when the "Old Breed" left for Vietnam in 1965. Units hurriedly packed up and departed for the combat zone leaving Camp Pendleton a virtual ghost town. Brigadier General Rowe soon became the only general officer left, so he picked up responsibility for Camp Pendleton, the remainder of the 1st Marine Division, I MEF rear echelon, and the remain-behind equipment in addition to his other duties.[106]

Activation Issues

When the dust finally settled, General Rowe began to wonder what the future held for the MEB. Whispers and innuendos compounded the uncertainty. Some rumor mongers had 5th MEB command element flying to Saudi Arabia to become the I MEF rear area security command element, while others said the MEB was staying put to become the nucleus of a new MEF. On 13 October, General Rowe learned officially that the 5th MEB would deploy to the Gulf as an amphibious landing force on board the ships of Rear Admiral Stephen S. Clarey's Amphibious Group 3 (PhibGru 3).[107]

Brigadier General Rowe had questions about the upcoming deployment. He was particularly concerned with seven crucial areas: mission; organization; manpower; equipment; shipping; logistics; and training. Each of these issues would have to be addressed before the 5th MEB could sail. Aware that the MEB was earmarked for deployment to the Gulf, Colonel Drake F. Trumpe, General Rowe's chief of staff, initiated the planning process and prepared preliminary force lists. General Rowe believed the three missions the 5th MEB would most likely be called on to perform were: an amphibious assault; maritime interdiction operations; and special operations. Not surprisingly, his analysis was very similar to the earlier one compiled by Major General Jenkins. The 5th MEB would be facing a mechanized foe able to conduct biological and chemical warfare in desert terrain. Amphibious operations and maneuver warfare using mechanized combined arms task forces were the primary offensive concerns, while anti-armor defense and chemical/biological countermeasures were the initial defensive concerns. Additional operations might include maritime interdiction or non-combatant evacuations.

On 26 October, Central Command formulated a proposed mission statement and issued a proposed force list. These documents provided a base from which General Rowe could determine requirements to be presented to Headquarters Marine Corps and Fleet Marine Force Pacific when he requested support. The main question was, "Where would the forces come from?" He had to ponder several other key questions as well. When, where, and for how long would the MEB deploy? How many ships would be available? How long would the deployment last? Would a unit rotation policy be established? Once in the Persian Gulf, would the 5th MEB be absorbed by the 4th MEB or would it remain independent? Regardless, the 5th MEB would have to race the clock to be ready to sail on time because the U.N.-imposed 15 January deadline for an Iraqi withdrawal was fast

approaching. Luckily, answers were not long in coming.

By November, it was obvious that Saddam was not going to pull out of Kuwait, therefore General Schwarzkopf requested additional forces and the national command authority concurred. This decision clarified one key issue, the 5th MEB would reinforce, not replace, the 4th MEB. General Rowe could now concentrate on procuring the forces he needed. Unfortunately, when he took stock of what was at hand, the picture was not very promising. A quick look around Camp Pendleton showed there was very little left to pick from. The 5th MEB command element was undermanned. The 5th Marines, designated to become the nucleus of the ground combat element, had only two rifle battalions. There were almost no other ground combat support elements at hand. Marine Aircraft Group 50 and Brigade Service Support Group 5 virtually did not exist and there were very few readily available resources to bring them up to strength.[108]

The command element was critically short of intelligence and communications assets. The ground combat element needed combat support personnel and equipment. The aviation pool had few deployable personnel and not many aircraft were on the west coast. Most of the equipment left behind at Camp Pendleton was needed to outfit Reserve units, but some of it was not combat ready since the few support personnel at Camp Pendelton had been too busy keeping the supply pipeline flowing into the Middle East to fix or maintain what had been left behind.[109]

Although Brigadier General Rowe exercised administrative and not operational control of Colonel Robert J. Garner's 11th MEU, Colonel John E. Rhodes' 13th MEU(SOC), and Colonel Terrance P. Murray's 15th MEU, these units were not immediately available to the 5th MEB. The 11th MEU was undergoing predeployment training before sailing for the Western Pacific, the 13th MEU(SOC) was already in the Gulf, and the 15th MEU was standing down after returning from the Western Pacific.

Manpower Issues

General Rowe's most pressing need was manpower. This issue was solved in a number of ways. First, President Bush authorized General Alfred Gray to stop releasing Marines from active duty. This "stop-loss" program immediately made previously non-deployable Marines eligible for overseas duty. Second, the decision to call up the Reserves gave Gray the green light to activate Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) units and Individual Ready Reservists. Third, Gray instituted the time-honored Marine tradition of marshalling forces from the posts and stations of the Corps to meet an emergency. This bold action allowed the 5th MEB to embed the fully-equipped 11th MEU, to recall Marines already deployed to the Gulf region, and to assimilate intelligence, combat support, aviation, and communications assets from the east coast, Hawaii, and the Reserves.

On 8 November, orders went out to 890 Reservists to report for active duty with

the 5th MEB, and 883 swiftly answered the call.* Most Reservists reported to their local drill sites for two days of processing before they moved on to Camp Pendleton to be absorbed into the MEB. Reservists began arriving at Oceanside on 15 November. There were reconnaissance Marines from Nevada; tankers, light armored infantry, anti-aircraft gunners, intelligence specialists, and a helicopter squadron from California; an infantry company from New York; an attack helicopter squadron from Georgia; antitank gunners from Louisiana; combat engineers from West Virginia; truckers from Texas; aviation support personnel from Massachusetts; and support engineers from Michigan. Incoming Reservists were assigned to their active duty commands within 48 hours, after which a majority attended a four-day, Southwest Asia training program run by the School of Infantry.[110]

Brigadier General Rowe was a little uneasy at first about the state of Reserve readiness, but he soon found the Reservists to be highly motivated individuals who asked only to serve their country and to be accepted as fellow Marines by their active-duty counterparts. He felt they were devoted, enthusiastic, intelligent, and skilled in their primary military specialties. He favorably compared them to the British territorial soldiers activated for the Boer War described by Rudyard Kipling who, "when they heard the bugle call, their regiment did not have to search to find them."[111] General Rowe noted that the major operational difficulty turned out to be familiarizing Reserve units with the 5th MEB's standard operating procedures. Colonel Drake Trumpe stated the Reserves were "outstanding" and that their smooth transition from civilian life to military life validated the Total Force concept instituted after the Vietnam Conflict. The integration of the Reserves was so successful that Colonel Randolph A. Gangle, RLT 5's commanding officer, reported that by the time the MEB arrived in the Gulf he could not tell the regulars from the Reservists.[112]

Although the Reserve call-up went very smoothly overall, there were a few glitches. One problem had to do with Reserve pay. All Reserve units encountered difficulties in transitioning from the Reserve Manpower and Management Pay System to the Joint Uniform Military Pay Systems. This caused financial hardships for both the Reservists and their families. This problem reared its ugly head when many Reservists had to cancel pre-planned family allotments while on their way to the combat zone. General Rowe was made aware of the pay problem while in Hawaii. It turned out the only way for some Reservists to enjoy an evening's liberty was for their officers to cash personal checks for $150 and then loan this money to needy Marines. He solved the problem by arranging with the paymaster to have $50 emergency pay advances available the next day. However, he could do little about other Reserve concerns. Some reservists felt valuable time was wasted on administrative matters that had already been dealt with at their home drill sites. Most Reserve unit commanders would have preferred to

*One I&I said that after the local media reported three Reservists would be unable to deploy, the Marine Corps Reserve Center was swamped by volunteers who were thanked for their patriotism but had to be gently turned away.

bring their own well-maintained unit equipment instead of inheriting marginally acceptable remain-behind equipment at Camp Pendleton.[113]

On 19 November, the highly trained and well-equipped 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, by then designated special operations capable, was embedded into the 5th MEB. This was an arrangement whereby the 11th MEU(SOC) was placed under Brigadier General Rowe's operational control, but would be ready to break away within 12 hours for independent operations. To accomplish this only the MEU and its equipment was embarked on board the five ships of PhibRon 1. The MEU's command element was integrated into the 5th MEB command element; Battalion Landing Team 3/1 (BLT 3/1) was assigned to the ground combat element; Marine Composite Helicopter Squadron 268 (HMM(C)-268) was assigned to the aviation combat element; and MEU Service Support Group 11 (MSSG 11) became the backbone of BSSG 5. The final pieces of the activation puzzle fell into place after the 5th MEB sailed from the west coast. A complete helicopter squadron, as well as much needed communications equipment and intelligence specialists, joined the 5th MEB when it arrived in Hawaii.

Force Structure

The 5th MEB command element was composed of the commanding general and his staff, augmented by intelligence and communications specialists and a military police detachment. The headquarters staff was assigned to Headquarters and Service Company commanded by Major Clifton R. Weyeneth. Incorporation of the 11th MEU(SOC) command element provided a solid, well-trained staff to augment the existing under-manned headquarters staff. The 1st Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Group (1st SRIG) in Saudi Arabia was tasked to return enough Marines to form 5th Surveillance, Reconnaissance Intelligence, and Support Group (SRISG 5), including detachments from 1st Radio Battalion, 9th Communications Battalion, 4th Force Reconnaissance Company, and a military police detachment. The 5th MEB command element mustered 472 personnel.[114]

Regimental Landing Team 5 was a very diverse unit. The 5th Marines (Reinforced) became the nucleus of the ground combat element. Both of its organic rifle battalions and an attached artillery battalion were earmarked for deployment. Most of the combat support units that rounded out the landing team, however, were provided by the Selected Marine Corps Reserve. The crucial third maneuver battalion and its organic combat support units came from the 11th MEU. This addition greatly enhanced the combat power and capabilities of the 5th MEB because Battalion Landing Team 3/1 was fully manned, well trained, possessed all necessary equipment and combat support units, and had just completed a rigorous training cycle before being certified "special operations capable."

Colonel Gangle's landing team included: Headquarters Company; 2d Battalion, 5th Marines; 3d Battalion, 5th Marines; 3d Battalion, 1st Marines; 2d Battalion, 11th Marines; a composite reconnaissance company from 1st and 4th Reconnaissance Battalions; Company A, 4th Tank Battalion; Company A, 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion; Company A, 4th Light Armored Infantry Battalion;

Company F, 2d Battalion, 25th Marines; TOW Platoon, Headquarters Company, 23d Marines; Company B, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion; Company A, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion; and the 5th/6th Truck Platoons, 6th Motor Transport Battalion. The ground combat element included 4,732 Marines.[115]

It was a tough haul forming MAG-50 because so many aviation units had already deployed with MAG-70 in August and September as part of the 7th MEB. Marine Aircraft Group 39 had been alerted in late August that MAG-50 would be deploying to the Gulf as part of 5th MEB. MAG-50's staff was assembled and plans were being initiated when the orders were changed. The staff stood down and was embedded into MAG-39. Most of the personnel, aircraft, and equipment originally earmarked for MAG-50 was absorbed by MAG-70, including HMLA-369, HMLA-367, VMO-2, and MALS-39. The month ended with Col Randall L. West assuming command of the skeletal aircraft group.

General Rowe later cited Colonel West with doing "yeoman work, pulling things together" to create Marine Aircraft Group 50.[116] West was a 42-year-old "Mustang," a former enlisted Marine, who flew A-6 Intruders over Vietnam in 1970 and commanded HMA-269 when the unit received the Chief of Naval Operation's Safety Award and was selected Marine Corps Helicopter Squadron of the Year in 1983. In early October, he was sent a warning order to be prepared to stand up MAG-50 for deployment to the Persian Gulf sometime between 1 December and 31 January. The initial equipment survey indicated that only one unserviceable AH-1W was assigned to HMLA-169, two AH-1Js were being modified to "W" status, one new production AH-1W was in the pipeline from Bell Textron, and one test aircraft could be transferred back to operational status when the deployment order arrived.

Despite the bleak outlook, MAG-50 was quickly brought up to combat-ready status. Colonel West gathered all of the remaining aviation assets of MAG-39 at Camp Pendleton, embedded the 11th MEU's aviation element, brought in a Reserve AH-1J Sea Cobra squadron from Atlanta, arranged to pick up a CH-46 Sea Knight squadron in Hawaii, and added other bits and pieces, including an AV-8B Harrier II detachment. Detachment C, MASS-6, flew in to train with RLT 5 at Twentynine Palms; HMA-773 arrived from Atlanta with 14 AH-1Js; HMM(C)-268 was embedded; and HMLA-169 was brought up to strength. New equipment was added as well. Loran precision navigation sets were mounted in all aircraft except the CH-53Es, which carried Omega Doppler radar, and the Harriers, which mounted inertial navigation systems. Five global positioning systems were distributed, one to each squadron. One UH-1N mounted a Night Eagle forward-looking infrared radar laser designator to direct Hellfire missiles from the air. Flash suppressors were attached to allow firing of .50-caliber machine guns while flying with night vision goggles, laser boresight devices sighted 20mm cannon on the gunships, finger and lip lights were installed, and 16 new Cobra helmets were issued.

When the 5th MEB deployed MAG-50's headquarters included detachments from Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3 (MWHS-3), Marine Air Control Group 38 (MACG-38), Marine Air Control Squadron 7 (MACS-7), Marine

Aviation Logistics Squadron 39 (MALS-39), Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24 (MALS-24), Marine Wing Communications Squadron 38 (MWCS-38), and provisional rotary- and fixed-wing Marine wing support detachments. The operational units included Marine Medium Composite Helicopter Squadron 268; Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169 (HMLA-169); Marine Reserve Attack Helicopter Squadron 773 (HMA-773); Detachment B, Marine Attack Squadron 513 (VMA-513); Detachment A, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466; Battery A, 3d Light Antiaircraft Defense Battalion; and Marine Wing Support Squadron 372 (MWSS-372). Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265 (HMM-265) later joined the 5th MEB in Hawaii and Detachment A, Marine Reserve Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772 with four RH-53D Sea Stallions was attached in March 1991 after the break-out of the 11th MEU(SOC) left the 5th MEB without heavy-lift aircraft.* The aviation combat element had 1,928 Marines when it arrived in the North Arabian Sea.[117]

The most critical shortages were in the combat service support element. Brigade Service Support Group 5 could muster just over 600 people. This was only about one-fifth of the nearly 3,000 personnel normally assigned to a BSSG and caused Brigadier General Rowe to describe his combat service support element as "more like a reinforced MSSG than a full-blown BSSG."[118] To offset this shortfall, General Rowe planned to rely on sea-based logistics, but that meant that the 5th MEB would require substantial outside logistics support if it was deployed ashore for any length of time. Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lupton of the 11th MEU(SOC) was selected to command BSSG 5 as his MEU Service Support Group provided more than half of the personnel and much of the equipment used by BSSG 5. Remaining BSSG 5 Marines came from the Marine Corps Reserve. The group was composed of detachments from Headquarters and Service Battalion, 1st FSSG; Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th FSSG; 1st and 4th Landing Support Battalions; 6th and 7th Motor Transport Battalions; 6th and 7th Engineer Support Battalions; Bridge Company, 6th Engineer Support Battalion; 1st and 4th Supply Battalions; 1st and 4th Maintenance Battalions; and Communications Company, 6th Communications Battalion. When the final count was done, the combat service support element numbered 613 personnel.[119]

The 5th MEB Mounts Out

While the ground combat element was busy training in the desert heat at Twentynine Palms and MAG-50 was being assembled, the 5th MEB logisticians were busy preparing for embarkation. Logistical planning centered around three vital issues: the number and type of ships that would be available; the amount and

*RH-53Ds were originally Navy mine countermeasures variants of the Sea Stallion; they had greater range, in-air refueling probes, more powerful engines, and better control systems than the CH-53Ds.

type of equipment remaining in southern California; and the amount of sustainment supplies needed to support the MEB until it could link-up with I MEF forces.* The 5th MEB was able to acquire 30- day supply for all classes except Class V, ammunition. There was insufficient ammunition on hand or in war reserve stocks, therefore the MEB was allocated only a 15-day supply. An additional 45 days of ammunition supply was to be provided by I MEF when the MEB arrived in the Persian Gulf. Unfortunately, this "15-day" ammunition supply was based on ammunition availability rates, not combat rates. In actual combat this ammunition, particularly high-value antiarmor, would likely be consumed within two to five days.[120]

A major problem was the status of the equipment which was left behind. When the 7th MEB and other units departed the west coast in August and September, they deployed with above-normal personnel and equipment allowances. Since they were headed into a potential combat zone and were not sure how ready the MPS equipment might be, they sometimes took unauthorized items with them. This created problems for General Rowe as the remain-behind heavy equipment was not only slated for use by Reserve units, but left a lot to be desired. The equipment, although undamaged, was in poor repair due to the deployment of the maintenance personnel. In addition, some of the equipment, notably the AAVs, required modification.** These modifications were made by hard-pressed Reservists who were concurrently undergoing individual and unit training. The effort by 1st FSSG (Rear) and BSSG 5 personnel to correct maintenance problems cannot be overstated.[121]

Despite the lack of training time and equipment shortfalls, the 5th MEB was ready to deploy within two weeks. By the time it sailed the MEB was one of the most diverse units in Marine Corps history. Its major subordinate elements included active-duty Marines from around the globe and Reservists from 16 units located in 11 different states, units that criss-crossed the country from California to Georgia and from Massachusetts to Texas. Had there been an award for farthest traveled, it would have been given to the Marines who flew back to California from Saudi Arabia.

When it arrived in the Persian Gulf, the 5th MEB increased the combat power of the Marine Forces Afloat by more than 40 percent. The MEB brought 7,449 Marines and its combat equipment list included 17 main battle tanks, 56 TOW missiles, 52 assault amphibians, 26 howitzers, and 18 light armored vehicles. The aviation combat element included virtually all of the non-allocated attack aircraft left in the United States, six Harriers and 20 Sea Cobras, as well as the all of the available utility and heavy-lift helicopters, 12 Hueys and eight Sea Stallions.[122]

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*See section, Retrograde and Departure, for a detailed discussion of available transport.

**The AAVs required GPS installation for desert navigation and their main armaments were upgraded; 5th MEB Staff intvw.

Operation Eastern Exit

Crisis in the Horn of Africa

Although Operation Desert Shield received the lion's share of the media coverage, the Persian Gulf was not the only trouble spot in Central Command's area of operations. A second regional emergency occurred in the famine-stricken country of Somalia where long-festering internal strife burst into full-scale civil war. This fighting threatened American civilians and other foreign nationals and became an international crisis. The American response demonstrated the flexibility of a forward-deployed, combat-ready amphibious force when a contingency Marine air-ground task force from the 4th MEB conducted a daring night helicopter evacuation. This operation, codenamed Eastern Exit, was so well executed that it was described as "flawless" by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Alfred Gray.[123]

Somalia is located in the tip of the arid Horn of Africa, about 1,500 miles southwest of the Strait of Hormuz. Mogadishu, the capital city, is situated on the Indian Ocean about midway down Somalia's east coast. Unrest had plagued Somalia since octogenarian President Mohammed Siad Barre ousted the constitutional government in 1969. In the intervening 21 years his military regime became increasingly unpopular and more repressive. In December 1990, a rebel force led by General Mohammed Farah Aideed had pushed Barre's forces back into Mogadishu. Afraid that innocents might be harmed by spillover fighting, U.S. Ambassador James K. Bishop recommended American civilians and non-essential embassy personnel leave Mogadishu. One hundred and ten of them departed within two weeks. The emergency seemed to abate for a couple of weeks, but after 30 December fighting broke out once again. On 1 January, Ambassador Bishop cabled the State Department and requested permission to evacuate the embassy. Soon, a contingency Marine air-ground task force from the 4th MEB was ordered to conduct a non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) to rescue the remaining Americans.

Such operations are a modern extension of the traditional use of Marines to protect American lives and property overseas. One of three MAGTF stability missions, a NEO is tactically similar to an amphibious withdrawal except the unarmed civilians are unable to protect themselves as a military force could.* During a typical evacuation, amphibious ships, maintaining positions well beyond the visual horizon to mask their locations and intentions, launch a heliborne force consisting of a forward command element, a security element, and an evacuation control team. After landing, the security force isolates one or more landing zones and protects those awaiting evacuation. Evacuees are screened at an evacuation control center (ECC) then they are flown out of an ever-contracting cordon until

*These three missions are: support friendly governments; protect American lives and property; and conduct non-combatant evacuations.

the last elements of the rear guard are airborne. Although this procedure appears simple, it is actually a complex operation requiring detailed planning, stringent inter-Service cooperation, split-second timing, iron-willed discipline, great flexibility, and rapid execution. Non-combatant evacuation operations have become a Marine Corps specialty since the closing days of the Vietnam War and are so important that all Marine expeditionary units slated for forward deployment practice non-combatant evacuations before being certified special operations capable.*

Command and Control

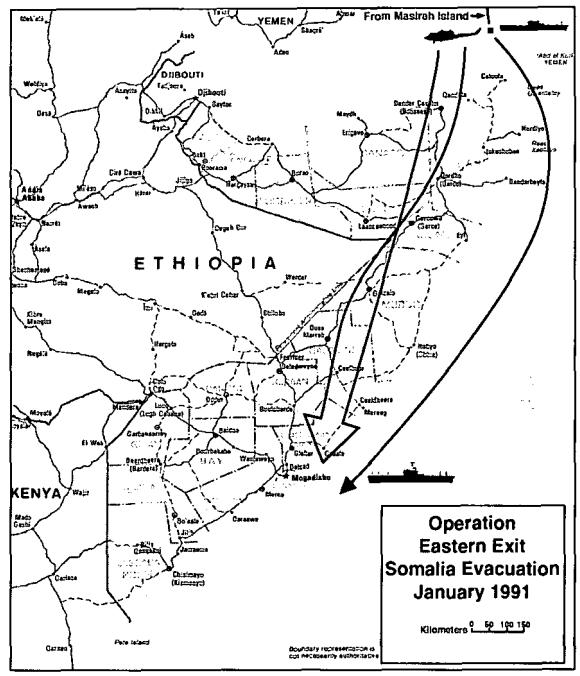
The United States has a well-established chain of command to deal with international emergencies. The President, the Secretary of Defense, or their designated subordinates are the decision-making entities at the strategic level. Unified commanders-in-chief are the operational level commanders. They issue specific missions to their component commanders and designate forces to be used. Specially appointed task force or task group commanders are in tactical control of operations. As in all amphibious operations, a non-combatant evacuation begins with an initiating directive which states the mission, specifies the area of operations, and names the amphibious task force and landing force commanders.

In the case of Somalia, Secretary of State James A. Baker III presented Ambassador Bishop's request to President George Bush on 2 January 1991. President Bush concurred and the American Embassy was ordered closed. As Somalia was within Central Command's area of operations, General Schwarzkopf was tasked to render assistance. His initial options included: moving Air Force combat, transport, and support aircraft to Mogadishu Airport; deploying an amphibious task group from the North Arabian Sea; or using Special Operations Command assets from Saudi Arabia.

The original plan, based on rather sketchy information, envisioned establishing a forward base in Kenya. Central Command was to provide a forward command element, support personnel, and Air Force C-130 transports, gunships, and aerial refuelers. Marine Lockheed KC-130 Hercules aerial tankers from the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing at Bahrain were also alerted. It was first believed that there were fewer than 50 Americans in Mogadishu and that no more than 100 people altogether needed evacuation. Using this information, planners hoped all evacuees could be lifted out by two Sikorsky CH-53E heavy-lift helicopters which would land briefly at Mogadishu, then continue on to Kenya.[124]

On 2 January, General Schwarzkopf ordered Admiral Arthur to launch Operation Eastern Exit to rescue those trapped in the diplomatic compound at Mogadishu. Admiral Arthur then transmitted initiating directives to Major

*In 1975 Marine forces afloat in WestPac successfully evacuated Phnom Penh, Cambodia (Operation Eagle Pull) and Saigon, Republic of Vietnam (Operation Frequent Wind); Colonel Alfred M. Gray, Jr., commanded the ground combat element, RLT 4, of the evacuation force.



General Jenkins and Admiral LaPlante, who in turn forwarded them to their respective subordinate element commanders. For the 4th MEB this was Colonel James J. Doyle, Jr., on board the *Trenton*. Colonel Doyle, the commanding officer of BSSG 4, was appointed landing force commander and was directed to move to the *Guam* at Masirah anchorage. On board the *Guam* he would take charge of the 4th MEB alternate, or Bravo, command group. Captain Alan B. Moser, USN, Commander, Amphibious Squadron 6 (PhibRon 6), was named commander of the amphibious task force. He and part of his staff left an amphibious planning conference at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and flew to Masirah to join Colonel Doyle and his command group on board the *Guam*.

The Evacuation Force

The amphibious task group was a two-ship flotilla from PhibGru 2. Four different ship mixes were considered, but only the *Guam* and the *Trenton* could be spared for the voyage to Somalia without seriously degrading naval forces needed in the Persian Gulf. The Marine component was an unnumbered contingency Marine air-ground task force. Contingency MAGTFs were created units, usually smaller than MEUs, formed for a specific mission. As all MAGTFs, this one had a command element, a ground combat element, an aviation combat element, and a combat service support element.

The command element was composed of about one-third of the 4th MEB Headquarters reinforced by detachments from 8th Communications Battalion, 2d Radio Battalion, and 2d Force Reconnaissance Company. The ground combat element, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert P. McAleer, consisted of a headquarters detachment, Company C, and a weapons company detachment from

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-11243

CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters of HMM-365 hug the edge of the Nassau*'s flight deck as a Marine AV-8B takes off. Twelve of the squadron's helicopters were assigned to the Somalian evacuation force.*

Battalion Landing Team 1/2 (BLT 1/2). Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Wallace, commanding officer of HMM-263, commanded the aviation combat element which included 12 CH-46Es from HMM-263, 12 CH-46Es from HMM-365, 2 UH-1Ns from HMLA-269, and 2 CH-53Es from HMH-461. Major William N. Saunder, executive officer of BSSG 4, commanded the combat service support element. It included a headquarters detachment, a military police platoon, a landing support detachment, and a medical/dental section.

There was a wide variety of support units earmarked for Eastern Exit. Seven provisional rifle platoons—made up of personnel from the command element, the aviation combat element, and the combat service support element—were organized in case a reserve reaction force was needed. Naval Special Warfare Team 8-F (SEAL Team 8-F) supported the ground combat element. Additional support included KC-130 tankers from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadrons 252 and 352 at Bahrain; the Marine Security Guard detachment at Mogadishu; and U.S. Air Force AC-130 Spectre gunships and HC-130 Hercules refuelers from the 1st Special Operations Wing in Saudi Arabia.

Predeployment Issues

Many factors made an embarked Marine air-ground task force the ideal force for Operation Eastern Exit. An amphibious task group operating out of sight from land can move into a crisis area without revealing its exact strength, intentions, or location. All MAGTFs can rapidly enter and exit an objective area at night or during adverse weather and operate from over-the-horizon without electronic emissions. Joint operations posed no problem as the 4th MEB and PhibGru 2 had been working together since August.

Navy and Marine staffs were collocated in the supporting arms coordination center (SACC) on board the *Guam*, instead of using separate spaces in the landing force operations center and flag plot as was standard operating procedure. This arrangement facilitated cooperation. Sharing a single room allowed information to be quickly disseminated. An added bonus was that message traffic directed to only one agency was immediately available to all interested parties. The commander of one component and the operations officer of the other, for example the CATF and his operations officer or the CLF and the operations officers, were always present in the SACC. This speeded the decision making process and enhanced rapid planning.[125]

A key component of any inter-Service venture, particularly one that is going to cover more than 1,500 miles, is communications. General Schwarzkopf dedicated a Central Command satellite communications channel to support Eastern Exit. This decision allowed long-distance direct voice contact and eased the communications burden. Communications, however, remained a problem area throughout the operation. Use of a single command and control net sometimes caused confusion. After landing, Marine communicators encountered difficulties with the PCS-3 radio, so they used embassy-supplied Motorola commercial radios instead.[126]

The major shortfall was timely intelligence. Information about the situation was often incomplete and was, in fact, sometimes contradictory. To rectify this situation, the intelligence section prepared a message that included 42 essential elements of information queries. Unfortunately, these questions could not be answered until direct communication with Mogadishu was established. The 1969 country intelligence handbook on board was of limited value since most of the information was out of date. One crucial fact missing was that the American embassy had moved from downtown Mogadishu to a new location in the late 1980s.* Luckily, a member of the BSSG 4 staff had been assigned to Mogadishu and was able to update much of the obsolete data.

Planning Operation Eastern Exit

The two-ship amphibious task group departed Masirah for Somalia at 2330 on 2 January.** The original evacuation plan was based on the mistaken assumptions that a semi-permissive environment existed in Mogadishu and that a cease fire was near. The task group was directed to sail at the best possible speed and was making about 15 knots in the early hours of 3 January. This pace, however, proved impractical when the true situation in Mogadishu was finally realized, so the ships increased speed to 22 knots.[127]

Throughout the voyage to Somalia planners constantly reviewed the situation, revised their estimates as new information came in, and created a series of contingency plans. They relied on standard operating procedures and "playbooks" developed as part of a special operations package. This allowed them to focus on mission specifics, rather than spend time working on such basic concepts as command structure. Each plan was submitted to intense scrutiny by a group called a "murder board." These reviews helped planners anticipate problems and ruthlessly exposed any weaknesses.

The staff wrestled with several tough issues. What size force should be inserted to secure the area? What aircraft mix would best meet the needs of the mission? Should the evacuation be accomplished in daylight or darkness? The insertion force would have to be large enough to protect the landing zone and control operations, but had to be small and mobile enough to depart swiftly. The helicopter mix would have to have sufficient range and lift to land the security force, yet, still be able set down in a limited landing zone.

The major issue was timing the evacuation, so the staff developed both a daylight plan and a night alternative. If there was a permissive environment, a day-

*Adam Siegel reported that this source had been periodically updated and its information was correct, but Marine reports assert it was a flawed source. (Siegel comments; 4th MEB AAR)

**Chronology can become confusing because the operation involved several different time zones; this particular reference was to 2330 Delta (1930 GMT or Zulu), the local time in Oman; all times, unless otherwise noted, are local times.

time lift would be best. Location, coordination, and landing problems would be minimized. Somali forces would see that the helicopters were on a rescue, not a combat mission, and would be unlikely to fire. There was also great concern about locating the compound. Only black-and-white 1:50,000 maps and very few photos of the compound were at hand, therefore, accurate navigation would be much easier during daylight hours.

On the other hand, night vision devices permitted operations after-dark, which offered the advantages of stealth and surprise. The main dangers to an after dark evacuation were unknown navigation hazards, locating the landing zone, and the possibility of being mistaken for an assault force if suddenly discovered. A major problem would be landing helicopters into a small, unfamiliar, poorly marked, sand-covered landing zone during blackout conditions.

The decision to land at night was made as a result of the reports emanating from the embassy. Armed bands were trying to breach the compound wall, rocket-propelled grenades were striking in and around the compound, and the undisciplined soldiers of both sides seemed trigger-happy and unreasonable. Attempts by Ambassador Bishop to negotiate a cease fire were thwarted because no single agency could control the various armed forces inside the city. This last consideration settled the issue: the evacuation would be conducted under cover of darkness.

Colonel Doyle's first option had been to fly the CH-53s from Masirah to Mogadishu, then lift the evacuees to Mombasa. A second plan called for the CH-53s to fly almost 900 miles from the ships to Mogadishu. Both plans were complex, requiring at least four aerial refuelings and a minimum of sixteen hours in the air. There was also great uncertainty about the tactical situation in Mogadishu. The final plan, dictated by events, was two-staged. The first phase would be a night reinforcement mission by CH-53s to stabilize the situation in Mogadishu. This would be followed by the main evacuation, a ferry operation by CH-46s, after the task group arrived off the coast of Somalia.

The Situation in Mogadishu

By the time the decision to evacuate was made President Barre had taken refuge at the airport and was besieged by rebel forces. This obviated an airlift using fixed-wing transports for evacuation, a fact that became readily apparent after attempts to withdraw foreign civilians in this manner failed. Some Americans at the Office of Military Coordination, located about a quarter-mile from the diplomatic compound, were isolated. Ambassador Bishop did not feel they could safely move to the embassy at that time, so he ordered them to stay put. A short time later the embassy became untenable when gangs of looters attacked using small arms and rocket-propelled grenades. The situation was so fluid that within 24 hours an immediate amphibious evacuation had suddenly become the only practical option.

The fighting jeopardized all foreign civilians, not just Americans. Egyptian and European attempts to secure a cease fire or to arrange the evacuation of inno-

cent civilians failed when their appeals to stop the fighting fell on deaf ears. After Soviet and Italian evacuation attempts failed, diplomats and private citizens began seeking the safety of the American diplomatic compound. This trickle became a flood after the arrival of Marine helicopters.

On 4 January, Ambassador Bishop reported the compound was under siege and that looters were trying to scale the walls. When they threatened the security of the compound Bishop asked if paratroopers could be landed to defnd the embassy but was told that was not practical. Although looters penetrated the compound and entered an open recreational area, they were held in check by a 30-man Somali security force led by Robert Noble, a former British Special Air Service soldier.

The embassy had a five-man Marine security guard detachment. These Marines were stationed inside the chancery to safeguard classified material and provide close-in protection of embassy personnel. Although many people believe otherwise, Marine security guard detachments are charged with only internal security, not embassy defense. Security guard detachments are not manned, organized, or equipped for sustained defensive operations. Protection of diplomatic compounds is most often negotiated as part of a host nation agreement; hence, this mission is usually the responsibility of host nation police forces or a locally hired security force.

Super Stallions to the Rescue

In response to Ambassador Bishop's strong plea the task group increased its speed to 22 knots. Even at full speed, however, the ships could not be made to close on Mogadishu fast enough to rescue the civilians inside the embattled U.S. diplomatic compound. Two CH-53Es Super Stallions cross-decked from the *Trenton* to the *Guam* in the late afternoon and remained there while Colonel Doyle awaited further instructions. At about 2030 that evening the desired helicopter arrival time at Mogadishu was confirmed as 0600 the next morning. This dictated a launch from 466 nautical miles away. To do this the helicopters would have to leave the *Guam* at about 0145 on the morning of 5 January.[128]

The fly-in force was composed of a forward command element under Lieutenant Colonel Willard D. Oates, Bravo command group's operations officer; a two-man evacuation coordination team headed by Major William N. Saunders of BSSG 4; a Marine security element commanded by Lieutenant Colonel McAleer of BLT 1/2; and a nine-man Navy SEAL team. The 46-man Marine security force would augment the Somali guards and help secure a designated area of the compound, primarily the landing zone. The Evacuation Coordination Center (ECC) would screen evacuees, set evacuation priorities, organize evacuation groups, and direct them to proper embarkation points. The SEAL team would reinforce the Marine security guards at the chancery. The fly-in force was evenly distributed in numbers and capability between the two helicopters.[129]

The flight plan was an intricate one that called for the Super Stallions to land the 60-man security force in Mogadishu at the crack of dawn. This night mission

to Mogadishu was no routine flight. It would require two nighttime, over-water, in-air refuelings and an aerial rendezvous with an Air Force AC-130 gunship. This required exceptional pilot skill, precise dead-reckoning navigation, and split-second timing.

It is an old Marine saying, "the best plans go awry as soon as the line of departure is crossed." This axiom certainly proved true during Operation Eastern Exit. The Super Stallions launched without incident at about 0147 but trouble soon arose. Their Omega navigation systems relied on triangulation signals from three separate ground stations for a precise position, but the CH-53s were flying through a dead space and could receive no signals. Because the Omegas could not give accurate readings, the pilots used a combination of dead reckoning, positive control from the amphibious task group, and pathfinding by KC-130s for accurate navigation.

The most difficult part of the flight was making the planned rendezvous with KC-130 tankers. Two night refuelings were planned. The first was scheduled about one and one-half hours into the journey. This was done so the helicopters could return to their ships if refueling was unsuccessful. The second refueling, timed to take place about three hours after departure, would give the helicopters sufficient gas to locate the embassy, land, and begin their return trip.

The first rendezvous was accomplished using night vision goggles (NVGs). Both CH-53 copilots were wearing NVGs and were able to spot the incoming KC-130s easily. Unfortunately, the KC-130s did not possess NVG capability and had difficulty seeing the CH-53s from a distance. The Super Stallions were flying with running lights on but had to use their search lights to alert the KC-130s as to their exact positions. Aerial refueling was tricky because these tankers and helicopters had never worked together before. In fact, the Super Stallion crews had not practiced aerial refueling since their initial deployment more than five months earlier.

The first attempt almost resulted in an aborted mission. The lead CH-53 sprung a fuel leak in the cargo compartment while refueling. The pilot quickly disengaged to allow the crew chief to locate and repair the leak. A loose fitting was tightened and refueling continued; however, some passengers had been sprayed with fuel. Two had been thoroughly soaked. About an hour before landfall the second refueling was accomplished without incident.

Another mission glitch occurred when the AC-130, which had been detailed to provide suppressive fire if needed, could not be located.* As the CH-53s approached the coast, the pilots stopped electronic emissions and shut off all exterior lights. This made establishing contact difficult so the Super Stallions continued the mission without their Spectre escort. They went in only three minutes behind schedule, a remarkable achievement. At the initial entry point, the huge helicopters swooped low in the dusky sky to avoid radar that could alert antiair-

*This aircraft had departed the area to refuel but could not contact the incoming Marines because it was forced to maintain radio silence as part of the ECM plan.

craft batteries of their unexpected approach. The search for the embassy took some time because none of the pilots were familiar with the area, their maps did not accurately reflect Mogadishu's recent urban sprawl, and landmarks were difficult to see from only 100 feet above ground in the hazy conditions of first light.

The Marines Arrive

After about a 15-minute search the compound was finally spotted. This was no small task because visual terminal control consisted of only one infrared strobe light which was almost invisible in daylight. Despite this handicap, the helicopters spotted the landing zone after a search and landed at about 0620. Former Marine Mike Shanklin, the embassy's commercial officer, assisted the landing by waving a white sheet in the landing zone. Debarking Marines unloaded their equipment, then fanned out into defensive positions.

Like the cavalry in a western movie, the Marines had arrived in time to save the day. Startled attackers fled the compound area when the Super Stallions unexpectedly appeared overhead. The evacuees were certain that they would have been harmed had it not been for the Marines' timely arrival.[130]

Lieutenant Colonel Oates held a quick conference with Ambassador Bishop, then directed the security forces to their assigned stations. The command element, the forward air controller, and the evacuation control team set up in the joint administrative office and the chancery. The SEAL team assumed defensive positions at the chancery. The Marines of Company C, BLT 1/2 manned the southern and western perimeter. Shortly thereafter, an AC-130 arrived on station over Mogadishu. The Spectre was prepared to deliver fire support and use its sensors to warn of potential threats and other events inside the city.*

The Super Stallions lingered in the landing zone for about an hour while 61 civilians loaded on board. Passengers included the deputy American ambassador, the ambassadors from Nigeria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the charge d'affaires of Oman. The CH-53s departed at about 0700 to return to the *Guam,* which was then in the Indian Ocean more than 400 miles away. During the final refueling on the way out, the helicopters had difficulty maintaining probe connections due to a faulty tanker drogue. This slowed the refueling process and forced one helicopter to take on only about half of the desired amount of fuel. There was some talk of aborting the mission, but the helicopters continued their return flight.

The ride to safety was reassuring but uncomfortable for the civilians, most of whom were clad only in light tropical clothing. The combat-configured helicopters had window panels removed to allow door gunners to man .50-caliber machine guns. The passenger compartments were, therefore, exposed to low tem-

*This AC-130H Spectre was armed with two 20mm cannon, a 40mm gun, a 105mm howitzer, and mounted multiple intelligence gathering sensors.

peratures and wind chill when the Super Stallions sped along at an altitude of about 6,000 feet. Once out of danger, the aircrews tried their best to make the passengers comfortable. They offered words of reassurance, passed out the few available blankets, and entertained children by making funny faces and letting them blow the emergency whistles on their life jackets. During the ride to the *Guam* the grateful evacuees thanked the Marines profusely.

Back on board ship the CH-53 crews and U.S. diplomatic personnel were immediately debriefed, after which the diplomats helped screen the embarked civilians. Some of the civilians needed medical attention, others needed clothing, and a few could not speak English. These tasks were normally accomplished at the Evacuation Control Center prior to evacuation, however, the two-man ECC at the embassy had been overcome by events. Instead of delaying the flight for administrative purposes, ECC personnel wisely loaded as many people on the home-bound flight as they could after only cursory preliminary screening.*

After debriefing the Marine flight crews, a planned second CH-53 flight was scrubbed. The second mission was supposed to carry 40 more Marines—27 evacuation center personnel and a 13-man rifle squad—to the compound. The decision to scrap this mission was made because of crew fatigue and stabilization of the situation in Mogadishu.**

Inside the Compound

The 160-acre U.S. diplomatic compound at Mogadishu was the largest in sub-Saharan Africa. It was located on Afgoi Road, about three miles north of the airport. The entire compound, which included a nine-hole golf course, was far too large to be defended at every point, so an 18-acre, built-up area became the focal point of the Marine defenses. The designated area included most of the buildings and the primary helicopter landing zone.

A sandy open area, boxed on three sides by embassy buildings, was selected as the primary helicopter landing zone (HLZ). The ambassador's residence was located east of the HLZ, the chancery was to the northeast, the joint administrative office building protected the HLZ's northern edge, and the Marine House was located to the west. The highest points inside the compound were the chancery roof and a centrally located water tower. The compound's wall was only about 10 feet high and was pockmarked by two-foot gaps about every 20 yards. These openings were blocked by thin iron bars to prevent entry, but allowed outsiders to rake the compound with small arms fire.

The firm hand of Ambassador Bishop guided American actions throughout the evacuation. Possessing tact, organizational skill, and situational awareness, he

*A much larger Evacuation Control Center was planned, but the need for "trigger pullers" outweighed the need for in-flight security so the bulk of the ECC was scheduled for the second wave.

**The CH-53 crews had already spent eight hours in the air and more than 16 hours on standby; two fresh pilots were available, but a two-aircraft mission required four pilots.

Photo courtesy of Col Frederick M. Lorenz, USMC

A later photo of the United States Embassy compound at Mogadishu which Marines secured during Operation Eastern Exit to provide a base for the evacuation of Americans and other foreign nationals.

proved to be the perfect man to lead the evacuation. Diplomatic emergencies were nothing new for Bishop. He had been U.S. Ambassador to Liberia and then served as director of the task force formed to manage the evacuation of embassy personnel from that west African nation during Operation Sharp Edge in 1990.[131] Bishop did not want to escalate the crisis so he decided to defend the compound and protect the evacuees using minimal force. He clearly stated the rules of engagement—Marines could fire only if armed people displaying hostile intent breached the perimeter, and then only with his permission.

Bishop directed that a J-shaped defensive perimeter be formed inside the compound to cover the southern and western sides of the HLZ and oriented toward the golf course from where intruders had fired on embassy personnel the previous day. Sniper teams were dispatched to the water tower and the roof of the chancery. From those positions they could observe the wall and engage intruders. The most dangerous threat was posed by a nearby five-story apartment building known as K-7. It towered over the embassy buildings and afforded a vantage point to anyone on the upper stories or the roof. The building had housed some embassy workers, but was evacuated when conditions deteriorated. Armed men were spotted atop K-7, but no shots came from that direction. A Marine sniper team, consisting of a spotter and a shooter, was posted on the water tower but drew fire and was withdrawn at Ambassador Bishop's direction.

Sporadic small arms fire echoed throughout the city. Some rounds impacted inside the compound, but they did not seem to be directed at specific targets inside the compound. Most of the shooting was done by teenage brigands cruising the streets of Mogadishu in pickup trucks.[132] Except for some short forays into town, the American forces remained inside the compound.

After beatings of Kenyan and Sudanese diplomatic personnel and their families by looters, Ambassador Bishop received several notes from fellow diplomats asking for refuge or rescue. Bishop's response was that diplomatic refugees were

welcome, but that the United States could not mount any rescue operations. On 5 January, Robert Noble arranged for the local militia commander, Major Sayeed, to escort several foreign diplomats, their families, and embassy staffs to the U.S. compound during a lull in the fighting.

A four-vehicle convoy carrying three Marines and six SEALs made a 20-minute run to the U.S. Office of Military Cooperation located about a quarter of a mile from the compound on the Via Mekka Highway. It brought back four Americans and 18 foreign nationals, including the ambassador from Kenya and his family. Another convoy brought 38 Russians, including the Soviet ambassador and his wife, later in the day. A similar mission brought 15 British nationals. Special arrangements with a senior Somali official freed the British ambassador and the German charge d'affaires. Unfortunately, South Korean diplomats refused Major Sayeed's escort and remained holed up in their compound instead.[133]

When night fell the embassy was well prepared for the evacuation. The late afternoon and evening hours were devoted to preparing for the upcoming helicopter operation; more than 200 people inside the compound required evacuation.. They were divided into 15-person heliteams and were assigned to one of four evacuation serials. The landing zone was marked using chemical neon lights, or Chemlites. There were five landing points, one per CH-46 in each of the scheduled landing waves. The evacuation control center, assisted by embassy personnel, did its best to identify each person but was unable to screen them for medical conditions or conduct last-minute weapons searches. Chemlites were attached to each child so they could be easily found if they wandered away in the confusion. Terrain barriers were marked as well as possible. All lights were extinguished in the compound after dark.

The Final Exit

At sea the task group sailed parallel to the Somali coast, careful to remain over the horizon, out of sight of land. On board the *Guam*, final evacuation plans were made. Four helicopter waves would be used. These waves would be flown by two flights. Thunder Flight was made up of five CH-46s from HMM-263 commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wallace, and Rugby Flight had five CH-46s from HMM-365 led by Lieutenant Colonel Robert F. Saikowski. The evacuation would be conducted after dark, under blackout conditions, using night vision goggles. Night operations were not a problem because both helicopter squadrons had been preparing for a night amphibious assault in the Persian Gulf since the previous October. Before leaving the *Guam*, Colonel Wallace reminded the pilots of the importance of accurate navigation. If they flew too far north, they would be flying over known surface-to-air missile sites and manned antiaircraft artillery positions; too far south and they would be off their maps.

Thunder Flight lifted off at about 2330 on 5 January. Although they were 30 miles from shore the pilots easily picked out Mogadishu with their NVGs. The flight crossed its initial point, the spot where the designated air corridor crossed

the coast, without incident. The Sea Knights then descended to 100 feet and slowed to 80 knots as they searched for the embassy. Colonel Wallace wisely decided to keep extra distance between the helicopters because of uncertainty about the exact size and nature of the landing zone.

Although some fires burned inside Mogadishu and a few lights created some ground clutter, operational conditions were described as "excellent."[134] The embassy was blacked out except for an HLZ strobe and Chemlites that marked utility poles, trees, and a small building. The first Sea Knight set down inside the compound at about 2343. Unfortunately, the landing zone was more confined than expected, and the whirling rotor blades created a total brownout by kicking up sand and loose debris. This was dangerous because incoming pilots had to land without accurate reference to the ground or other aircraft. As soon as the dust settled the first evacuees moved to the landing zone and began boarding the waiting helicopters.

The first two waves went well but, as Thunder Flight took to the air for the second time, radio silence was broken to announce there was trouble inside the compound. The circling AC-130 reported that an SA-2 surface-to-air missile radar had been activated. While this news caused some alarm it did not stop the evacuation.[135] The mission was being conducted under combat conditions so this information had little impact on helicopter operations. Flying at low altitude and slow airspeeds prevented the radars from acquiring the incoming helicopters. Had the Somalis opened fire, the AC-130 lurking above would have destroyed them immediately. Evacuees reported the blacked-out helicopters were practically invisible, so well-aimed antiaircraft fire was a very slim possibility. Inbound aircrews, however, took prudent steps such as reviewing flight control transfer procedures and making final weapons checks.

Inside the embassy things were not going well. Major Sayeed, the Somali militiaman responsible for rescuing several diplomats earlier in the day, entered the embassy's front gate carrying a hand-held radio and an armed hand grenade. He threatened to order his men to begin shooting helicopters out of the sky if "unauthorized violation" of Somali airspace was not stopped immediately. Ambassador Bishop eventually purchased his goodwill with cash and his choice of the vehicles in the parking lot. Although soothed, Major Sayeed refused to leave the compound. He stayed to watch the evacuation and his forces did not interfere with operations.[136]

Ambassador Bishop, the remaining embassy staff, and the Marine security guards were assigned to the third departure wave, but the incident at the front gate delayed the takeoff. Only four of the five helicopters in the third wave loaded up and returned to the ship. This disrupted what had been a smooth operation up to that point. The final departure wave was delayed when an alert crew chief spotted two Marines still in the compound. As it turned out, two communicators almost missed the pickup because they did not realize this was the last flight out. At about 0300 the last two helicopters closed on the *Guam* and the evacuation was declared complete at 0343 on 6 January.

Finale

The evacuees stayed on the *Guam* until daylight because Captain Moser prudently decided not to risk further night operations. The next morning 59 evacuees were transferred to the *Trenton* for the return voyage. The evacuees came from 31 countries and included diplomats from Great Britain, Germany, Kenya, Kuwait, Nigeria, Oman, the Soviet Union, Sudan, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. The ships' crews provided hot meals and spare clothes.

There were no American casualties but some evacuees needed medical attention. The Sudanese ambassador's wife was nine months pregnant. In the chaos preceding the evacuation, one evacuee had been shot and another had been stabbed. On 10 January, the total number of evacuees increased to 282 when Abrahim Mohammed Ahmed Musallem Abograin was delivered by caesarean section on board the *Guam.*

On 11 January, the amphibious task group arrived at Muscat, Oman. Before disembarking, Ambassador Bishop addressed the sailors and Marines of the amphibious task group. In a moving speech he commended them for their professionalism and thanked them for their compassion, and he concluded by noting that "few of us would have been alive [without] your extraordinary efforts...we will take a part of each of you with us for the rest of our lives."[137] Operation Eastern Exit was officially over, the mission had been accomplished.

Soon after the last American helicopter departed, the compound gates were blasted open and the embassy was sacked by looters. They smashed what they could not carry off and left the once beautiful compound in ruins. Between 5 and

A port view of the Guam *(LPH 9) underway shows the amphibious assault ship which served as the flagship of the contingency Marine air-ground task force and carried the evacuees from Somalia to Oman.*

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-92-07209

12 January, Italian planes and ships evacuated more than 800 foreign nationals and French ships picked up about 100 more.* On the 17th, Mohammed Said Barre, the octogenarian dictator whose oppressive rule precipitated the crisis, fled Somalia. The warring rebel factions were unable to unite and the turmoil in Somalia continued unabated. Within a year, the situation had become so bad that the United Nations requested international intervention to alleviate widespread starvation and restore order in Somalia. U.S. Marines returned to Somalia in 1992 as the vanguard of Operation Restore Hope, the U.N.-sponsored humanitarian and stability operations in that country.

Consolidation of the Marine Forces Afloat

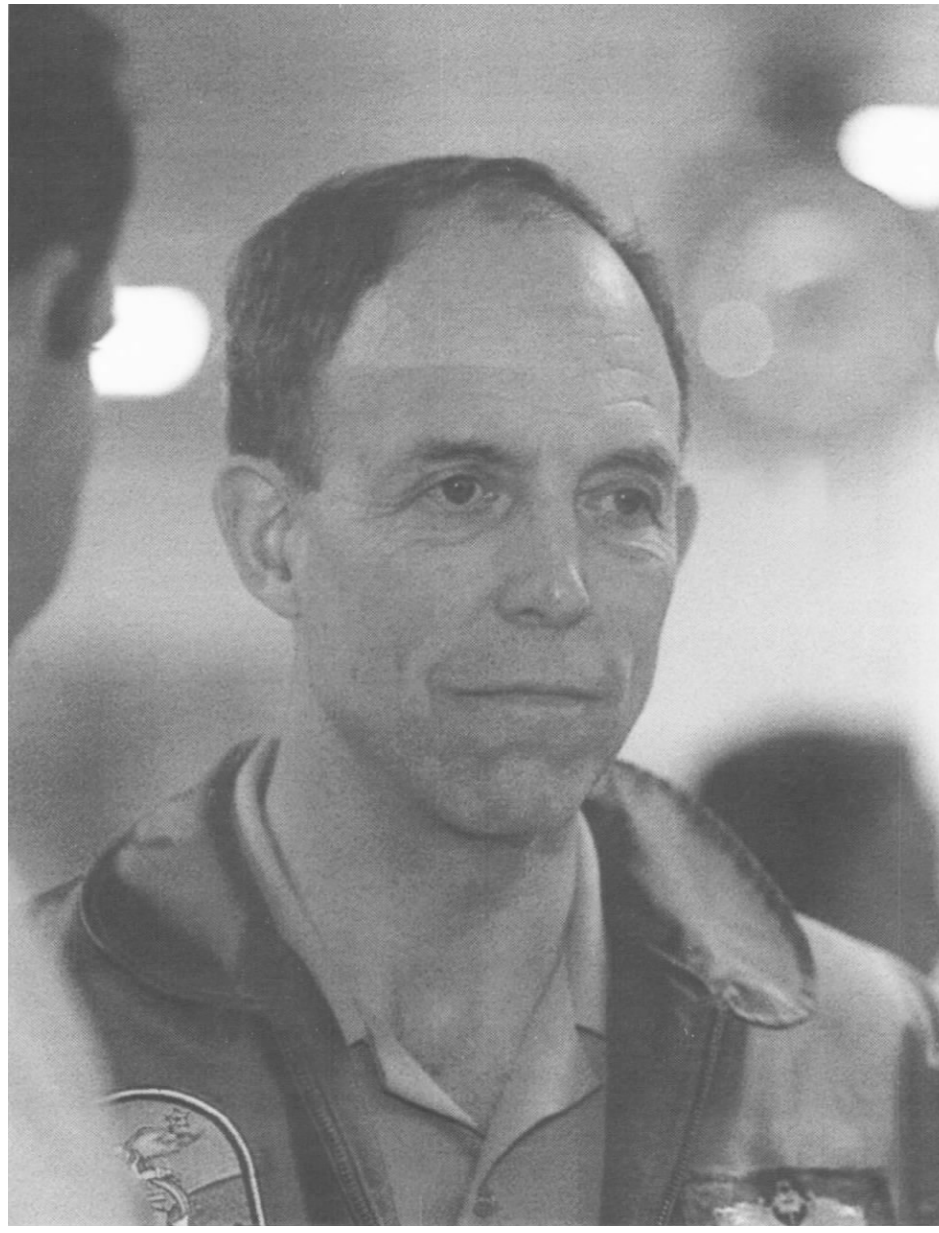
5th MEB Embarks

The formation and deployment of the 5th MEB had been contemplated intermittently from 12 August 1990, but the only firm deployment commitment was for PhibRon 1 and the 11th MEU(SOC) to get underway on or about 15 November so the MEU could replace the 13th MEU(SOC) as Landing Force Seventh Fleet in early January. This deployment was tied to an existing Navy rotation policy whereby amphibious ready groups, and their embarked Marines, remained in the Western Pacific for about six months at a time. This schedule changed on 13 October when Brigadier General Rowe received word the 5th MEB was to sail for the Persian Gulf with the 11th MEU embedded. In addition to the 11th MEU, General Rowe was to use "what was left at Camp Pendleton and Reservists" to fill out the 5th MEB. Amphibious Group 3 was to be loaded so PhibRon 1 and the 11th MEU could separate from the ATF within 12 hours if necessary.[138]

As it prepared for embarkation, the 5th MEB encountered a shipping shortage much like the one that marked the earlier embarkation of the 4th MEB. The problem was that a seaborne Marine expeditionary brigade required almost two dozen amphibious ships to carry its assault echelon, but the Navy had nowhere near that number of ships available on the west coast. After carefully studying proposed personnel and equipment lists, Marine embarkation officers figured the 5th MEB could squeeze on board 15 amphibious ships (2 LHAs, 2 LPHs, 3 LSDs, 4 LPDs, 3 LSTs, and 1 LKA).[139] The Pacific Fleet, unfortunately, had only allocated nine amphibious ships to PhibGru 3 (1 LHA, 1 LPH, 3 LSDs, 2 LPDs, 1 LST, and 1 LKA).** After many intercontinental conversations and the direct intercession of CentCom's deputy chief of staff for operations, Brigadier General Richard I.

*These updated figures, which conflict with the 4th MEB AAR, were supplied by Adam B. Siegel after an exhaustive study of Eastern Exit. (Siegel comments).

**In September, there was thought of sending a small 5th MEB and the 11th MEU(SOC) on board PhibRon 1 and the *Tarawa*, but the plan was overtaken by events in October.



Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-SC-91-07588

RAdm Stephen S. Clarey commanded Amphibious Group 3, the 13-ship group that carried the 5th MEB. PhibGru 3 conducted Exercise Sea Soldier IV, participated in combat actions during Desert Storm, and rendered humanitarian aid during Operation Sea Angel.

Neal, USMC, a Central Command amphibious planning conference held on 26 October reaffirmed the need to find more than nine amphibious ships. After two weeks of intense negotiations, conducted under the watchful eyes of General Alfred Gray and closely monitored by General Schwarzkopf through his Marine

deputies Generals Johnston and Neal, four more amphibious ships were added and three MSC ships were designated to carry sustainment supplies and some assault echelon equipment.[140]

At first, PhibGru 3 included the five-ships assigned to PhibRon 1—the helicopter assault ship USS *New Orleans* (LPH 11), the amphibious transport dock USS *Denver* (LPD 9), the landing ship dock USS *Germantown* (LSD 42), the tank landing ship USS *Peoria* (LST 1183), and the amphibious cargo ship USS *Mobile* (LKA 115)—in addition to the amphibious assault ship USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1), the dock transports USS *Juneau* (LPD 10) and USS *Vancouver* (LPD 2), and the dock landing ship USS *Mount Vernon* (LSD 39). As Admiral Clarey noted, the big shortfall in this ship mix was the need for at least one more "big deck" assault ship.[141]

By 9 November, following several compromises, Admiral Clarey had one more helicopter assault ship, an additional dock transport, and two more tank landing ships. The requested addition of the amphibious assault ship *Belleau Wood* (LHA 3) had been vetoed because it needed maintenance and would be the only LHA amphibious assault ship left on the west coast following PhibGru 3's departure. This last factor was critical as there were several potential trouble spots around the Pacific rim that might require an amphibious intervention. Instead of the *Belleau Wood*, the *Tripoli* (LPH 10) and the *Anchorage* (LSD 36) were made available, but neither was able to undergo a predeployment work-up. The tank landing ships *Frederick* (LST 1184) and *Barbour County* (LST 1195) were also included to carry AAVs. By the time it sailed, PhibGru 3—although not a "mirror image" of its east coast counterpart, PhibGru 2—numbered 13 amphibious ships.[142]

The Maritime Sealift Command's National Defense Reserve Fleet activated two Ready Reserve Force ships to augment the amphibious ships of PhibGru 3. The auxiliary crane ship USNS *Flickertail State* (T-ACS 5) carried 192 pieces of assault echelon equipment and the break-bulk combat logistics ship MV *Cape Girardeau* (T-AK 2009) carried sustainment supplies. These black-bottom ships could make 20 knots and the *Flickertail State* could conduct limited in-stream unloading. Unfortunately, they were not amphibious ships and had some limitations that affected combat readiness. They were not completely self-sustaining and could not support over-the-beach operations, nor could they maintain secure communications with the ATF while underway and lacked suitable berthing space for their embarked Marines.[143] A third ship, the cargo ship SS *Neptune Iolite* which would immediately unload in Saudi Arabia rather than accompany the ATF, was also scheduled to carry some 5th MEB sustainment supplies.

Admiral Clarey noted another problem with the make-up of PhibGru 3. There was no specified airborne mine counter-measures (AMCM) platform from which to operate U.S. Navy MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters needed for undersea mine clearing operations. This shortfall became a problem for the ATF when the dock transport *Dubuque* departed the Persian Gulf in November. Admiral Clarey at first hoped to include the dock transport *Duluth* (LPD 6) as the designated AMCM platform, but the *Duluth* was needed for other operations. When informed of this,

Admiral Clarey nominated the command ship *LaSalle*, a converted *Raleigh*-class LPD serving as the U.S. Middle East Force flagship, to become the designated AMCM helicopter platform. This issue was still unresolved when PhibGru 3 sailed from San Diego.[144]

Another issue was the sail date of PhibGru 3 and the 5th MEB from the United States. The original sail date for PhibRon 1 and the 11th MEU had been 15 November which allowed for an early January arrival in the North Arabian Sea. This plan was placed on hold when it was decided to embed the 11th MEU into the 5th MEB. Admiral Arthur wanted PhibGru 3 to sail on or about 1 December to allow for an early turnover of Amphibious Ready Group A/Landing Force Seventh Fleet duties, but General Gray and Vice Admiral James F. Dorsey, Jr., Commander, Third Fleet, felt a later date would increase predeployment training time and enhance combat readiness. This issue was put to rest when the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the 5th MEB and PhibGru 3 to be on station and ready for combat in the Persian Gulf by 15 January, the U.N. deadline for Saddam Hussein to pull his troops out of Kuwait. This decision established the final sail date as 1 December.[145]

Like the 4th MEB earlier, the 5th MEB had precious little time to get ready to deploy. The major difference was that the 5th MEB would be arriving in the Gulf at about the same time as offensive actions were slated to begin. This meant that the 5th MEB had to combat load because there would be little or no opportunity to reconfigure ship loads on the way. Again, much like the 4th MEB, the 5th MEB had to load from multiple sea ports of departure. Most of the amphibious ships loaded at San Diego and the rest loaded at Long Beach. The MSC ships loaded at Port Hueneme.

On 1 December, the largest amphibious group to sail from the west coast since the Vietnam deployment in 1965 slipped over the horizon and began its voyage to the Persian Gulf.[146] In his final pre-sail report, a statement that later turned out to be prophetic, Brigadier General Rowe informed General Gray that while the 5th MEB was ready for any contingency, it was poorly equipped for sustained operations ashore because it lacked sufficient line haul transportation and had inadequate communications and cryptographic equipment.

Training in Transit

Two of General Rowe's greatest worries, as the 5th MEB sailed, centered on the lack of training time and the ability of so many new units to work in harmony. The training status of the units of the 5th MEB varied widely. The 11th MEU had been training since the summer and was certified special operations capable after a rigorous program culminated with a final training exercise that tested its ability to conduct 18 different missions. The 2d and 3d Battalions, 5th Marines, and the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, had been conducting normal training, but had not had a chance to fully integrate all of the combat support attachments that made up a true regimental landing team. Most of the Reserve units that came on board in mid-November drilled one weekend each month and pulled two weeks of

active training duty each year. Luckily, elements of the 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion and the 4th Tank Battalion had participated in combined arms exercises at Twentynine Palms the previous summer, so they were familiar with the rigors of a desert environment. On the down side, very few pilots from VMA-513, HMA-773, and HMM-265 had completed recent carrier qualifications, and the "Gulfport Trackers" of the 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion had little experience working with amphibious ships.[147]

The 5th Marines had to make do with what was left after I MEF and much of the 1st Marine Division left for the Gulf region. About one-half of the personnel assigned to 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, were non-deployable under existing regulations. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, had just returned from a unit deployment to Okinawa on 4 August, so many of its members were ineligible for immediate redeployment. In addition, the battalion experienced a change of command and the normal turnover of about half of its assigned Marines.

Following receipt of the October warning order, the 5th Marines conducted a computer-enhanced command post exercise to sharpen command and control procedures. In early November, maritime interdiction and small unit special operations training was held. Later in the month, the 5th Marines moved to Twentynine Palms for a series of live fire combined arms exercises. Unfortunately, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, did not join its Reserve combat support units—Company A, 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion; Company A, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, and Company A, 4th Tank Battalion—until the exercise was over. The Thanksgiving holidays were spent hurriedly trying to integrate MAG-50, BSSG 5, and the large number of Reservists. Despite the effort, the job was not com-

The hurried gathering of forces to form the 5th MEB left little time for training, so much of the training was carried out on board ship on the way to the Persian Gulf.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-07750

plete when it was time to embark. General Rowe's solution was to institute an intense training program during the 45-day transit to the Gulf.[148]

The command element's main mission was to plan for an amphibious assault at Ras Al Qulayah in southern Kuwait. Although planning to support a conventional amphibious assault was the primary focus of the 5th MEB's efforts, integrated training and detailed planning for a variety of combat contingencies continued day and night. General Rowe was concerned about air traffic control procedures and supporting arms coordination, both of which would have to be flawless to ensure a successful landing in Kuwait. As he later noted, an amphibious assault could require as many as 70 aircraft using six different airframes to fly from three separate decks simultaneously, a daunting coordination task.[149]

The biggest challenge was to integrate 7,500 Marines whose skill levels varied from rudimentary to special operations capable. While at sea, an aggressive training program took advantage of every opportunity. The 5th MEB staff developed a comprehensive training matrix using a building block approach that focused on contingencies and stressed safety.

The MEB command element had been augmented by a seven-man Battle Training Staff from Quantico while at Camp Pendleton. This staff was able to accompany the MEB when it deployed. The main training function enroute from San Diego to Hawaii was the integration of new staff members since the 11th MEU staff had been absorbed only recently, and at least two key planners did not join the MEB until it was ready to sail.[150] The pilots of MAG-50 used the trip to Hawaii to familiarize themselves with shipboard operations. Performance during this time was considered to be only marginally suitable with a close air support strip alert response of 20 minutes and few pilots night-operations qualified.[151]

A key training concern was the MEB's special operations capabilities, particularly maritime interdiction and non-combatant evacuation procedures. The 11th MEU was special operations capable but might be broken out at any time, therefore, Brigadier General Rowe wanted to ensure that the rest of the MEB could quickly form cohesive units varying in size from a reinforced company to a battalion landing team. The *Mobile*, the ship that most closely resembled the likely profile of an Iraqi merchant ship, was used as a maritime interdiction training platform to practice ship-boarding and search procedures by maritime special purpose forces. Additionally, some ships constructed mock buildings in available space so embarked Marines could practice urban warfare techniques. General military skills training while underway was intense. General Rowe recalled that every ship was a hive of training activity, and that on board the *Tarawa* it was not unusual for live fire practice to begin at sunrise and end at sunset, interrupted only for safety reasons or by flight operations.[152]

When the 5th MEB arrived at Pearl Harbor, intelligence specialists and radio battalion personnel were added to the command element. The aviation combat element got a boost when MAG-50 incorporated the "Rainbows" of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265 from MCAS Kaneohe. On 8 December, the group conducted Operation Boomerang, a fly-away training exercise to coordinate safe air operations by 30 aircraft from four squadrons flying off three decks

using six different aircraft types. After a very brief liberty call in Honolulu, the ATF sailed for the Philippines.

While enroute, MAG-50 conducted an underway exercise, So-Damn Insane, a simultaneous simulated helicopter assault involving more than 40 aircraft. This was followed by Stage I and II carrier qualifications. On 27 December, PhibGru 3 entered Subic Bay after MAG-50 conducted Exercise Snake Bite, a second turn-away landing by more than 40 aircraft. The 5th MEB took advantage of the Zambales Training Facility while PhibGru 3 was at Subic Bay. Exercise Quick Thrust included advance force operations, raids, and long-range reconnaissance insertions. Regimental Landing Team 5 then executed a turn-away landing by surface and air-cushion landing craft, while MAG-50 made a helicopter turn-away over six landing zones. By the time it sailed, MAG-50 had logged 1,781.4 flight hours by seven different airframes and had landed on every type of amphibious platform in the U.S. Navy. The command element ran a supporting arms coordination exercise to control naval gunfire, close air support, and artillery fire.[153] Brigade Service Support Group 5 used the in-port period to perform heavy vehicle maintenance.

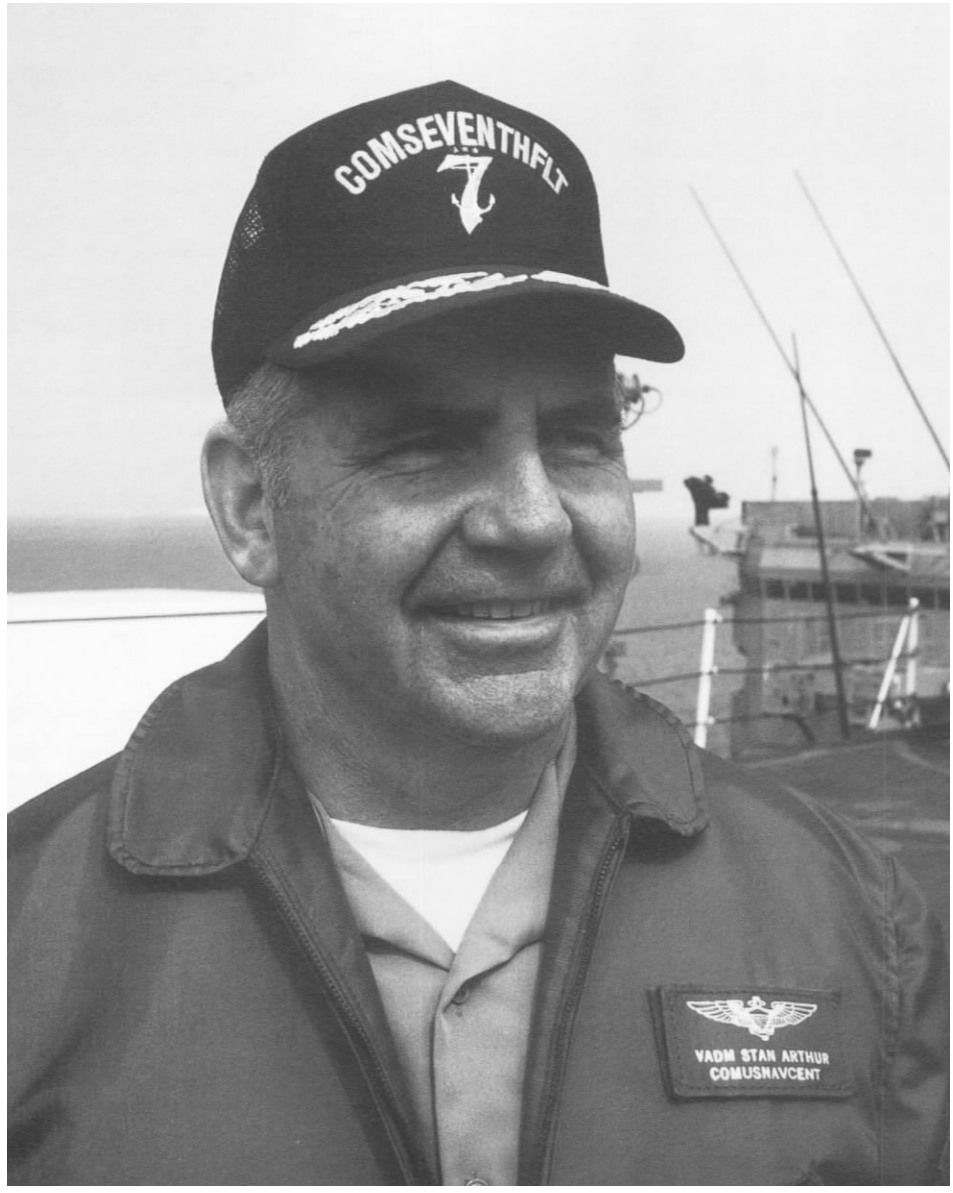
One vital supply shortfall was filled when much-needed nuclear, biological, and chemical protective overgarments and ancillary equipment arrived. The shortage of cryptography equipment remained, but did not affect later operations. On 29 December, the MEB conducted live fire raid and mass casualty evacuation exercises, in addition to live fire training with small arms, crew-served weapons, LAVs, tanks, and assault amphibians. This training was followed by New Year's Eve celebrations during the final liberty call before the 5th MEB departed the Philippines on 2 January.[154]

Link-up at Sea

On 4 November, the 13th MEU(SOC) left the Persian Gulf. At that time efforts were made to have the 13th MEU released from its Landing Force Seventh Fleet duties so it could return home.* Instead, the MEU was ordered to remain in the Western Pacific and was placed on a 72-hour alert to return to the Persian Gulf. On 17 December, Colonel John Rhodes received orders to return to the Persian Gulf via Singapore and to rendezvous with the 5th MEB enroute. On New Year's Eve, the MEU arrived at Singapore for a six-day port visit.[155]

Amphibious Ready Group Alpha and the 13th MEU(SOC) departed Singapore on 6 January, and rendezvoused with Amphibious Group 3 as it passed through the Malacca Straits. During its return voyage the MEU resumed a high tempo of training. Battalion Landing Team 1/4 conducted small unit and classroom training and Composite Helicopter Squadron 164 flew daily missions. During this

*Gen Gray objected to having a rotation policy for Marines afloat while there was none for Marines ashore but this issue became moot when additional combat power was needed to support Operation Desert Storm.



Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-08572

VAdm Stanley R. Arthur, ComUSNavCent during Desert Storm, moved the amphibious task force into the northern Persian Gulf, looked at many amphibious options, and was a strong supporter of the Marine Forces Afloat.

time, the 13th MEU's small boat, aviation, and antiaircraft defense assets were integrated into shipboard emergency defense of the amphibious task force. Transport helicopters were used to identify surface contacts while attack helicopters protected ARG Alpha with rockets, 20mm cannon, and AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles. Four of the ships used Marine Stinger missile teams for low altitude air defense. All five of the ships used Marine M60 and M2HB machine guns for close-in defensive fires.[156]

The final leg of the transit to Southwest Asia was uneventful except for the brief flurry of excitement when a Russian Tupolev TU-95 Bear-C reconnaissance plane passed over the task force. After the rendezvous at sea, Colonel Rhodes and his staff often cross-decked from the *Okinawa* to the *Tarawa* for situation updates and to meet with their 5th MEB counterparts. On 12 January, Central Command assumed operational control of the task group. The next day, the 5th MEB and 13th MEU joined the 4th MEB and the *Ranger* (CV-61) Carrier Battle Group in the North Arabian Sea to form the largest amphibious task force assembled in a combat zone since the Inchon landing during the Korean Conflict in 1950.[157]

Command Relationships

There had been several important changes in the command structure of the amphibious task force since the 5th MEB sailed from the United States. On 1 December, Vice Admiral Stanley R. Arthur replaced Admiral Mauz as the Central Command Naval Forces component commander. On the 12th, Lieutenant General Boomer boarded the *Blue Ridge* and briefed Arthur prior to a two-day Central Command planning conference held at Muscat, Oman. Five days later, a 5th MEB liaison team was assigned to 4th MEB. Later in the month, Major General Jenkins went ashore and attended a planning conference at I MEF headquarters at Al Jubayl where he briefed General Alfred Gray about amphibious plans and capabilities.[158] A NavCent planning conference also was held on 30 December. No ATF representatives were invited, however. The conference turned out to be critical since the decision was made to use an ATF amphibious assault ship as the airborne mine counter-measure platform without consultation or approval by Admiral LaPlante or Major General Jenkins.*[159]

On 1 January, a new NavCent command structure went into effect. Admiral Arthur remained CTF 150 (ComUSNavCent) and the Naval Logistics Support Force retained its designator TG 150.3, but most other designations were changed to reflect the increased size of the naval forces in the Persian Gulf. Rear Admiral William M. Fogarty became Commander, Surface Action Force (CTF 151). All carrier battle groups inside the Persian Gulf were assigned to Battle Force Zulu (TF 154). Admiral LaPlante, the amphibious task force commander, became CTF 156, while Major General Jenkins, the landing force commander, was assigned CTF 158. Within Task Force 158, the 4th MEB was TG 158.1, the 5th MEB was TG 158.2, and the 13th MEU was TU 158.1.4.[160]

The late December conferences resulted in two changes that improved the planning process and enhanced command relationships among the Marine Forces Afloat, NavCent, and CentCom. First, Major General John J. Sheehan and a special planning staff, "MarCent Forward," were assigned to the flagship *Blue Ridge.* Major General Jenkins' predecessor at the Atlantic Fleet Landing Force Training Center and former commanding general of 4th MEB, Sheehan was selected

*This decision to use an LPH when an LPD would have sufficed later was criticized.

because of his amphibious expertise.* Five field grade officers were also members of this planning cell.

The second addition was a landing force targeting cell tasked to work with the existing NavCent targeting cell assigned to the Joint Force Air Component Commander's (JFACC) staff at Riyadh. This cell relayed target information from the ATF and MFA staffs to the JFACC targeteers for inclusion in the air tasking order using the World-Wide Military Command and Control System computer network.[161]

The 5th MEB and the 13th MEU(SOC) linked up with the 4th MEB on 13 January. Together, they formed the largest Marine force afloat since Exercise Steel Pike in 1964. Consolidation of these forces, however, created problems in command and control. General Jenkins had to decide how best to organize the Marine Forces Afloat. Marine doctrine called for compositing separate combat elements by melding existing units into a single large force and specifically prohibited creating "a MAGTF within a MAGTF," but compositing was not a practical solution for the MFA. After extensive long-distance consultations with Brigadier General Rowe and Lieutenant General Robert Milligan, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Pacific, General Jenkins opted to expand the "associated" command relationship that had been used until the 13th MEU departed the Gulf in November.

The ATF had been divided into three groups for Operation Desert Shield. Although Admiral Arthur was now NavCent commander, the original reasons for dividing the ATF were still valid. Tactical and logistics factors made small task groups more desirable than one large ATF for day-to-day naval operations. Although the Marine landing force might have to operate as a single integrated force during a major amphibious operation, it would also have to deal with a myriad of special operations requiring smaller forces. These activities would require separate MEBs, independent MEUs, or small special purpose forces. Such contingency operations meant that the ATF would likely remain divided into several amphibious task groups.

General Jenkins also had to ponder the fact that with Operation Desert Storm about to begin, the MFA might be called on to make a landing without an adequate rehearsal. This issue was a factor in amphibious planning and dictated a scheme of maneuver that featured "two MEBs landing side-by-side rather than operating as a single small MEF."[162] Several other limiting factors came into play. There were very few shipyards available in the Gulf, so the Navy had to adopt a round-

*Although they differ as to the reasons, members of the NavCent and MFA staffs both agreed MarCent Fwd smoothed relationships.

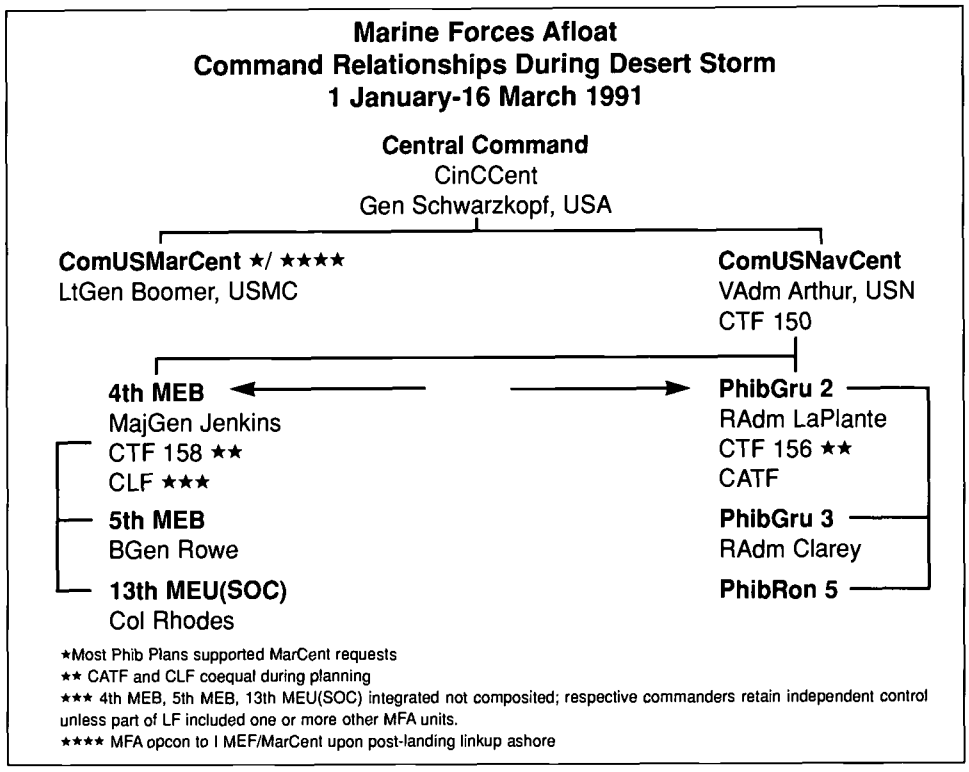
robin ship maintenance program. The best amphibious training areas were located in Oman in the northern Arabian Sea and in the United Arab Emirates in the southern Gulf. This meant that integrated training was not practical because at least one amphibious task group would have to remain in the Persian Gulf at all times. Another major factor prohibiting traditional compositing was the lack of a suitable amphibious command ship for MEF-size operations.

The lack of a command ship for the amphibious forces brought to the fore a long-standing problem. The ATF's most capable ships, the *Tarawa* and *Nassau*, were configured for command and control of only one MEU and a single PhibRon. As MEB- or MEF-level command ships they lacked adequate workspace and communications equipment. These multipurpose ships also served as medical receiving stations, floating ammunition and supply dumps, seaborne FARPs, and motherships for AAVs, LCUs, and LCACs. Ironically, the flexibility that had been built into these ships became a liability since these additional duties at times interfered with task force command and control. The command ships which had been specifically built to control large-scale amphibious operations in the 1960s were reconfigured as fleet command platforms in the late-1970s, but replacement command ships were neither available nor contemplated. One command ship, the *Blue Ridge*, was in the Persian Gulf, but it was not used as an amphibious command ship during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm as it was designated ComUSNavCent's flagship.[163]

The decision to associate was undoubtedly the correct one. Association avoided creating a "MAGTF within a MAGTF" and subordinate elements or task groups could easily break away from the ATF when necessary. Had a large landing force gone ashore for sustained operations the MFA could have composited at that time. Although there were some problems with logistical support and communications with higher headquarters, associating forces best met the particular needs of the moment since it offered the most operational flexibility to the landing force.[164] Commenting on the compositing issue, General Jenkins noted that while "maximum flexibility was critical to the ATF's ability to accomplish its assigned missions,...commanders...have to adapt to the situation at hand."[165] In response to a question as to why the landing force did not composite, Brigadier General Rowe stated that it was never practical, and unequivocally asserted association was the correct way to go.[166]

Within the MFA, the following command relationships were established. The 4th MEB would be the lead unit of the landing force. Major General Jenkins, as senior Marine officer afloat, was designated commanding general and his ship, the *Nassau*, the ATF/LF flagship. The 4th MEB staff became the "alpha" command group. Colonel Thomas A. Hobbs led the landing force ground combat element, while Colonel Glenn F. Burgess commanded the aviation combat element and Colonel James J. Doyle controlled combat service support.* Brigadier

*This created a minor flurry on the Navy side because RAdm Clarey (ComPhibGru 3) was senior to RAdm LaPlante (ComPhibGru 2), but the issue was resolved when Clarey agreed LaPlante should remain CATF.



General Rowe became the deputy landing force commander and the 5th MEB staff was designated the "bravo" command group with the *Tarawa* serving as the alternate command post. Colonel Rhodes and the 13th MEU staff remained intact on board the *Okinawa* and could be used for special operations or as a floating reserve when not a part of the landing force. This arrangement provided solid command and control redundancy and allowed for easy task organization into MEB- or MEU-size units for independent operations.[167]

After being informed the 5th MEB would reinforce rather than replace the 4th MEB, General Jenkins brought the matter of designating the two-brigade force a MEF to the attention of General Gray. Major General Jenkins did not believe this change would have any effect on the internal operations of the Marine Forces Afloat, but he did conclude that it would give him some leverage in inter-Service matters. As a MEF commander he would be accorded appropriate representation at MarCent, NavCent, and CentCom. This would lessen the impact of the "missing link" in the chain of command. General Jenkins cited such issues as aviation control, the establishment of suitable amphibious objective areas, and a larger voice in operational planning as other reasons for changing the MFA designation.

General Gray agreed and sent the matter to Manpower Plans and Policy Division, HQMC, for action. In response, Marine Corps Bulletin 5400 was drafted to direct the activation of VI MEF, to confirm MFA command relationships, and to integrate the Marine Forces Afloat into a single Marine air-ground task force. Led by General Jenkins, the 4th MEB command element was to be designated VI MEF (Forward). The MEF headquarters would be manned in accord

with Table of Organization 49188—121 Marine officers, 117 enlisted, 9 Navy officers, and 108 sailors. Forces for the ground combat, air combat, and combat service support elements were to come from the afloat MAGTFs under the operational control of NavCent. The 4th MEB, 5th MEB, and 13th MEU stateside rear echelons would retain separate designations and would not be designated VI MEF (Rear). Lieutenant General Boomer, as MarCent commander, would be tasked to develop and publish appropriate documents and to initiate all necessary actions to activate VI MEF sometime in February. The draft being prepared for General Gray's signature, however, was overcome by events in the region and was never issued.[168]

Exercise Sea Soldier IV

Exercise Sea Soldier IV was the last major amphibious exercise of the Sea Soldier series and was the only time the 4th and 5th MEBs had a chance to train together. Only the 4th and 5th MEBs participated as the 13th MEU(SOC) had been ordered into the Persian Gulf. Sea Soldier IV was the largest amphibious exercise since the 21,654-man II MEF sailed from the United States to Spain on board 43 amphibious ships and 17 Military Sea Transport Service ships in October 1964 during Exercise Steel Pike.*

The final planning conference was held on 19 January and the 4th and 5th MEBs were ready to go. There were two rehearsals prior to Sea Soldier IV. The first was held on the night of 22 January and the second took place on 24th. Unfortunately, the exercise began on an ominous note. One of the primary goals of the rehearsals was to familiarize aircrews with night operations. One such mission resulted in tragedy. On 22 January, Captain Manuel Rivera, Jr., a "Bumblebee" pilot from VMA-331, was killed during carrier qualification training. Using a modified instrument approach to make a night landing on board the *Nassau*, Rivera closed to within three miles when his AV-8B Harrier went into a rapid, uncontrolled descent, hitting the beach and exploding. The cause of the accident was never firmly established.[169]

Sea Soldier IV was a much-needed rehearsal for the upcoming amphibious assault at Ash Shuaybah. It also provided a chance for the 5th MEB to practice deception operations. Lasting from 23 January to 2 February, the exercise was held at Ras Al Madrakah's Suqrah Bay, a site by then very familiar to the Marines and sailors of the 4th MEB. The major training objectives were to rehearse and refine day and night landing operations, rehearse supporting arms coordination, rehearse elements of the amphibious deception plan, develop and exercise inland link-up procedures, provide aviation assault support from shore-based facilities, conduct a tactical withdrawal at night, work on prisoner of war collection and pro-

*Steel Pike was a harbinger of amphibious force woes; there were ship shortages, inadequate command ships, and insufficient NGF resources—problems that still plagued the MFA almost three decades later.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-92-06923

An AAV-7A1 amphibious assault vehicle is driven off one of the Nassau's *landing craft as 4th MEB Marines train during the Sea Soldier exercises.*

cessing, practice mass casualty evacuations, and conduct extensive vehicle and equipment maintenance while on shore.[170]

The exercise began on the morning of the 23d, when the 5th MEB conducted surface and heliborne demonstrations west of Ras Al Madrakah. The main event, a two-brigade pre-dawn assault controlled by the 4th MEB command element began at 0400 on the 26th. In addition to the surface assault, three rifle battalions were helilifted from nine ships during the largest heliborne exercise conducted by the Marine Corps in recent years. Helicopters from nine different squadrons participated in the landing exercise. Harriers from VMA-331 and VMA-513 made 172 day sorties and 25 night sorties from the assault ships *Nassau* and *Tarawa.*

The landing was followed by a 24-hour field exercise, about a week of desert training, and an amphibious withdrawal exercise. In addition, General Jenkins held a command post exercise at his field headquarters. A 60 x 100 foot sand table, courtesy of the 2d Topographical Detachment, replicated the landing beaches and inland terrain in the vicinity of Ash Shuaybah. The exercise turned out to be the only opportunity for all aviation and ground commanders to get together and carefully coordinate their plans for Operation Desert Saber.[171] During field exercises units worked on individual skills, small unit tactics, overland movement, and combat firing techniques. While on shore, vehicles and equipment were worked on by mobile maintenance teams. A comprehensive prisoner of war exercise tested the ability of the military police and counterintelligence teams to handle Iraqi prisoners. More than 60 role players were interrogated, processed, and held in a mock prisoner of war compound. Post-conflict reports indicated that many lessons learned here were put into practice in Kuwait.[172]

The final training stage was a tactical withdrawal. Major General Jenkins wanted to give the 5th MEB command element some practice, so control of the landing force was passed to Brigadier General Rowe for this action. The withdrawal took place over a 24-hour period and featured a heliborne night extraction of two rifle battalions. Generals Jenkins and Rowe were both satisfied with this part of the exercise.[173]

By the end of Sea Soldier IV, all elements of the landing force and landing plan had been exercised by both MEB command elements. More than 6,500 Marines and 574 vehicles had gone ashore and long overdue maintenance had been completed. Following Sea Soldier IV, the 5th MEB traveled north through Strait of Hormuz to the United Arab Emirates to conduct final training before moving into the northern Gulf. At Al Hamra, it held a three-day supporting arms center coordination exercise (SACCEx). When the SACCEx ended, General Jenkins felt confident his landing forces were ready to conduct any of the 25 amphibious operations then on the drawing board.[174]

Desert Storm Amphibious Plans

The Situation

The original purpose of Operation Desert Shield was to protect the Arabian Peninsula from further Iraqi aggression and this had been accomplished by late September 1990. Saddam Hussein, however, was determined to solidify his position inside Kuwait. Kuwait, therefore, was turned into a vast fortress bristling with mines, barbed wire, underground bunkers, and concrete strongpoints. The "Saddam Line" stretched from Wadi Al Batin to the Gulf, bent north up the coast through Kuwait City, and continued on to Bubiyan Island. Positive that Saudi Arabia was no longer threatened, General Colin Powell tasked General Schwarzkopf to prepare contingency plans to eject the Iraqis from Kuwait. As September drew to a close Schwarzkopf was confident he could repel an Iraqi assault, but he did not believe he could conduct a successful offensive without significant reinforcements.[175]

At that time, Marine units in Southwest Asia were split between the operational control of MarCent and NavCent and answered to no common superior below CinCCent. MarCent's 30,000 Marines ashore were assigned to defend a coastal area from Ras Al Mishab south to Al Jubayl. The Marine Forces Afloat—under operational control of NavCent and not MarCent—included 12,737 men from 4th MEB and 13th MEU(SOC) on board 18 amphibious ships inside the Gulf and in the North Arabian Sea.* At first the Marine Forces Afloat were the theater reserve force, but they later grew into the largest amphibious force of its kind in three decades.

*MajGen Rhodes noted that 13th MEU(SOC) never chopped from III MEF to 4th MEB, but as senior Marine on-scene, Gen Jenkins exercised tactical control.

The First Offensive Plan

In spite of objections about premature offensive action, CentCom was ordered to prepare a concept of operations. A hand-picked staff, informally known as the "Jedi Knights," created several. In the "one-corps option" plan General Schwarzkopf selected for further study on 5 October, American forces were assigned the premier role.[176] XVIII Airborne Corps was to attack into central Kuwait in mid-December. The spearhead would be the 1st Armored and 24th Infantry (Mechanized) Divisions which would drive deep into Kuwait to capture and occupy key terrain between Kuwait City and the Iraqi border. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and I MEF would push swiftly inland to seize and hold a key road intersection at Al Jahrah in order to block the escape of Iraqi divisions from southern Kuwait.* The 82d Airborne Division would be the corps reserve. A combined French-Egyptian corps would screen CentCom's left flank and Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council forces would protect the right wing and liberate Kuwait City.

The Marines, including the 4th MEB which would be incorporated into I MEF prior to the attack, were assigned to the central sector.** Lieutenant General Boomer would also have tactical control of the British 7th Armoured Brigade.*** The 101st Airborne Division would make a night air mobile assault to seize Mutlah Ridge just northwest of Kuwait City. Simultaneously, British and Marine mechanized combined-arms task forces would penetrate the Iraqi lines under cover of darkness then push rapidly forward to link-up with the Screaming Eagles. The 13th MEU(SOC) would remain at sea in reserve and conduct amphibious demonstrations off the Kuwaiti coast.

This plan was fraught with problems for Marine forces. It had been created without the knowledge of Lieutenant General Boomer, so the Marines had no voice in the planning process. The plan did not recognize or allow for unique Marine capabilities or Marine shortfalls. It violated Marine Corps doctrine in a way that negated Marine strengths and accented Marine weaknesses. The essential failing was that the Jedi Knights planned to use I MEF as if it were an Army heavy division. Unfortunately, this was a role for which the Marines were ill-suited in terms of equipment, structure, and tactics. The existing plan threatened to fragment well-trained MAGTFs, strip the Marines of their organic air power, and stretch logistics beyond the breaking point.

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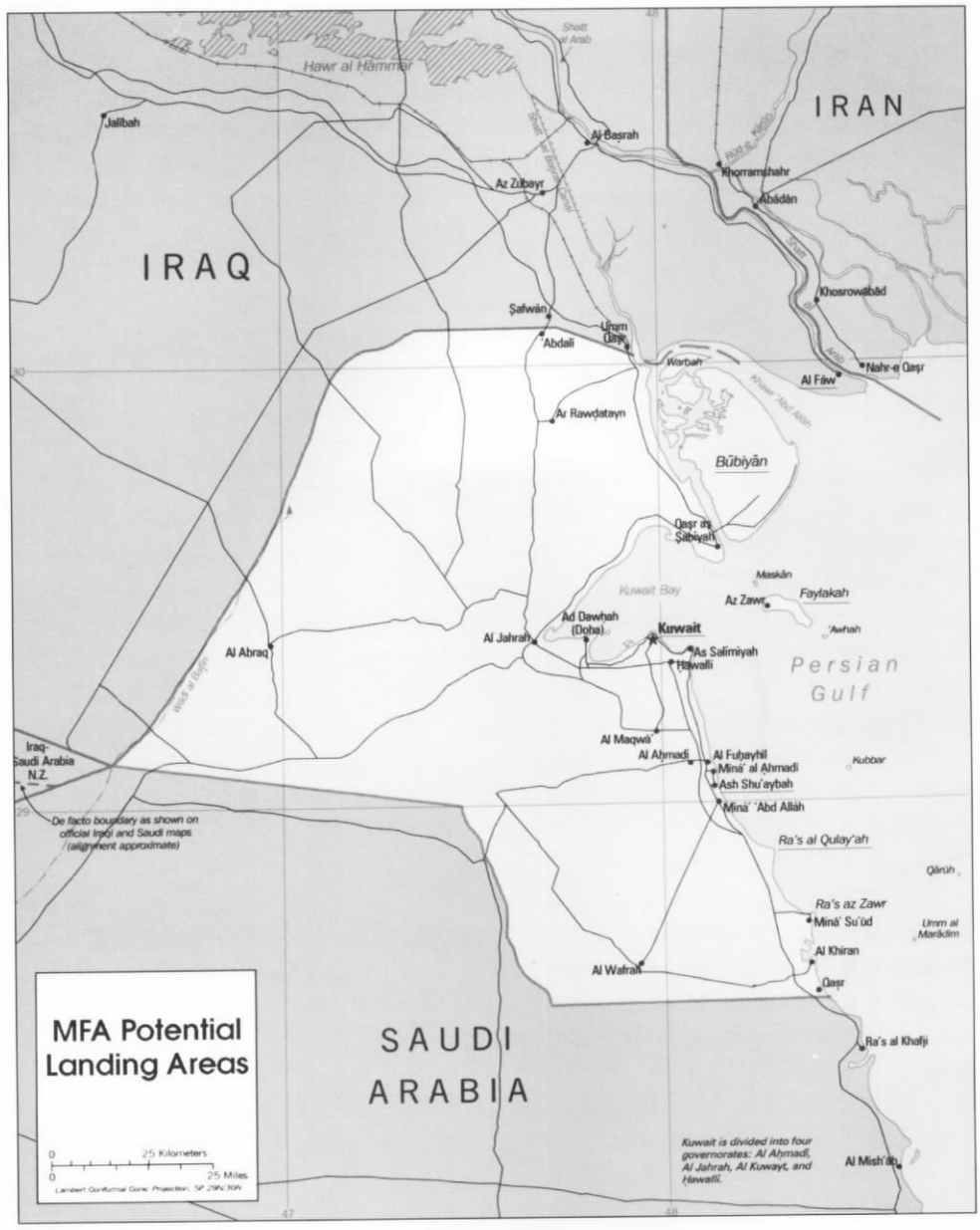
*LtGen Trainor characterized the plan as "the Marines [would] kick down the door for the Army and then protect the Army's LOC." (Trainor comments)

**The plan was so closely held that even Gen Jenkins had no knowledge of it. (Jenkins comments II)

***The 7th Armoured Brigade was the lineal descendant of the famous "Desert Rats" of World War II.


IRAN
IRAQ
SAUDI ARABIA
Persian Gulf
Hawr al Hammar
Shatt al Arab
Jalibah
Al Basrah
Az Zubayr
Khorramshahr
Abadan
Khosrowabad
Safwan
Umm Qasr
'Abdali
Warbah
Al Faw
Nahr-e Qasr
Ar Rawdatayn
Bubiyan
Qasr as Sabiyah
Maskan
Kuwait Bay
Az Zawr
Faylakah
Ad Dawhah (Doha)
Kuwait
Al Jahrah
As Salimiyah
Hawalli
Al Abraq
Wadi al Batin
Al Maqwa'
Al Ahmadi
Al Fuhayhil
Mina' al Ahmadi
Ash Shu'aybah
Mina' 'Abd Allah
Kubbar
Iraq-Saudi Arabia N.Z.
De facto boundary as shown on official Iraqi and Saudi maps (alignment approximate)
Ra's al Qulay'ah
Qaruh
Ra's az Zawr
Mina' Su'ud
Umm al Maradim
Al Khiran
Al Wafrah
Qasr
Ra's al Khafji
Kuwait is divided into four governorates: Al Ahmadi, Al Jahrah, Al Kuwayt, and Hawalli.
Al Mish'ab
MFA Potential Landing Areas
0 25 Kilometers
0 25 Miles
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, SP 29°c 30N

The Marines were not mobile enough to execute the scheme of maneuver because they lacked sufficient line haul, heavy equipment transporters, and tanker trucks to support the planned deep inland movement. Marine assault amphibians had been primarily designed for ship-to-shore movement, not for use as armored personnel carriers, so if the AAVs were used in the manner prescribed they would not be able to sustain the combat tempo envisioned. Without a dedicated aviation component the Marines would lack fire support because they would be too far inland to call for naval gunfire and they had no corps-level artillery.* After going over the CentCom plan, General Boomer sent Marine Colonel James D. Majchrzak to Riyadh to meet with CentCom planners. He also ordered the MarCent battle planning staff to begin working on its own plan and to provide prompt and appropriate answers to any future CentCom queries.[177]

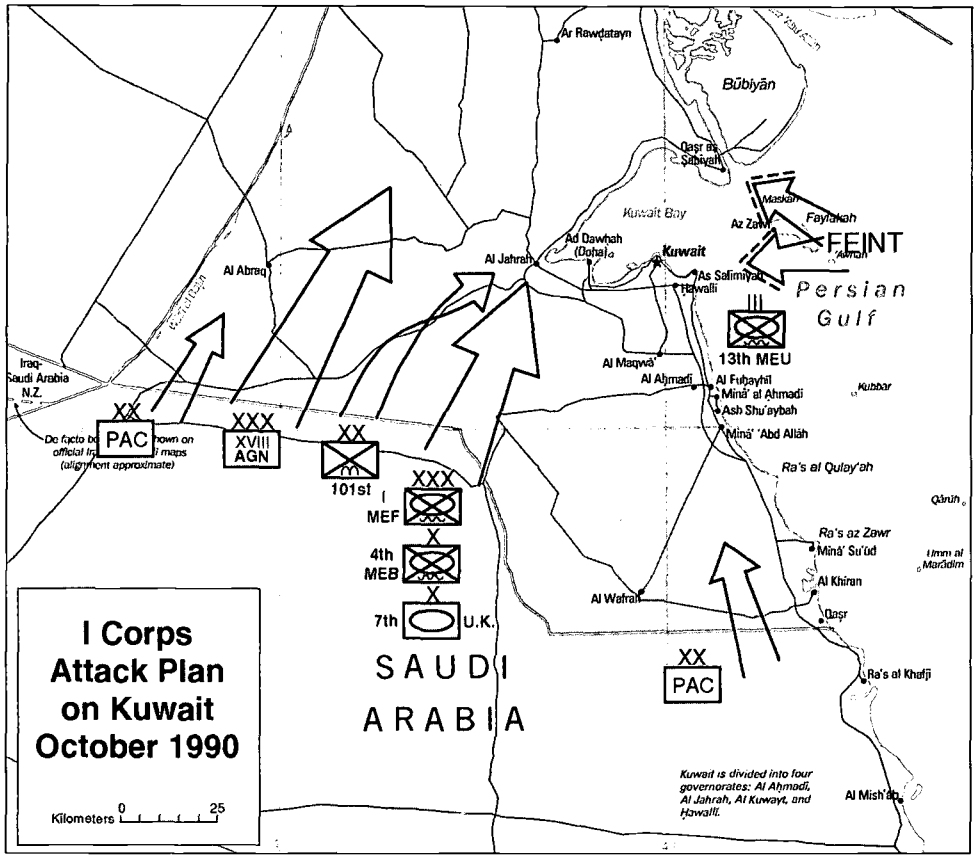
The Home Front

As it turned out, General Boomer and the Marines were not the only ones concerned about this first offensive plan. General Schwarzkopf was uneasy about it as well. He sent Marine Major General Robert Johnston to Washington to brief the Joint Chiefs and the National Command Authorities with an admonition not to be too enthusiastic and to end the presentation with a plea for more troops and more time. Predictably, the Joint Chiefs were not happy when they heard the plan on 10 October. One of the harshest critics that day was General Alfred Gray. The outspoken Marine Commandant felt it was a poor plan that violated the principles of maneuver warfare and ignored the potential for amphibious intervention.

No discussion of Marine operations in the Persian Gulf can be complete without acknowledging the active role played by General Gray. He has been described as "imaginative, innovative, iconoclastic, articulate, charismatic, and compassionate."[178] A former enlisted Marine, Gray possessed vast combat experience. He first saw combat as a sergeant during the Korean War. After becoming an officer, Gray had the unusual distinction of commanding both the first and last Marine ground units to see service during the Vietnam War. While a general officer, Gray commanded the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade, the 2d Marine Division, II Marine Amphibious Force, and Fleet Marine Force Atlantic. During that time he stressed combat readiness, enhanced the special operations capabilities of forward-deployed Marine units, and was an advocate of maneuver warfare.[179]

The Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 profoundly changed the duties of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It significantly strengthened the power of the Chairman at the expense of the other Chiefs. Instead of being only "one among equals," the

*The approximate artillery equivalents of these supporting arms are: seven fire support ships (2 BB, 5 DD/FF) have the fire power of at least three field artillery groups, and one Harrier squadron can deliver the explosive power of 12 hours of 155mm bombardment by an artillery battalion in a single airstrike.



Chairman became the principal military adviser to the President and he served as the primary conduit between civilian decision makers and military commanders. The Joint Chiefs were purposely placed outside of the operational chain of command. Their new functions were to advise the Chairman and to act as military administrators for each of their respective Services. The unified commanders-in-chief in the field were granted greater warfighting responsibilities and controlled all operational forces within their theaters. These reforms eliminated the sometimes fuzzy nature of the relationships between theater commanders and the Service chiefs that had hampered previous operations.

These new roles for the Joint Chiefs were not the type relished by an activist like Gray. Clearly unhappy as a bystander, he pushed his statutory limits to the edge during the Gulf War. Inside Washington, he was a vocal and outspoken advocate for amphibious operations who constantly lobbied General Powell for a greater afloat Marine presence and a more active operational role for the deployed landing forces. Within the Marine Corps he kept a close watch on training and carefully marshalled available resources to support the Marines in the Gulf.

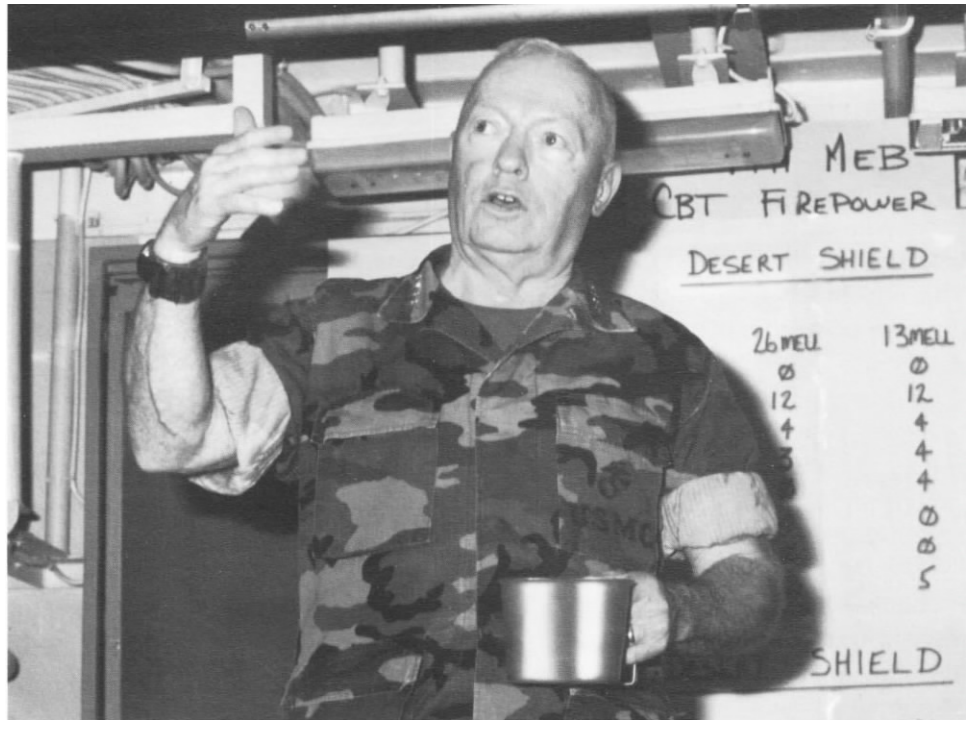
The much-maligned CentCom offensive plan fared no better at the White House than it did at the Pentagon. After President Bush and the National Security Council heard the plan there was a lot of grumbling. They seemed satisfied with the air campaign, but blasted the ground plan as "unimaginative." Some critics

mirrored General Gray's previous comments and inquired about the possibility of an "Inchon-style" turning movement from the sea. Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney was so unhappy with the plan that he suggested a ground attack into western Iraq. President Bush agreed to send more troops, but he also told General Powell to have CentCom come up with a better plan.[180]

General Gray did not limit his activities in support of a greater Marine role in the Gulf to Washington's corridors of power. He went to the Gulf in October and met with senior Navy and Marine officers. The tour convinced Gray that there should be a Marine-generated amphibious campaign plan similar to the "Instant Thunder" air campaign created by U.S. Air Force "Checkmate" planners. Accordingly, Major General Matthew P. Caulfield was ordered to have the Marine Corps Combat Development Command make recommendations for more effective use of amphibious forces in the Gulf. An Ad Hoc Study Team was quickly assembled at Quantico to look at amphibious options and the Warfighting Center conducted a series of war games to test the Study Team's recommendations. Among the options looked at were Marine landings from the Red Sea and overland strikes into western Iraq from Jordan, Syria, or Turkey. Each of these options, however, were deemed unworkable. Plans for a major amphibious assault into Iraq, codenamed Operation Tiger, and a series of amphibious raids

The Commandant, Gen Gray, addresses the 4th MEB staff on board the Nassau. *Gray worked behind the scenes to showcase Marine capabilities and pushed hard for an amphibious assault despite high-level objections to such an operation.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DM-ST-91-04423



proved to be far more practical and were accepted by General Gray in November.

These concepts were detailed in a report titled "The Use of Amphibious Forces in Southwest Asia." This document was an in-depth look at a wide spectrum of amphibious operations and their specific utility in the Gulf. Prospective amphibious actions included several small-scale versions of World War II island hopping whereby the small islands and oil rigs in the northern Gulf would be seized or neutralized by aggressive naval action. There were also plans for the seizure of Faylakah Island, landings at Bubiyan Island and Kuwait Bay, and a direct assault on the Al Faw Peninsula. This thought-provoking study was, however, kept close to the vest and did not receive widespread distribution.[181]

A Quantico-based briefing team led by Colonel Martin R. Steele was sent to the Gulf in December, but received a very cool reception. It was obvious Operation Tiger was not going to be implemented and there would be no "Inchon" in the Gulf. Undaunted by this rejection, General Gray instead pressed for amphibious raids to keep Saddam off balance. Although he was unaware of General Gray's specific plans at the time, General Jenkins later noted that "the World War II style assault ... got all the attention, but other operations had the potential for far greater strategic leverage and were in line with our maneuver from the sea concepts."[182]

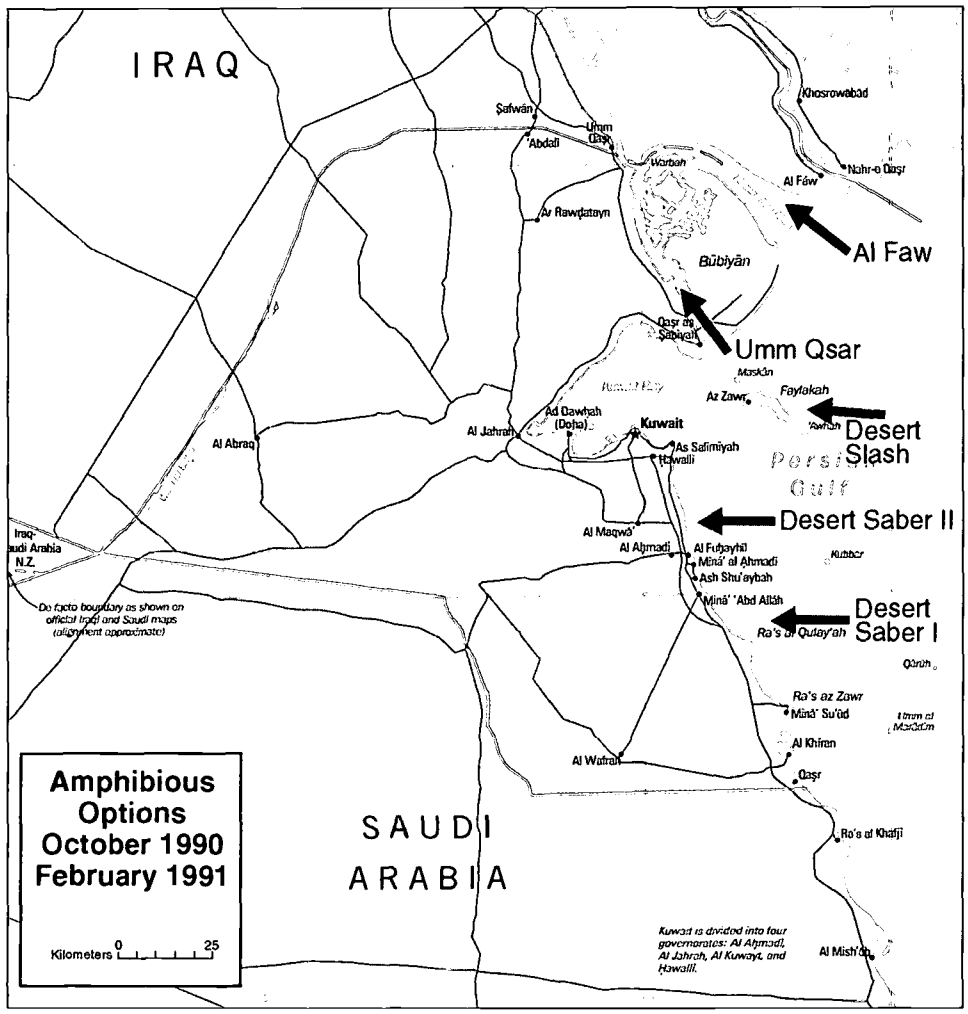
In December, General Gray ordered Major General John J. Sheehan to form an amphibious planning cell to be sent to the Gulf to assist the NavCent staff. At the same time he started the ball rolling to activate VI Marine Expeditionary Force which would be composed of the Marine Forces Afloat. This move would formalize the command structure of the MFA and give General Jenkins more say in joint affairs. Operationally, it would unite three independent MAGTFs that had been operating in-theater without a common headquarters other than NavCent, and would give General Jenkins increased status when working with NavCent and CentCom. Ultimately it led to the deployment of MarCent (Forward).[183]

The Al Faw Options

One major amphibious operation contemplated was a landing on Iraq's Al Faw Peninsula, an 18-mile-wide stretch of land sandwiched between the Bubiyan Channel and the Shatt Al Arab waterway that delineated Iraq's border with Iran. This area had been the site of the fiercest battles of the Iran-Iraq War because of its strategic importance. The Iraqi naval base at Umm Qasr, the port at Az Zubayr, and Basrah—the strategic heart of southern Iraq—were all located near Al Faw.

Al Faw seemed to be the best spot for an indirect approach from the sea as had been suggested after the President's war plans brief. As General Jenkins later noted: "There was really only one good spot for an amphibious landing in the entire Gulf...the Al Faw Peninsula."[184] This area was such an obvious choice that Quantico and 4th MEB both formulated plans for its capture by amphibious assault. Each plan, of course, had variations in scope and execution.

The Ad Hoc Study Team's Operation Tiger would synchronize the Marine landings with CentCom's armor-heavy "left hook" coming across the desert from the west. In this plan, Basrah would be threatened by amphibious forces after the



Republican Guard moved south to engage the U.S. Army's VII Corps. A five-regiment amphibious assault force embarked on board all available shipping, including MPS ships, would capture Umm Qasr and Az Zubayr. The Iraqis would then be placed on the horns of a dilemma, they would have to either wheel about to meet this new threat or leave an open corridor to Basrah. The 4th MEB plan was to use an amphibious assault as a supporting attack to draw attention away from the CentCom main effort. The Marine Forces Afloat would land at Al Faw then be reinforced by I MEF forces shuttling north from Al Jubayl. This landing would take place before the inland ground offensive began in order to fix elements of the *Republican Guard* near Basrah and keep this powerful Iraqi reserve force from interdicting the VII Corps armored thrust.

Lieutenant General Boomer tried to convince CentCom to give Al Faw a closer look, but he later opined that General Schwarzkopf never appeared to seriously consider the option. Schwarzkopf asserted that he thought the plan credible, but it was rejected by higher authority.[185] Although the option caused much dis-

quiet on the Navy side, General Jenkins believed that although a landing at Al Faw never came to fruition, the potential for success was excellent.[186] He noted many problems that later sidetracked an amphibious assault on Kuwait could have been avoided by landing at Al Faw. Careful study of Iraqi shipping lanes during Desert Shield revealed a mine-free passage along the Iranian coast, the isolation of the peninsula allowed the creation of a suitable amphibious objective area, the lack of population and infrastructure eliminated concerns about collateral damage, and the area was only lightly defended.*

There were problems with such daring plans. General Schwarzkopf's Jedi Knights used manual and computer-assisted analysis to conclude an amphibious landing at Al Faw "was not feasible in support of the [CentCom] main attack." They determined Iraqi coastal defenses, the length of time necessary to seize and strengthen the beachhead, the lack of Marine armor, and the threat from nearby *Republican Guard* heavy divisions could result in unacceptably high casualties.[187]

There were other objections as well. Admiral Mauz was reluctant to send ships into the heavily mined waters of the northern Gulf and was concerned about vulnerable ships running a narrow gauntlet that was well within the ranges of Silkworm missiles, Exocet-carrying aircraft, and Scud/FROG missiles. He noted that the only mine-free sea lanes were inside Iranian territorial waters, the northern Gulf had insufficient room for fleet support areas, and sea-based logistics could not support the proposed landing force. Admiral LaPlante shared these objections and further concluded that the 4th MEB did not have sufficient combat power to sustain an attack aimed at Basrah.[188] Colonel Wickersham, the senior Marine on the NavCent staff at that time, opposed landing at Al Faw because of poor hydrography and difficult inland terrain.[189] He also noted the Al Faw option could easily become a trap for the fleet and the landing force, so cost-risk analysis argued against landing there. At the highest levels the Al Faw option was rejected because its proximity to Iran presented unacceptable diplomatic risks.[190]

Desert Storm Plans

In November, President Bush authorized the reinforcements General Schwarzkopf had requested. Among the new units deployed to the Gulf were the Army's VII Corps, the bulk of the II MEF, and the 5th MEB.** These additional forces allowed General Schwarzkopf to draw up a new offensive plan which he named Operation Desert Storm. Little changed from the original air campaign plan, then codenamed Instant Thunder. The ground attack, however, was radical-

*No more than a single Iraqi brigade was ever identified in the landing area.

**II MEF colors remained at Camp Lejeune, but the 2d MarDiv, 2d MAW, and 2d FSSG all deployed to the Gulf.

ly different. The point of main effort was shifted from central Kuwait to the far western flank. XVIII Airborne Corps and VII Corps would achieve surprise by sweeping out of the unguarded desert to cut off *Republican Guard* units. General Schwarzkopf later compared this maneuver to the "Hail Mary" play in football where the offensive receivers overload the defense by lining up on one sideline then running downfield into the same corner of the end zone.[191]

In this revised offensive plan, I MEF was slated to conduct a supporting attack to fix and destroy Iraqi forces in southern Kuwait. It was first planned that the Marines ashore would breach the Saddam Line, then link-up with Marine amphibious forces before pushing north to Kuwait City in concert with Joint Forces Command (JFC).* As time passed, however, the situation changed and obviated the need for an amphibious assault although several such operations had been planned.

Iraqi Coastal Defenses

The northern Gulf had been liberally seeded with a mixture of deep-water pressure sensitive, magnetic, and acoustic mines arranged in seven groups and four lines. Closer to shore barbed wire, tanglefoot wire, steel and concrete obstacles, and antitank mines were placed throughout the surf zone. The beaches contained land mines, barbed wire, trenches, berms, and covered machine gun nests. The Iraqis turned seaside villas into fortified bunkers and high-rise apartment buildings along the coast served as lookout towers mounting deadly antiaircraft nests on their roofs. This defensive line was backed up by a row of antitank ditches and dug-in tanks.[192]

Contemporary intelligence estimates reported 68,000 Iraqi troops, 190 tanks, and 342 artillery pieces were earmarked for coastal defense between Kuwait City and Mina Saud.**[193] The Iraqi *11th Infantry Division* occupied Kuwait City, the *19th Infantry Division* defended Ash Shuaybah, the *42d Infantry Division* was at Ras Al Qulayah, and the *18th Infantry Division* was in the vicinity of Mina Saud. The powerful *3d Tank Division* and *5th Mechanized Division* were both located within one hour of any potential landing spot along this stretch of coastline.

Saddam also eventually used environmentally detrimental obstructions of questionable military value. He moored potentially explosive heavily laden oil tankers along the pier at Ash Shuaybah, rigged oil terminals and well heads to flood oil into coastal waters, and reportedly strung underwater cables to electrocute Marines as they waded ashore. One of the most dangerous spots on the coast was the industrial port complex at Ash Shuaybah. Here were located a natural gas pro-

*JFC was the pan-Arab corps, a parallel command not under Gen Schwarzkopf's operational control; it consisted of Gulf-Cooperation Council JFC-East (JFC-E) and the Syrian-Egyptian JFC-North (JFC-N).

**Post-conflict analysis revealed these numbers to be inaccurate; however, they comprised the data used by the planners at the time.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-08410

Barbed wire, mines, and other obstacles were erected along the shoreline during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait to prevent or slow any attack by sea.

cessing plant and a storage tank farm that could have exploded with a blast equal to that of a tactical nuclear weapon whether detonated purposely, by accident, or by friendly fire.

The Iraqis launched a campaign of environmental terrorism when they sabotaged the super tanker terminal at Sea Island, dumping thousands of gallons of oil into the Gulf on 25 January. The resulting oil slick stretched 35 miles, devastated area wildlife, and threatened Saudi desalinization plants until the oil flow was stanched by air strikes and Kuwaiti resistance fighters.[194] Saddam later lit more than 600 oil wells on fire and created a blanket of thick black smoke that obscured ground targets and Iraqi movements.

Ras Al Qulayah Plan

Almost all ATF plans after late October were driven by requirements generated at MarCent. The desire to seize a port facility to establish a logistics base to support the I MEF attack into Kuwait led to a plan to land at Ras Al Qulayah on the southern Kuwait coast.* Ras Al Qulayah was the site of a small port and naval base located between Mina Saud and Ash Shuaybah. It was selected because it

*This plan could be easily adapted if the Iraqis launched an offensive and drove into Saudi Arabia. (Mauz Comments)

sat astride the coastal highway, outflanked the Saddam Line, and could support logistics-over-the-shore operations. Its main drawbacks were a very shallow hydrographic gradient of 1:1,000 which would not allow fire support ships to close the beach and the lack of strategic depth which brought the landing force ashore close to the Iraqi main line of resistance and reserve staging areas.

On 20 October, Admiral Mauz issued a letter of instruction for amphibious planning.*[195] The document included a number of assumptions: an extensive naval and air campaign prior to the ground offensive would gain and maintain naval and air superiority within the amphibious objective area; enemy forces in the AOA would be destroyed or sufficiently reduced enough to ensure a successful landing; the 3d MAW could provide aviation support; mine countermeasures (MCM) forces would clear underwater mines; link-up with friendly forces would occur within 72 hours; and MarCent forces would penetrate the Saddam Line to achieve the link-up. Admiral LaPlante and General Jenkins were directed to prepare plans for an amphibious assault to seize Ras Al Qulayah to "establish a beachhead/seize a port area to sustain U.S. forces in follow-on operations." The launch date and time would depend on the progress of the Coalition attack into Kuwait. The operation was assigned the codename Desert Saber.**

The joint plan called for supporting, pre-assault, and subsidiary operations to begin on D-Minus Seven. At that time theater-wide air operations would begin to isolate the amphibious objective area, reduce enemy strength to an acceptable level, destroy all high priority targets, and amphibious forces would start their movement to the AOA. Beginning on D-Minus Three supporting and advance forces would start to clear underwater mines, make hydrographic reconnaissance, and conduct deception operations while the air and naval bombardments continued.

The most complex and crucial of the supporting operations was mine countermeasures. Navy surface and air assets would isolate the AOA to halt further mining and repel Iraqi air and surface attacks. The MCM force would mark all mine-like objects within the fire support areas, sea echelons, and approach lanes. Each area would be swept after divers verified the presence of mines and explosive ordnance men destroyed selected obstacles. Navy SEALs would conduct very shallow water hydrographic reconnaissance. If mines were discovered the assault would be delayed until beach approach lanes could be cleared. Admiral Mauz included the proviso that "Damage/loss of a single amphibious ship...is unacceptable and will result in cancellation...of the amphibious assault."[196]

Another serious planning issue was creating a suitable amphibious objective area. An AOA is the air, land, and sea space reserved for the operational control

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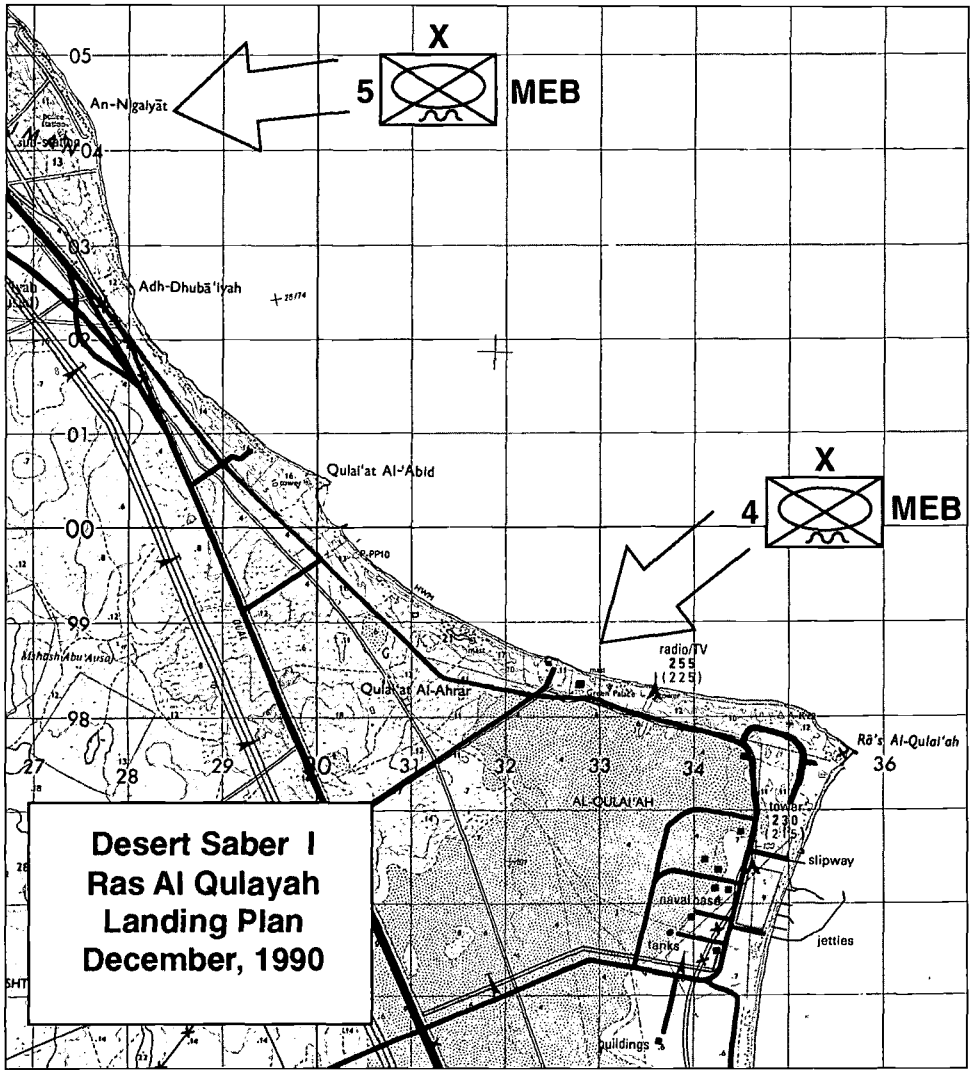
*Adm Mauz asserted he never favored this option and viewed the resulting planning as almost a training exercise. (Mauz Comments)

**This name caused some confusion because the British attack in support of Desert Storm was codenamed Operation Desert Sabre.


X
5
MEB
X
4
MEB
An-Ngalyāt
Adh-Dhubā'iyah
Qulai'at Al-'Abid
Qulai'at Al-Ahrar
radio/TV
255
(225)
Rā's Al-Qulai'ah
AL QULAI'AH
tower
230
(215)
slipway
naval base
tanks
jetties
buildings
Desert Saber I
Ras Al Qulayah
Landing Plan
December, 1990

of the amphibious task force commander. It is established to ensure unity of command, to minimize confusion that might lead to fratricide, and to ensure proper use and coordination of a wide variety of supporting arms. A single commander controls all movement and is responsible for fire support coordination within the AOA. He may delegate part of this authority to the advance force commander before the ATF arrives in the AOA or to the landing force commander after the forces are firmly established ashore, but outside agencies must have expressed permission to enter into, fire into, or pass through the AOA. The AOA is terminated upon completion of the amphibious operation.

At Ras Al Qulayah advance force operations would begin on D minus seven. The supporting operations, mine sweeping and naval gunfire support, would be conducted by a surface action force, TF 151. The Desert Saber AOA would be activated five days before the assault. From that point Admiral LaPlante would control all seaborne, air, and ground activities within the AOA until it was dissolved. Admiral LaPlante could delegate coordinating authority for shore operations to General Jenkins once the Marines had landed. Once MarCent and JFC forces linked up, the AOA would be terminated.

The mission was to interdict lines of communication, fix enemy forces on the coastline, and establish a beachhead to secure the naval facility and port area at Ras Al Qulayah. General Jenkins intended to isolate the force beachhead by attacking enemy concentrations with heavy air and naval gunfire support. The Marines would land at night and swiftly establish blocking positions before the enemy could react. The point of main effort would be the attack to seize the naval base and block the main supply route from Mina Saud. Once blocking positions were established, it was imperative that a rapid buildup of combat supplies and equipment take place on the first day. On the second day the beachhead would be expanded and specific link-up points would be established while tactical air continued to isolate the battlefield.[197]

The landing would be a surface-heavy assault by two forces. The landings would take place between An Nigaiyat and the Ras Al Qulayah Peninsula. One mechanized combined arms task force would land in the vicinity of Adh Dhubayah and attack north to establish blocking positions north and west of Umm Qasabah. Heliborne reinforcements would land and be integrated into these defensive positions to prevent Iraqi penetrations of the force beachhead line from the north and northwest. The other mechanized force would land at Qulaiat Al Abid, attack south to capture the port and naval base, then establish a blocking position astride the main supply route south of Al Adami. Heliborne reinforcements would also be integrated into these positions. Aircraft and LAVs would screen the west flank to provide early warning of enemy movement, delay penetration of the force beachhead line, and support economy of force operations. Marine or Joint Forces Command, East (JFC-E) units attacking north from the Saudi border would link-up with the landing force in the vicinity of Al Adami.[198]

When General Jenkins and Admiral LaPlante forwarded their joint concept of operations for Admiral Mauz' approval on 21 November it included some controversial assumptions: the landing force would consist of two regimental landing

MajGen John J. Sheehan served on board the flagship Blue Ridge *as Commander, U.S. Marine Central Command (Forward), from January through March 1991.*

teams; all priority I and II, class A and B targets, would be destroyed before establishment of the AOA; all islands and oil platforms located in the seaward approach lanes or capable of interdicting the landing would be neutralized; an

ammunition ship would be dedicated to support the ATF; and a minimum of 12 naval gunfire support ships would be needed.*

An in-depth intelligence study estimated 11,000 Iraqi soldiers were within 10 kilometers of the proposed landing beaches and there were no less than three mechanized/tank brigades in reserve nearby. This study convinced General Jenkins that he could not achieve success with the forces at hand, which consisted of only two battalion landing teams in November. General Jenkins, therefore, recommended the recall of the 13th MEU(SOC) from WestPac and the addition of at least one more regimental landing team. Both requests were granted. Instead of just one additional regimental landing team, however, the much more powerful 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade was ordered to the Gulf and the 13th MEU(SOC) ordered to return.[199]

The Ras Al Qulayah plans were refined at coordination meetings with I MEF, NavCent, and supporting task force staffs throughout December. Discussion topics included the size of the AOA, link-up procedures, logistics support, and naval gunfire support. These were difficult issues that continually had to be revisited and would later surface as sore spots when planning other amphibious landings. The Ras Al Qulayah option was eventually replaced by an amphibious operation at Ash Shuaybah because of poor hydrography and a change in MarCent plans that shifted I MEF's point of attack.**

MarCent Forward

On 6 January, Major General Sheehan and five field grade officers bearing the imposing title MarCent Forward arrived on board the *Blue Ridge*. They had been sent by General Gray to assist the NavCent staff. Until that time the primary Marine spokesmen on the NavCent staff were the Fleet Marine Force officer and two Marine staff officers, in addition to Commander Gordon Holder, USN, who was an effective spokesman for amphibious action.[200] The addition of MarCent Forward, collocated with the NavCent staff, resolved most of the problems the MFA had experienced since the beginning of the deployment.*** As General Jenkins later stated: "We should never again deploy without placing a team of [amphibious] planners under a senior Marine general on the fleet or JTF flagship." Admiral LaPlante did not share General Jenkins' belief.[201]

General Sheehan and his planners did not have much time to adjust. The day

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*Only seven ships were eventually assigned fire support missions.

**General Jenkins claimed a lack of command interest, asserting Admiral Mauz was hesitant, General Schwarzkopf was neutral at best, and General Powell was opposed. (Jenkins Comments)

***Predictably, some on the NavCent staff blamed the ATF/MFA staffs and vice versa; no matter who was at fault, the situation improved after MarCent Fwd came on board (Mauz, Arthur, LaPlante, Jenkins, Rowe, and Wickersham comments).

MarCent Forward reported to the *Blue Ridge* Admiral LaPlante and General Jenkins received a warning order from Admiral Arthur directing the development of a detailed concept of operations for a landing in the vicinity of Ash Shuaybah.[202] A joint MarCent/Navcent operations conference was held on board the *Blue Ridge* on 10 January to discuss future operations. At this conference it became clear that things had changed with respect to amphibious operations. Admiral Arthur, who General Schwarzkopf described as "very aggressive," wanted to step up amphibious planning and was willing to move naval forces into the northern Gulf.[203]

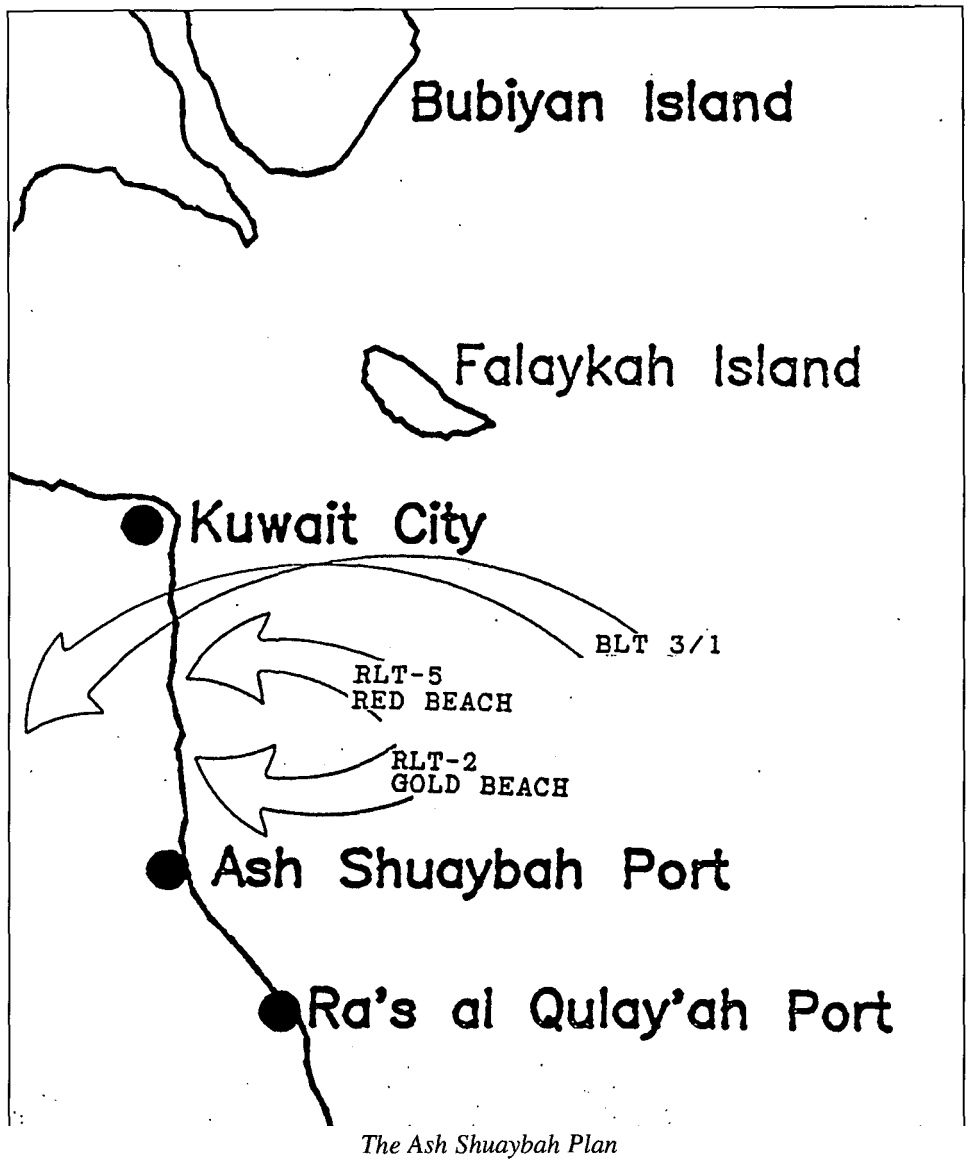
The conference was followed by an initiating directive on the 14th, "the first initiating directive in four and a half months at sea," General Jenkins later noted.[204] This key document had been drafted by General Sheehan and his staff. It cleared up command relationships, delineated operational areas, and gave the Marine Forces Afloat specific missions. The Marines were to "conduct amphibious operations to include assaults, raids, and/or demonstrations in support of the theater campaign, to deceive, fix and destroy enemy forces throughout the Kuwaiti Theater."[205] The directive set forth guidelines for an amphibious assault at Ash Shuaybah, but it also discussed a major raid on Faylakah Island, amphibious demonstrations off the Kuwaiti coast and Iraq's Al Faw Peninsula, and a series of raids against a wide variety of targets.*[206]

The object of the Ash Shuaybah assault was to establish a logistics support base to support land operations to retake Kuwait City. The seizure of Faylakah Island would convince the Iraqis that further amphibious assaults were about to be made into Kuwait Bay or at Bubiyan Island. Amphibious demonstrations at Al Faw, Bubiyan Island, Faylakah Island, and the Kuwait coast would fix Iraqi forces to the coast. Raids along the Al Faw/Umm Qasr/Bubiyan axis would inflict casualties, destroy equipment and facilities, disrupt enemy cohesion, and force Iraqi defenders to leave their fortifications making them more vulnerable to air interdiction. Admiral Arthur emphasized that "the successful accomplishment of these raid missions is viewed as more important than the tactical value of the target."[207]

Ash Shuaybah Plan

Admiral LaPlante issued a concept of operations for the Ash Shuaybah option on 11 January. It addressed primarily Navy matters, but had a significant impact on Marine plans as well. Among Admiral LaPlante's assumptions were: 13 days would be required to clear the fire support and sea echelon areas and the discovery of VSW mines would further delay operations; link-up between MarCent and the landing force might take longer than 72 hours; the oil refinery, liquid gas plant, and all tankers in the vicinity of Shuaybah port would have to be destroyed

*Gen Jenkins later lamented that "this initiating directive came too late to effect any change in the overall campaign" (Jenkins, "Letter to Editor," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Nov94, p. 12).



The Ash Shuaybah Plan

prior to the assault; the Iraqis might pump a heavy concentration of crude oil into the offshore area just before the assault began; and naval support element personnel would be available to conduct in-stream offloading of MSC ships.[208] The mine countermeasures timetable, logistics support for MarCent, and the potential for extensive collateral damage eventually became critical factors affecting the decision not to land the landing force.[209]

The initiating directive of 14 January assigned the MFA to be prepared to "seize the Ash Shuaybah port in order to maintain a steady flow of logistics for I MEF and ArCent forces." The joint amphibious staff soon thereafter prepared a concept of operations.[210] The selected scheme of maneuver closely paralleled the Ras Al Qulayah plan using two regimental landing teams crossing separate beaches and reinforced by heliborne units. Extensive use of supporting arms would

eliminate direct threats to the landing force, destroy or neutralize enemy forces within the force beachhead, and interdict targets that could threaten the landing force. No decisions were made as to exact landing beaches nor was a specific timetable or landing date established.[211]

A major point of discussion throughout the planning was the size of the amphibious objective area. This was a thorny issue that had caused problems during the Ras Al Qulayah planning as well. It was no easy task to carve out a classic AOA because of inter-Service and intra-Coalition issues. The joint forces air component commander, Lieutenant General Charles A. Horner, USAF, controlled the skies above Kuwait and was not about to violate single air manager doctrine by granting exclusive air space to a subordinate commander in another component. The ground attack into Kuwait was going to be a multinational operation by MarCent and JFC units. Lieutenant General Boomer and Major General Al (Al Mutairi) Sultan (JFC) had already been given tactical areas of responsibility within the proposed AOA; I MEF was assigned the central sector, JFC-E was given the right (coastal) flank, and JFC-N was allotted the left flank from Umm Gudair to Wadi Al Batin.

Major General Jenkins wanted a doctrinally large AOA that had sufficient size to conduct all necessary air, sea, and land operations under the solitary control of the amphibious task force commander. One reason this proposed AOA was rejected was political. If a large AOA was adopted all forces within it would be placed under the operational control of the U.S. amphibious force commander. This was not possible because the Coalition leaders had previously agreed Americans would not command Arab forces. A second limiting factor was the lack of space. Kuwait was a cramped area compared to the Pacific Ocean in World War II or even the coast of Korea in 1950.

Another issue was unity of command. Had a traditional AOA been established the Iraqis would have been firing on I MEF and JFC-E units from within the AOA. This situation would have required an immediate response and close cooperation by three separate and very diverse components—NavCent, MarCent, and JFC. All agreed this would not be possible. Boomer did not want to surrender operational control of any of his units in the midst of a high tempo offensive and felt that MarCent aviation assets supporting the I MEF attack must remain firmly under his control at all times.

The solution was a compromise that reduced the land portion of the AOA to the size of the force beachhead, an area less than 10 square miles. A temporary expedient was set up to facilitate the link-up with MarCent ground forces. A series of fire support coordination lines were established with agreement that MFA aircraft attacking targets north of these lines would check with the JFACC airborne command and control center, and MFA aircraft operating south of the lines would coordinate with the MarCent direct air support center. The AFCC on board the *Okinawa* would control air operations within the AOA from the onset of advance force operations on D-Minus Seven until the official stand-up of the AOA on D-Minus Five. All air operations within the AOA, except helicopter ship-to-shore movement, from then on would be directed by the tactical air control center on

board the *Nassau* until the landing force was firmly established on shore. Control of air space over the landward sector of the AOA would then be delegated to the 4th MEB tactical air direction center. The AOA would be dissolved upon the completion of link-up operations ashore.

The 13th MEU(SOC) was assigned duties as the advance force and would be the afloat reserve force. This allowed Colonel Rhodes maximum latitude for planning and control. The 4th and 5th MEB staffs remained separate command elements with the 4th MEB staff acting as the lead planners. General Rowe later attributed the success of this organization to General Jenkins who gave mission-type orders and closely monitored planning, but gave his subordinates wide latitude.[212]

The Ash Shuaybah landing plan was actually two simultaneous and separate assaults under the tactical control of 4th MEB. Regimental Landing Team 5 would come ashore over Red Beach, just north of Al Fintas and then move inland to establish blocking positions that covered the northern approaches, particularly the coastal highway from Kuwait City.* Oilfields and urban sprawl would channel Iraqis attacking from the northwest or west, exposing them to air interdiction and antitank weapons. The beachhead center would be screened by LAVs and tactical air. Regimental Landing Team 2 would land south of Al Fintas with BLT 1/2 and BLT 3/2 crossing Gold Beach Two, and an armored task force composed of the 2d LAI detachment and 4th MEB tanks would assault Gold Beach One.

Each MEB landing plan was different because of the specific task organization of the respective brigades. The 4th MEB would strike on a broad front using landing waves abreast. The assault would put the maximum amount of combat power ashore in the shortest time in order to press the attack to capture Ash Shuaybah, as the 4th MEB had sufficient minefield breaching equipment to accomplish the mission quickly. The 5th MEB had limited breaching assets, therefore Brigadier General Rowe elected to use one narrow breach. Once through the Iraqi lines the maneuver units would spread out to establish blocking positions, await helilifted reinforcements, and prepare for further operations.[213]

In the north, RLT 5 would assume a defensive stance, but after coming ashore RLT 2 would attack south and southwest to clear an area to support logistics-over-the-shore operations in the vicinity of the Kuwait Oil Company's north pier and set up blocking positions in the vicinity of Al Ahmadi. On order, RLT 2 would continue its attack south to seize the Ash Shuaybah port facility.

Landing force engagement areas were planned northwest, west, and south of the force beachhead line to allow maximum use of supporting arms to destroy Iraqi counterattacks. Here, unlike at Ras Al Qulayah, fire support ships could close the beach and the entire landward edge of the AOA was within range of naval gunfire. Potential link-up points were identified west of Al Ahmadi and south or west of Al Maqwa. There was also a possibility of linking-up with JFC-

*Because RLT 5 was landing in column there were no numbered beaches in the 5th MEB landing zone.

E forces moving north along the coastal highway. The exact timing of the amphibious assault would be keyed to the MEF's breach of the second barrier line with an eight-hour "go/no go" window of opportunity.[214]

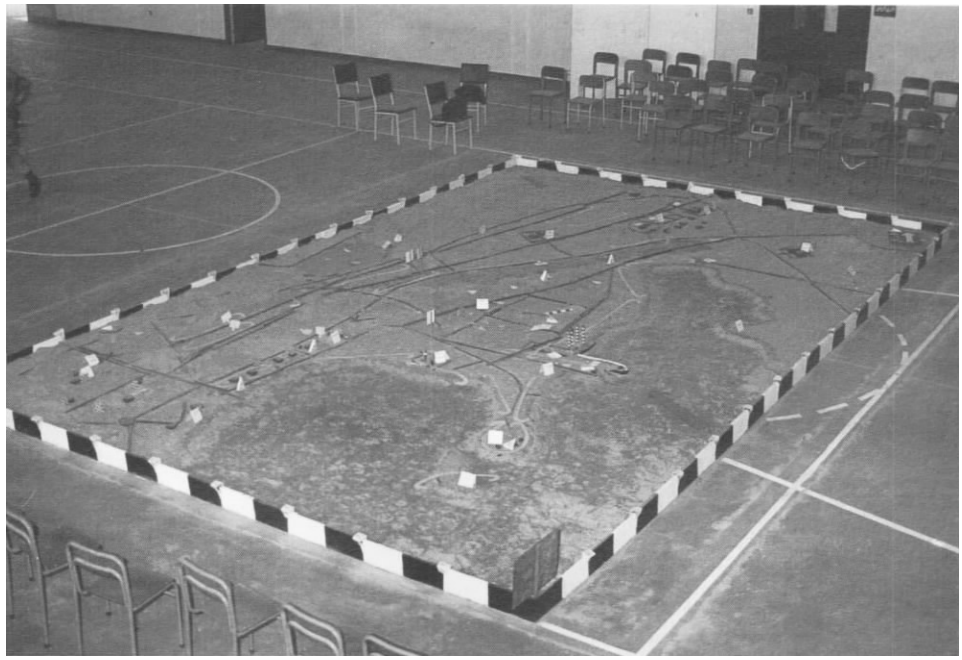
The Al Fintas landing area, located about eight miles south of Kuwait City, was divided into Red Beach in the north and Gold Beach to the south. The landing sites were defended by the Iraqi *11th Infantry Division.* The *45th Infantry Brigade* was dug-in north of Al Fintas at Red Beach. South of Al Fintas, defending the Gold Beaches in the vicinity of Abu Halayah, was the *16th Infantry Brigade.* The *35th Infantry Brigade* was located inland to guard the eastern approach to Kuwait International Airport. Ash Shuaybah port was defended by the *451st* and *452d Infantry Brigades* of the *19th Infantry Division.* Nearby reserve forces included the *20th Mechanized Brigade*, the *15th Mechanized Brigade*, and the *26th Tank Brigade.* It was estimated that there were about 10,000 infantry in the landing area and an additional 3,000 troops mounted in 300 tanks and armored personnel carriers just inland of the force beachhead line.

While Ash Shuaybah was a better target than Ras Al Qulayah, General Jenkins still felt he had been handed a very tough assignment. He had to land a division-size force, seize and clear nine miles of urban terrain, establish a beachhead, and have a logistics support base functioning within 72 hours. All of this had to be done while facing a counterattack by three Iraqi heavy brigades. Although he had reservations about the proposed timetable, General Jenkins was positive he could achieve success using massive fire support. In one message to Admiral Arthur he stated: "I intend to destroy everything in front of me and on the flanks to keep our casualties down."[215] He further elaborated that he wanted the battleships to pound the beach progressively from the shoreline to the inland limit of the AOA and hoped "that whoever survives will be in no mood to fight when the Marines get there."[216]

MarCent Offensive Plans

After receiving Central Command's concept of operations for Desert Storm in November, Lieutenant General Boomer ordered his staff to create a complementary Marine offensive plan. Major General Jenkins was kept abreast of these plans and subsequent changes at a series of MarCent-NavCent plenary sessions held during December and early January. The original document, I MEF Operations Order 91-0001, envisioned a link-up by MarCent forces attacking up the coastal road and an amphibious force landing in southeast Kuwait. As time passed the operations order was repeatedly amended to reflect enemy movements and other situational changes.[217]

One reason for this constant tinkering was that Lieutenant General Boomer had misgivings about the existing plan. It seemed to violate the tenets of maneuver warfare by trying to overwhelm a numerically superior enemy at the most likely point of attack. Boomer was also troubled by a Center for Naval Analyses prediction that between 9,667 and 10,052 casualties could be expected if the campaign lasted more than a week. After careful study of Iraqi dispositions, relief



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DM-SC-93-05227

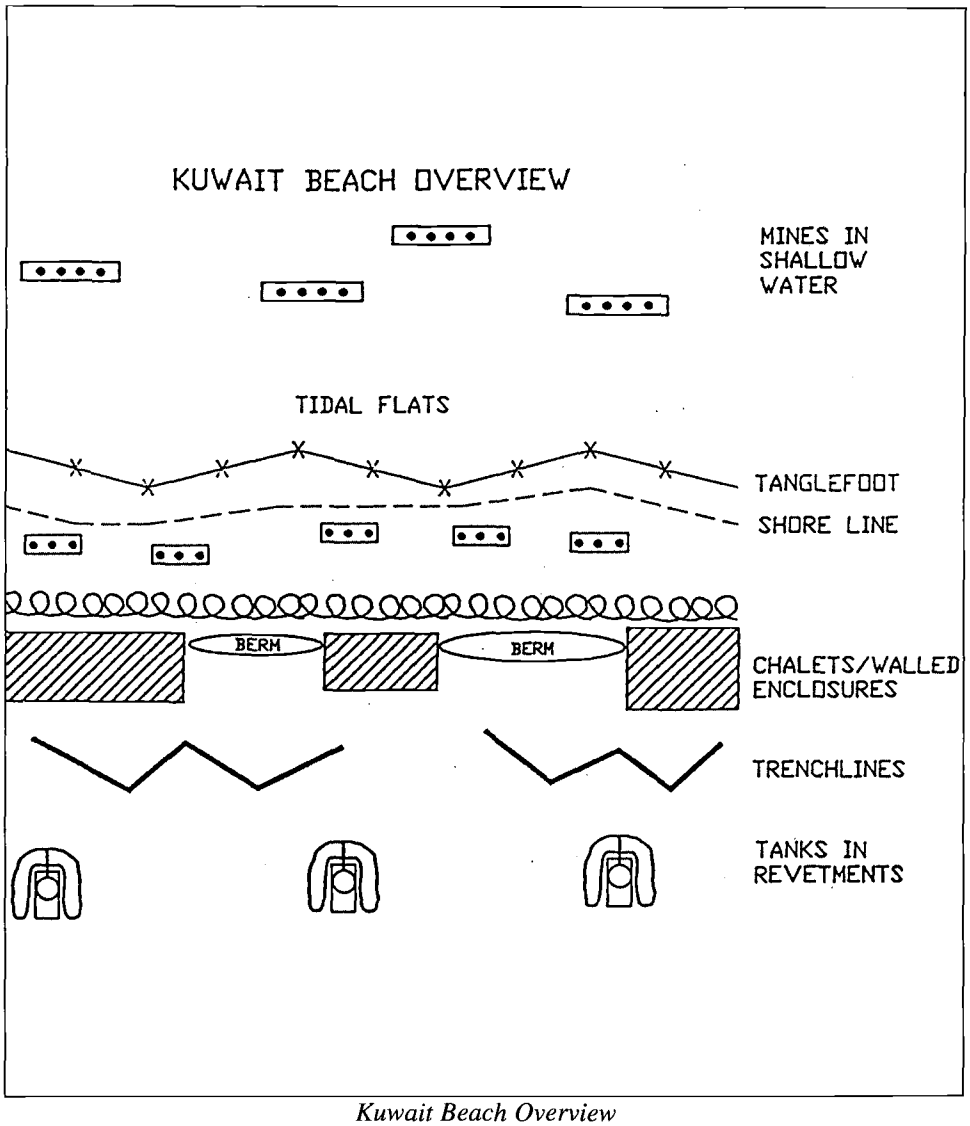
A close-up view of an Iraqi sand table found in the Al Jahrah School gymnasium after the Operation Desert Storm ceasefire. This is a graphic example of the effectiveness of the "strategic distraction" caused by an amphibious presence. Saddam was worried enough about his seaward flank to order the creation of elaborate defense plans and diverted many scarce resources to stop an amphibious assault.

from having to support JFC-E breaching operations, and reassessment of available logistics support, he began to consider moving the point of attack about 55 miles inland.

In mid-January, Boomer threw out the old plan and opted instead to mount a two-division breach to quickly capture Al Jaber Air Base then attack north to isolate Kuwait City by capturing Al Jahrah road junction and Kuwait International Airport. This bold new concept utilized the principles of mass, maneuver, and surprise. It allowed the Marines to concentrate their combat power using an unexpected avenue of approach to strike where the enemy was weakest.

On the down side, there were tremendous risks involved. This daring plan pushed the principles of economy of force and security to the limit. Boomer was committing all of his ground forces to the initial assault and would have no operational reserve in case the attack stalled or the Iraqis pushed into Saudi Arabia. Enemy attention would have to be diverted from the actual point of attack and a reserve force would have to be quickly constituted for the new plan to succeed. This new scheme of maneuver, coupled with obvious reluctance about an amphibious assault by the upper levels of command, led Boomer to make a fateful decision.

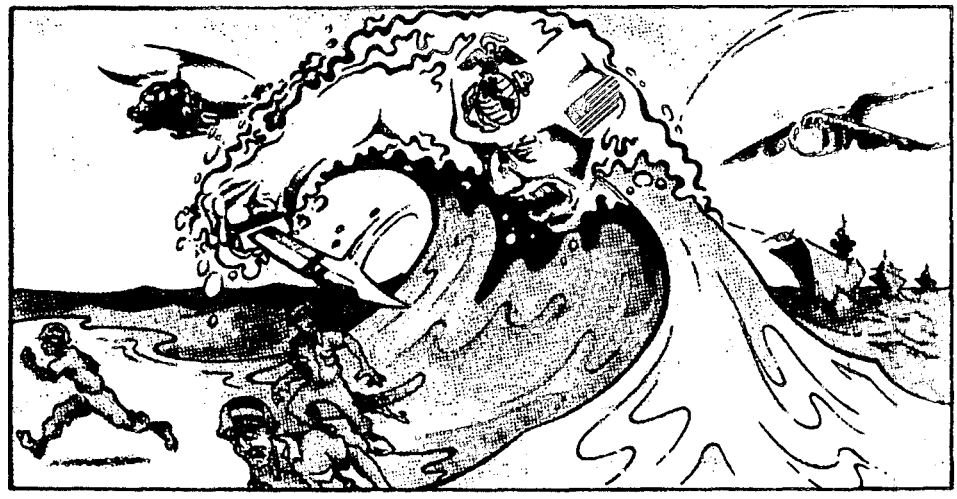
At noon on 2 February, an important naval planning conference was held on board the *Blue Ridge*. Admiral Arthur asked for the meeting so he could obtain a "green light" to begin countermine operations. The primary conferees were



Kuwait Beach Overview

General Schwarzkopf, Lieutenant General Boomer, and Admiral Arthur. Major General Jenkins, Brigadier General Rowe, Admiral LaPlante, and Admiral Clarey were not present even though the main topic was future amphibious plans. It had been obvious throughout Desert Shield that there was great reluctance at high levels to sanction a major amphibious assault, but with the onset of Desert Storm a final decision had to be made.[218]

The first issue raised was Navy countermine operations. It would take about a week of preparatory operations to conduct preliminary reconnaissance and neutralize the Iraqi coastal defenses before mine countermeasures operations could begin. Another 13-18 days would be needed to sweep the fire support and sea echelon areas to attain 80 percent mine clearance. If very shallow water mines were discovered, another two to five days would have to be added to the timeline. When another three to five days of naval gunfire preparation were added, the



This U.S. Marine-specific propaganda leaflet was one of many different types that were distributed along the Kuwait coast and at Faylakah Island. Post-conflict interviews revealed almost all Iraqis had read the leaflet and many had one or more in their possession.

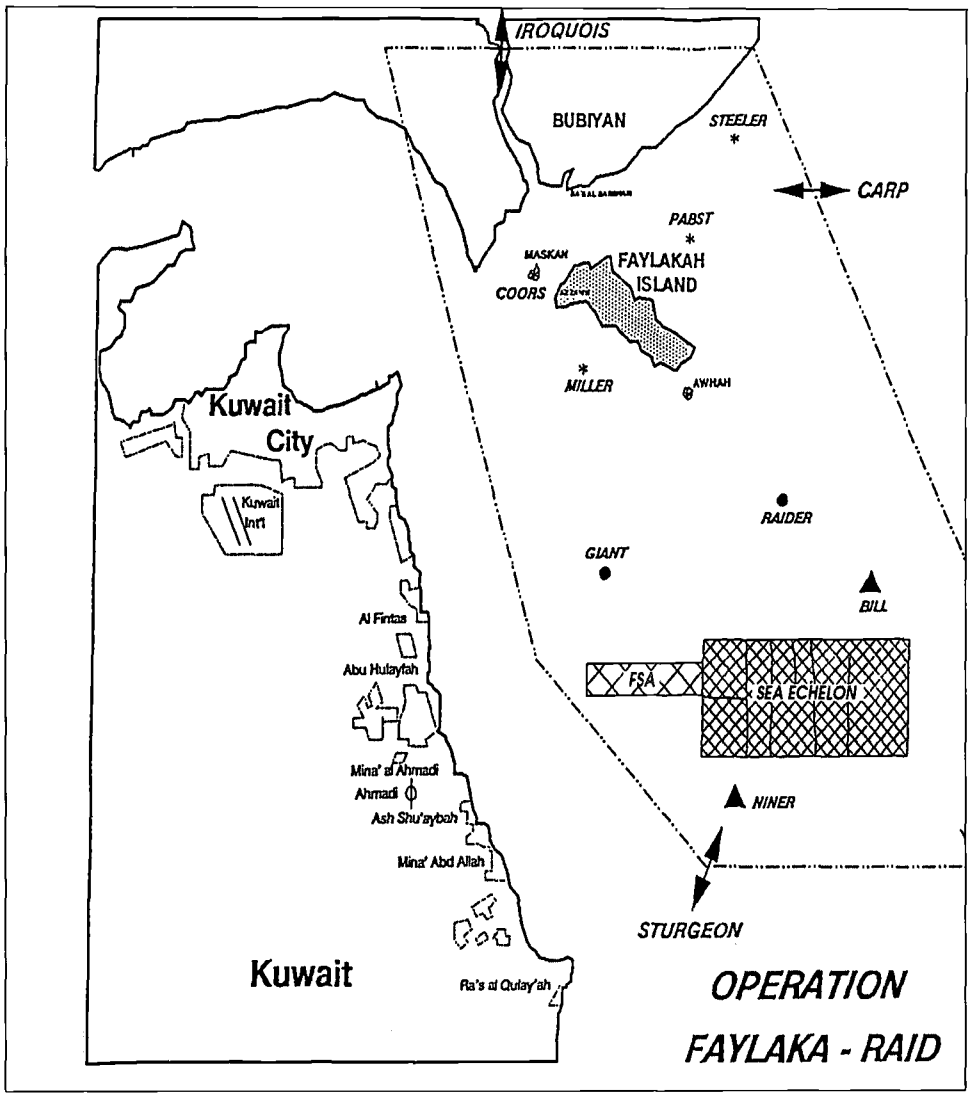
amphibious supporting operations could require up to a month and might postpone the landings until early March.*

General Schwarzkopf was not happy with what he had heard so far and found the proposed timeline unacceptable. Unfortunately, the news got worse. Admiral Arthur was worried about shore-based Silkworm missiles, suicide attacks by Exocet-armed aircraft or explosive-laden small boats, and the latent explosive power of the Ash Shuaybah petro-chemical storage areas and natural gas plant. To protect the amphibious task force and ease the Marines' way onto the beach, Arthur noted that every highrise building between the beach and the highway would have to be leveled by naval gunfire and air strikes. At this point General Schwarzkopf, harkening back to his Vietnam experience and well aware that General Powell shared his concerns about collateral damage, said he was not prepared to "destroy Kuwait in order to save it."[219]

The meeting then reached its climax. It was a moment of high drama when General Schwarzkopf turned to the Marine commander and asked Lieutenant General Boomer: "Walt, can you conduct your attack without an amphibious assault?" Boomer silently mulled over his options. Until recently an amphibious assault had been absolutely necessary because of logistics limitations, but a recent change of plans made it possible to attack without over-the-beach logistics support. Boomer knew there would be later criticism if there was no assault, but he had also pledged not to threaten Marine lives just to do an amphibious assault.**

*It was leter determined that there were no mines in the either the sea echelon or fire support areas. (Jenkins comments II)

**Gen Boomer did not have operational control of the MFA, but the MarCent plan could dictate its tactical employment through the CinC.



After what he described as "the longest 30 seconds of my life," Boomer replied the Marine ground attack could proceed without an amphibious landing.[220] However, he quickly added that minesweeping operations must continue in order to convince the Iraqis that an amphibious landing was on the way. He also insisted an amphibious assault had to be an option in case the ground attack ran into trouble. Schwarzkopf concurred. Planning would continue and raids and deception operations would be used to fool the Iraqis, but the amphibious focus now shifted from Ash Shuaybah to Faylakah Island.

Faylakah Island Plans

After the *Blue Ridge* conference Admiral Arthur sent a message summarizing the decisions made. He stated the amphibious mission was now to "hold the enemy in place and deceive him regarding...the main effort."[221] A 20-raid pack-

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-10372

A member of the multinational explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team studies an Iraqi mine washed up on the beach. EOD team members spent many days following the cease-fire defusing Iraqi munitions.

age was put together to support the strategic deception plan. These raids were intended to convince the Iraqis that the Marines were planning to strike Umm Qasr, Al Faw, and into Kuwait Bay. They concentrated on "soft targets" located between Al Faw and Mina Saud. Amphibious demonstrations were also planned for Ras Al Qulayah and the area southwest of Al Faw.

To further the amphibious distraction, the 4th MEB began to seriously consider a major raid at Faylakah Island. Faylakah was located inside the Gulf about midway between, and just east of, the northern tip of Kuwait City and southern Bubiyan Island. This "gateway to Kuwait Bay" was about 10 miles long and 5 miles wide. The terrain was relatively flat. The town of Az Zwar was on the west coast, archeological sites and ancient ruins dotted the center, and the Iraqis had constructed defensive positions along the eastern end of the island. There were two small uninhabited islands nearby, Miskan to the northwest and Auhah to the southeast. Faylakah was believed to be defended by up to 3,500 men of the *440th Marine Infantry Brigade..*[222]

The first concept called for the landing force to conduct a simultaneous surface and helicopter assault at night by two battalions. It would be an over-the-horizon raid using helicopters and LCACs supported by 16-inch battleship main batteries and air support by aircraft from the ATF, Battle Force Zulu, and 3d MAW. Extensive air and naval gunfire would fix, neutralize, and destroy enemy forces on the island. The landing force would come ashore on the south side of the

island, capture Az Zwar, then continue the attack east to clear remaining enemy forces. L-Hour was slated to be 0230 due to tides. After extensive discussions between the CATF and CLF and their staffs, it was agreed that the raid force would stay on the island no more than 12 hours and then withdraw under cover of darkness.[223]

On 6 February, Admiral Arthur issued a warning order to begin planning a destruction raid on Faylakah Island. The raid force would be composed of elements of the 4th MEB on board ships of a specially formed amphibious task group. The mission was to attrit enemy forces on the island and confuse enemy forces in the KTO as to the true point of main effort by Coalition forces. Codenamed Desert Slash, the raid was tentatively scheduled for one or two days prior to G-Day. The intent was to strike quickly without becoming decisively engaged while destroying SAM missile sites and antiaircraft positions. It was hoped this raid would keep Iraqi forces in eastern Kuwait from rapidly reacting to the I MEF attack which was tentatively planned for 20 February.[224]

Major General Jenkins borrowed a page from Marine Corps history in planning the raid. The 13th MEU(SOC) would land at Auhah Island and establish an artillery fire support base before the landings, a scheme of maneuver similar to one used by the 4th Marine Division at Roi-Namur in 1944. Colonel Hobbs, commanding RLT 2, was directed to develop a detailed concept of operations for the Faylakah raid and Colonel Rhodes was to do the same for the artillery raid at Auhah. Admiral Clarey was to develop a concept of operations for a simultaneous amphibious feint at Ash Shuaybah to further confuse the Iraqis and draw their attention away from the real attack.

The Faylakah raid was the cause of one of the more intense misunderstandings of the Gulf War. Admiral Arthur issued an "execute" order for the Faylakah raid on 11 February.[225] This message was actually a movement order directing the start of mine countermeasure operations and informed appropriate naval task groups when to move into the objective area. In Riyadh, however, General Schwarzkopf and his staff misunderstood the message. They assumed Arthur had launched an assault without permission and quickly flashed a message ordering the NavCent commander to explain his actions. When the smoke finally cleared and both parties understood what had taken place, Schwarzkopf asked Admiral Arthur to Riyadh to present a detailed operations brief on 15 February.[226]

Admiral LaPlante and Major General Jenkins flew to the *Blue Ridge* for preliminary meetings with Admiral Arthur, General Sheehan, and Rear Admiral Daniel P. March. The next morning all five men flew to CentCom Headquarters in Riyadh to brief General Schwarzkopf and his staff. At the end of the meeting, General Schwarzkopf told General Jenkins he was in favor of such a raid and thought it should be carried out, but that he was having a hard time selling it in Washington. He also set the raid date as no earlier than 22 February. Admiral LaPlante and General Jenkins then returned to the ATF which was on station just north of the United Arab Emirates.[227]

On 18 February, Desert Slash Operations Order 1-91 was issued.[228] Regimental Landing Team 2, less one battalion landing team, would conduct a

simultaneous surface and heliborne raid in the vicinity of a large recreation beach east of Ras Al Qihah to capture as many Iraqis and destroy as much equipment as possible within the 12 hours allotted. Battalion Landing Team 1/2—supported by 20 CH-46s, 8 CH-53s, and 13 UH-1N/AH-1Ws—would make a helicopter assault into designated landing zones inside the recreation area, then would attack west and northwest to destroy targets in the vicinity of Az Zwar. A task-organized armored unit would land by LCAC with 35 LAVs, 8 tanks, and 20 humvee-mounted TOWs to destroy specified targets and screen the east flank of the recreation area.* One heliborne company and one AAV-mounted mechanized company were designated reserve forces.

Colonel Rhodes planned a night over-the-horizon artillery raid that would use one reinforced rifle company to secure Auhah Island. The raid force would establish a fire support base with four M198 155mm howitzers, prepare an emergency refueling and divert landing site for helicopters supporting the raid, then withdraw on order after RLT 2 had departed Faylakah. One company from BLT 1/4 was the MEU reserve and had to be ready to support either the 13th MEU(SOC) at Auhah or RLT 2 on Faylakah.

These plans were overcome by events when the *Tripoli* and the *Princeton* hit mines about 40 miles east of Kuwait. Admiral Arthur then decided it would not be feasible to launch the planned large-scale raid from beyond the Durrah Oilfield, so Operation Desert Slash was dropped. After the mine countermeasure force opened a channel through the minefield and discovered no mines inside the fire support and sea echelon areas 22 miles south of Faylakah, a modified Desert Slash was revived. The original plan was revamped to suit changed circumstances. The new raid force was cut to about one-half its original size, but the plan kept the same general outline. The LCAC-mounted raiders would move through the channel to the sea echelon area under cover of darkness. From there they would turn north and land at Faylakah. A heliborne force would simultaneously land to destroy specific targets. The Auhah artillery raid plan was unchanged except for compressing the timeline.

The plan was replaced by another that relied upon only the 13th MEU for a reduced-scope night destruction raid at Faylakah. One rifle company would land at the eastern end of Faylakah to destroy the Silkworm missile site while a second force would support the raid force by fire from Auhah. The total time from launch to recovery would be less than six hours.

Amphibious plans in the Gulf included a half dozen feints, two dozen raids, and major assaults at Al Faw, Ras Al Qulayah, Ash Shuaybah, and Faylakah. The reasons most plans were canceled varied, but all were affected by concerns about mines, collateral damage, force ratios, and friendly casualties. Doctrinal issues like establishing AOAs, the proper sequence for amphibious operations, and command and control of amphibious forces, were recurring problems that hindered every plan.

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*This unit was composed of Det Hq; Co B, 2d LAI; Co C, 2d LAI; Med/Log Det; Co B, 1st LAI (13th MEU[SOC]); and Co A, 2d Tk Bn.

The Marine Forces Afloat were a viable alternative in General Schwarzkopf's arsenal and could have landed if the need arose. Schwarzkopf made this very clear at his 27 February news brief when he stated: "We had every intention of conducting amphibious operations." He later noted that if the amphibious deception had been less effective or the inland Iraqi defense more resolute, the seaward flank would have become Saddam's weak point. As he later wrote: "It was [reassuring] to me as Commander in Chief to know I had this potent alternative available to ensure a quick and speedy victory should the original plan fail."[229] "The Marine Forces Afloat were ready and could have landed," Brigadier General Rowe later commented.[230]

4th MEB and 13th MEU Operations from the Sea

Storm at Sea

More than five months of futile diplomatic negotiations came to an abrupt end when the long-awaited Coalition offensive began. The midnight stillness that had settled over the Iraqi capital of Baghdad was suddenly shattered by a series of explosions in the early morning hours of 17 January. Soon, the dark night sky glowed from the light of tracer rounds fired by panic-stricken gunners who searched for unseen Coalition aircraft with unaimed shots. This aerial bombardment marked the onset of Operation Desert Storm, a carefully crafted campaign to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait. These first air strikes were only the opening moves of a well-orchestrated air offensive. Follow-on strikes destroyed strategic and industrial targets, interdicted supply lines to isolate Iraqi forces inside Kuwait, and mercilessly pounded frontline defenders for 38 days.

When the uneasy calm of Desert Shield gave way to the sudden lightning of Desert Storm, Admiral Stanley Arthur, an aggressive, highly decorated naval aviator, initiated a naval sea control campaign to wrest the northern Gulf from the Iraqis. There were three major threats to Coalition naval forces operating there: the Iraqi Navy; underwater mines; and antiship missiles. Each threat would have to be eliminated before the Navy could move into position to support planned amphibious landings by the Marine Forces Afloat.

The destruction of the Iraqi Navy began on 21 January when an Iraqi T-43 mine warfare ship was disabled by American A-6E Intruders and it ended when the final OSA missile attack boat was sunk on 14 February. Saddam's navy was small, with less than 90 combatants, but it was equipped with modern weaponry. It operated from two major naval bases. The smaller and southern-most of these was Umm Qasr located on the narrow waterway between the Iraqi coast and Warbah Island not far from Kuwait's northeastern border. The largest base was at Basrah on the Shatt Al Arab, the Gulf outlet formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In January, the Iraqi Navy included 7 OSA missile attack boats (each mounting four antiship missiles), 29 assorted patrol boats, 9 mine warfare ships, 3 Polnocny "C"-class landing ships, a cargo ship, and uncounted miscellaneous tugs and tenders. Most of these ships were later

destroyed or disabled during the Battle of Bubiyan, when Umm Qasr was left in flames by a Coalition air strike and its entry channels were closed by air-delivered mines on 30 January. [231]

While air power pummelled the Iraqi navy, Admiral Arthur turned his attention to the mine and missile threats. The most difficult of these to solve was the underwater mine threat. During the Tanker War fought by Iran and Iraq inside the Persian Gulf from 1980-1988 an American warship and a Kuwaiti ship sailing under American protection struck mines. Although these mines had been planted by the Iranians, Iraq had also used undersea mines during the conflict, giving the Iraqi Navy some experience in underwater mine warfare. In February, Coalition intelligence officers estimated Saddam had sown more than a thousand underwater mines since the onset of Operation Desert Shield. These mines posed a serious obstacle to landing operations anywhere along the Kuwaiti coast. Unfortunately, active mine countermeasure operations had been placed on the back burner before Operation Desert Storm was launched as a result of diplomatic considerations. As it turned out, the mine problem was so serious that General Rowe termed it "the [amphibious] show stopper."[232]

At first, Admiral Arthur had felt the most serious threat to naval supremacy would be Iraq's antiship missiles. About four years earlier, during the Tanker War, the USS *Stark* (FFG 31) was hit by two French-made Exocet antiship missiles fired from an Iraqi aircraft. Memories of this unprovoked attack caused everyone to take the antiship missile threat seriously since Iraq possessed 34 French-made Dassault Mirage F-1 (EQ5/EQ6) strike aircraft and 5 Aerospatiale AS-231J Super Frelon helicopters capable of firing combat-proven Exocet AM-39 extended range air-to-surface antiship missiles.

The second type of antiship missile in Saddam's arsenal was the Silkworm HY-2, a Chinese copy of the Soviet Styx CSSN-1 mobile surface-to-surface antiship missile. American ships had encountered Iranian-fired Silkworm missiles in the Persian Gulf during the Tanker War but, luckily, none of the Silkworms found their mark during the conflict. Silkworm firing sites dotted the coast of Kuwait from Al Faw to Ras Al Qulayah and there was at least one Silkworm battery on Faylakah Island. Some Iraqi Silkworms had been modified for air launches. Four Tupolev TU-16D Badger bombers had been so configured, and a Dassault-Breguet Mystere-Falcon 50 civilian airplane, or "Saddamikaze," had been rigged to carry a Silkworm for a one-way mission.

Iraqi missile threats were, for the most part, neutralized by air strikes and naval gunfire. The Iraqi Air Force was effectively grounded by the air campaign and mounted no successful antiship missions against the ATF. Ground-mounted Silkworms were difficult to spot and hard to target effectively given the restrictions imposed by the cumbersome air tasking order emanating from JFACC at Riyadh. Only two Iraqi Silkworms were fired and neither struck its intended target.[233]

The final step in the sea control campaign was to clear Iraqi forces from offshore oil rigs and occupied islets which served as Iraqi naval support bases. These operations were somewhat reminiscent of Operation Praying Mantis in 1988

when U.S. naval forces in the Persian Gulf raided several oil rigs used as forward support bases by the Iranians. Admiral Arthur's island-clearing campaign opened on 18 January, when the USS *Nicholas* (FFG 47), supported by Free Kuwait patrol boats, cleared Iraqi defenders from drilling platforms in the Durrah Oilfield. This action inflicted a handful of Iraqi casualties and yielded 23 prisoners.[234] Building on this success, Arthur next ordered Colonel Rhodes and the 13th MEU(SOC) staff to begin planning Operation Desert Sting, a surface assault or heliborne raid to capture Jazirat Kobbar.[235]

Operation Desert Sting

While the 4th and 5th MEBs were in the North Arabian Sea conducting Exercise Sea Soldier IV, the 13th MEU separated from the ATF and was sent north into the Persian Gulf. The transit into the Southern Arabian Gulf began on 15 January. As the *Okinawa*, *Ogden*, *Fort McHenry*, *Durham,* and *Cayuga* passed through the Strait of Hormuz they set Condition III—one-third of the crew at combat stations, all watertight doors and hatches secured, and gun positions manned. The night passage was particularly nerve-wracking because the Coalition offensive was slated to begin soon. The five-ship task group quietly slipped through the dangerous narrows between Oman and Iran unnoticed. The movement was unobstructed and Phibron 5 anchored off Dubai in the United Arab Emirates the next day.

This area was popularly known as the "CNN Box" because ships anchored there were able to air Cable Network News (CNN) broadcasts. The news shows were popular because they reduced the sense of isolation imposed by slow mail delivery and kept the Marines up to date about contemporary world events. Although the Marines enjoyed the benefits of on CNN Box, the real reasons for the pause were to conserve fuel and to ease logistics support. The CNN Box was actually the logistics force anchorage, officially termed the "CLF Box" or the "ATF Box." Its waters usually included some large tenders and resupply ships under the protection of two Canadian warships.

During this time Colonel Rhodes activated a landing force operations center to monitor events and plot battle damage from the aerial campaign. Battalion Landing Team 1/4 used the good weather and smooth seas to conduct flight deck physical training and small arms familiarization. Lieutenant Colonel Vanderlinden's HMM(C)-164 enhanced its flying skills with daily flights. MEU Service Support Group 13 took advantage of this time to crossdeck maintenance contact teams via boats and helicopters to conduct preventive maintenance and make minor repairs. This pleasant lull came to an end when Colonel Rhodes received a warning order calling the 13th MEU(SOC) into action.

On 23 January, Admiral Arthur sent an initiating directive to Admiral LaPlante and General Jenkins. Acting as CATF and CLF, respectively, they passed the order on to the PhibRon 5 and 13th MEU commanders. Arthur's directive assigned a codename, stated the mission, established an amphibious operations area, stated the time frame, and delineated command relations. Operation Desert

Sting was going to be an amphibious raid on Kobbar Island, located about 18 miles off the Kuwaiti coast, to capture personnel and equipment and would be conducted within one week. The 13th MEU and ARG A were to operate independent of the MFA and ATF. Colonel Rhodes and Captain Thomas L. McClelland, USN, commanding Amphibious Squadron 5, were authorized to make direct contact with their common superior, CTF 150, and supporting units, TF 151 and TF 154, as necessary.

At that time there was still a very real threat from Iraqi aircraft, naval units, undersea mines, and antiship missiles. Accordingly, Captain McClelland decided to minimize the Iraqi threat by using only two amphibious ships, the *Okinawa* and the *Ogden*. This two-ship task unit left the CNN Box early on the morning of 24 January for a rendezvous with the *Blue Ridge*. Colonel Rhodes and selected staff officers crossdecked from the *Okinawa* to brief Admiral Arthur and to pick up the latest intelligence estimates. Just before his flight left the *Okinawa*, Colonel Rhodes was informed that the raid had been moved to standby status, but that the presentation remained on the table and would proceed as planned. After the briefing officers presented their raid plans to the NavCent staff on the *Blue Ridge*, the *Okinawa* and *Ogden* returned to the anchorage.[236]

On the morning of the 25th, another warning order arrived. This time Colonel Rhodes was to plan additional raids on Umm Al Maradim, as Desert Sting 2, and Qurah Island, as Desert Sting 3. These plans were completed and forwarded for Admiral Arthur's approval on 27 January. The concept was to strike all three targets within 24 hours. This would achieve surprise, maximize the destructive impact, and reduce the Iraqi threat through speed of movement. Both heliborne and small boat raiding forces were to be used. The *Okinawa* and the *Ogden* would approach from the east under cover of darkness using oil platforms to screen their movements. The raids would be conducted from south to north hitting Maradim, Qurah, and Kobbar in rapid succession. Captain Larry L. Richards' "Rigid Raiders" of Company A would land at Maradim Island while reconnaissance teams led by Captains Ignatius P. Liberto and Kenneth Grimes scouted Qurah and Kobbar. Once Maradim was secured Captain Michael J. Brown's Company C, an airborne reserve force mounted in two Super Stallions, would press the attack to seize Qurah. The final assault at Kobbar would be conducted by a third force arriving in HMM-164's Sea Knights. The execute order for Desert Sting was received on the 28th with D-Day set for 29 January.[237]

These plans, however, never came to pass because of other events in the Gulf. On 25 January, a landing force from the USS *Curts* (FFG 38) captured the Qurah garrison after being alerted the Iraqis wished to surrender by two U.S. Army OH-58D observation helicopters supporting combat search and rescue operations.*[238] This eliminated the need for 13th MEU to make forcible entry at Qurah Island, resulting in the cancellation of Desert Sting 3. A Navy reconnaissance flight on the 26th spotted a surrender notice on Maradim Island. This discovery sent

*These aircraft had been renovated during the Army's Helicopter Improvement Program and were called "AHIPs" instead of "Kiowa Warriors," their official designation.

Colonel Rhodes back to the drawing board to again modify his Desert Sting plans. This time he planned to conduct a heliborne enemy prisoner of war evacuation operation instead of an amphibious raid.[239]

The *Okinawa*, which already had the helicopter raid force embarked, was the only amphibious ship assigned to support this revised Operation Desert Sting. She left the CNN Box on 27 January and headed for the northern Gulf. The next day a Kuwaiti Marine detachment transferred to the *Okinawa* to provide translation services and to assist with prisoner handling on the island. This was the first combined combat operation using U.S. and Kuwaiti Marines. An underway rehearsal was held on board the *Okinawa* to practice processing prisoners of war. The task group activated a joint advance force coordination center (AFCC) while the Marines checked communications, issued ammunition, and prepared aviation ordnance. The AFCC included sections from PhibRon 5's flag bridge, the landing force operations center, the tactical air coordination center (TACC), and the supporting arms coordination center (SACC). The AFCC was established in the SACC/TACC on board the *Okinawa*, the only place with sufficient room and enough communications equipment to perform all of the required functions.[240]

The *Okinawa* was joined by the Aegis guided-missile cruiser USS *Mobile Bay* (CG 53) and fire support ships *Curts*, *Nicholas*, *Leftwich* (DD 984), and *Caron* (DD 970) at about 0600 on 28 January. The ships sailed up the Iranian coast before heading west to a position about 30 nautical miles from Umm Al Maradim. This movement used offshore oil platforms to screen the approach. Air cover and support was provided by a Navy Grumman E-2C Hawkeye early warning and air control airplane, a Grumman F-14 Tomcat combat air patrol, a Grumman A-6E Intruder surface strike patrol, Sikorsky SH-3G Sea King and SH-60B Seahawk antisubmarine helicopters, and U.S. Army OH-58D AHIP helicopters flying from the *Curts*.[241]

The Desert Sting AFCC was activated on board the *Okinawa* at 0800 on 29 January. Army and Marine pilots held a face-to-face aviation deconfliction coordination conference before launching. At 0815 the Navy confirmed A-6s would make low-level passes over Maradim at 1130. The action began at about 0855 when the *Leftwich* destroyed a floating mine in the fire support area just west of the Hout oil platforms. Soon thereafter a passing aircraft reported a burning ship and a body floating near the raid area. The aircraft carrier USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) dispatched a search and rescue helicopter to investigate.*

The raid force was composed of Captain Brown's Company C (Reinforced) and a five-man MEU command element. Lieutenant Colonel George W. Flinn, commanding BLT 1/4, assembled the raid force in the hangar deck for a final briefing at 0923. The plan was to make a low-level aircraft sweep of Maradim Island at about 1130. This would determine if the Iraqis were resisting or not and would give Colonel Rhodes about one-half hour to adjust his plans. At about

*Jaguar 614, a SH-3 Sea King SAR helicopter, later reported the ship had sunk and recovered the body of an Iraqi merchant seaman.

1150 two Army AHIPs and two Marine Cobras would take positions to provide observation and suppressive fires as necessary. Four CH-46s would land the assault force and two CH-53s would carry an airborne reserve force. The Sea Knights would shuttle prisoners from Maradim to the *Okinawa* while the Marines continued to search. After all personnel and intelligence materials were evacuated, any remaining weapons and equipment would be destroyed.

The *Okinawa* went to flight quarters at about 1000. The Super Stallions carrying the reserve force lifted off at 1111. The Cobras departed at 1122 then joined the *Curts*' AHIPs at 1134 and headed toward their stations. The raid force was airborne at 1136. At about the same time, Intruders from the USS *Midway* (CV 41) were buzzing the island. They reported no enemy fire and no personnel in sight. At 1141 the AHIPs and Cobras conducted a combat power demonstration to flush out any hidden Iraqis. At 1153 they confirmed no gun positions were manned.

The assault force approached the island under the close watch of the attack helicopters. There was no enemy fire and the insert at the north end of the island was completed at 1201. Colonel Flinn's raid force met no resistance, but found signs of a hasty departure. The Iraqi forces had apparently departed shortly before the Marines arrived. In their haste, they left cooking fires burning and television sets were still turned on. The Marines cautiously searched the buildings and fighting positions using grappling hooks to search for booby traps. During their search the Marines discovered about 300 cases of ammunition, three S-60 57mm antiaircraft guns, two ZPU-1 14.5mm machine guns, two 120mm mortars, 18 SA-7 Grail hand-held antiaircraft missiles, five AK-47 rifles, and a RASIT3190B battlefield surveillance radar. Many documents were also recovered. Major Steven J. Cash, the MEU's intelligence officer, evaluated captured material and equipment to determine what should be kept and what should be destroyed.

The raid lasted just over three hours. The Marines from Company C destroyed all but one of the crew-served weapons. Ammunition was either blown in place or was later dropped into the water from a CH-53. In addition to numerous documents and some observation devices, the raid force brought out one ZPU-1, the Grails, the AK-47s, and the RASIT radar. Before leaving, the Marines raised a Kuwaiti flag and spray painted "Free Kuwait" and "USMC" on the buildings as reminders of what happended for any post-raid Iraqi visitors. A media team flew over the island just in time to photograph an impressive explosion and its attendant mushroom cloud. The raid force departed Umm Al Maradim at 1523, just as Colonel Rhodes received word that about two dozen Iraqi boats were approaching the island.*

After their return, the elated Marines spent several hours posing for pictures and being interviewed. The *Okinawa* returned to its anchorage on 31 January. Captured materials were examined by the Joint Intelligence Center then were sent

*British surface and air units later attacked the flotilla and damaged or destroyed 14 of the 17 Boston Whaler-type boats carrying Iraqi commandos.

to the Joint Captured Material Exploitation Center at Dhahran.[242] No Iraqis were captured but many useful materials were confiscated, numerous weapons were destroyed or captured, inter-Service operations were smooth, and the 13th MEU(SOC) executed a complex plan flawlessly. Although it was successful in every way, Operation Desert Sting went almost unnoticed because it was overshadowed by the battle for Khafji which was raging in northern Saudi Arabia.

Desert Slash Canceled

Operation Desert Slash was slated to be a large-scale amphibious raid on Faylakah Island by the Marine Forces Afloat. The 4th MEB and 13th MEU(SOC) comprised the force list and had conducted integrated raid rehearsals at Al Hamra in mid-February. Regimental Landing Team 2 was to conduct the main landing, the 13th MEU was responsible for establishing an artillery support base on Auhah Island, and MAG-40 was to provide air support to include preparatory bombardment, assault transport, close-in fire support, command and control, and emergency medical evacuation. The plan was for BLT 1/4 to seize Auhah Island, then the MEB would land four M198 howitzers by helicopter one hour before RLT 2 conducted the main attack, a closely coordinated helicopter and LCAC surface assault by BLT 1/2 and a provisional LAI battalion. The main raid was to be carried out within 18 hours and the raid force was to pull out under covering fires by the artillery, close air support, and naval gunfire.

The ATF had been properly divided to support the action. Amphibious Group 2, including three PhibRon 5 ships—the *Okinawa*, *Ogden*, and *Fort McHenry*—was designated as a task group to carry out the raid. Amphibious Group 3 remained behind to support the 5th MEB landings at Jubayl and Mishab. On 17 February, the ships carrying the raid force sailed north. The next day mine strikes on the *Tripoli* and *Princeton* halted operations and placed Desert Slash plans in limbo. A contingency mission commander's brief was, however, held on board the *Nassau* on 19th to discuss future operations.

The next day, Colonel Rhodes received a warning order to conduct a scaled-down version of Desert Slash. The new plan called for 13th MEU(SOC) to conduct a destruction raid at Faylakah. It would occupy Auhah Island and establish an artillery fire support base, then land a raid force on Faylakah Island. Using a rapid planning sequence, Colonel Rhodes decided on a change in concept and the MEU staff modified the existing Desert Slash plan. The new concept of operations was for a SEAL team to conduct a combat rubber raiding craft insertion about 10 miles from Auhah then conduct a direct action mission to scout the island. At the same time the 13th MEU's force reconnaissance detachment would establish a floating observation site in the channel between Faylakah and Auhah Islands. After Auhah was secured, Battery B's 105mm Howitzer Platoon and the BLT 1/4 81mm Mortar Platoon would land and begin firing at targets on Faylakah. Two Super Stallions carrying 50 Marines from Captain Gregory A. Boyle's Company D would then land on the southern tip of Faylakah and conduct a destruction raid using small arms, machine guns, AT-4s, and shoulder-launched

multipurpose assault weapons to create confusion and disable Iraqi positions. The raid force would be covered by close-in fire support from eight attack helicopters and supporting arms fires from Auhah. When the raiders were safely airborne, the Auhah fire base would expend its ammunition and then be lifted out. The raid was timed to draw Iraqi attention away from the I MEF inland breach areas and was tentatively set to begin at 2200 on 23 February, about six hours before I MEF launched its attack.

On 22 February, a MAG-40/13th MEU deconfliction and coordination meeting was held on board the *Nassau*, but the next morning even this reduced-scale artillery raid was postponed by Admiral Arthur. The *Okinawa*, *Ogden*, and *Fort McHenry* remained at anchor with PhibGru 2 in the northern Gulf while things were sorted out. Colonel Rhodes twice more received warning orders to mount an artillery raid, but in both cases these orders were countermanded. On the 25th, the 13th MEU was within one hour of launching the raid force when Colonel Rhodes received word that the raid had been canceled, apparently because CNN had mistakenly broadcast a report that Marines were already on Faylakah Island.*[243]

Harrier Operations

When the ATF sailed into the Persian Gulf to support Operation Desert Storm, MAG-40's aircraft were spread among six ships. The *Shreveport* carried six AH-1W Super Cobras from HLMLA-269 Forward; the *Raleigh* had six UH-1Ns from Detachment A, HMLA-269; the *Trenton* had three CH-53E Super Stallions; the *Guam* was home to 24 CH-46Es of HMM-263 and HMM-365; the *Iwo Jima* carried 13 Super Stallions from HMH-461; and the *Nassau* had 19 AV-8B Harriers (VMA-331) accompanied by six UH-1Ns and 3 AH-1Ts (HMLA-269). Composite Helicopter Squadron 164, tasked to support MAG-40, had helicopters on board two other ships; four AH-1Ws were on the *Ogden* and 12 CH-46Es, 4 CH-53Es, and 2 UH-1Ns were on board the *Okinawa*.[244]

The *Nassau* deployed with an entire Harrier squadron of 20 aircraft on board. The deck load, for all practical purposes, eliminated the *Nassau* as a vertical assault platform. This unusual configuration had become a point of contention between the ATF, NavCent, and MarCent. Generals Boomer and Jenkins wanted to keep the Harriers on board for the duration. They were wary of stripping the landing force of its only organic fixed-wing assets. Having dedicated close air support aircraft within the landing force structure allowed quick response and operational flexibility not found when aircraft were tasked from carriers or shore bases. Lack of apron space ashore—King Adul Aziz Naval Air Base and Shaik Isa Air Base were full—was another concern. Admiral LaPlante and General Jenkins maintained that the CATF and CLF must be given the latitude to determine how their ships will be configured and what tactics will be used.

*Radio intercepts later indicated that the Iraqi high command believed the false report.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-SC-91-00632

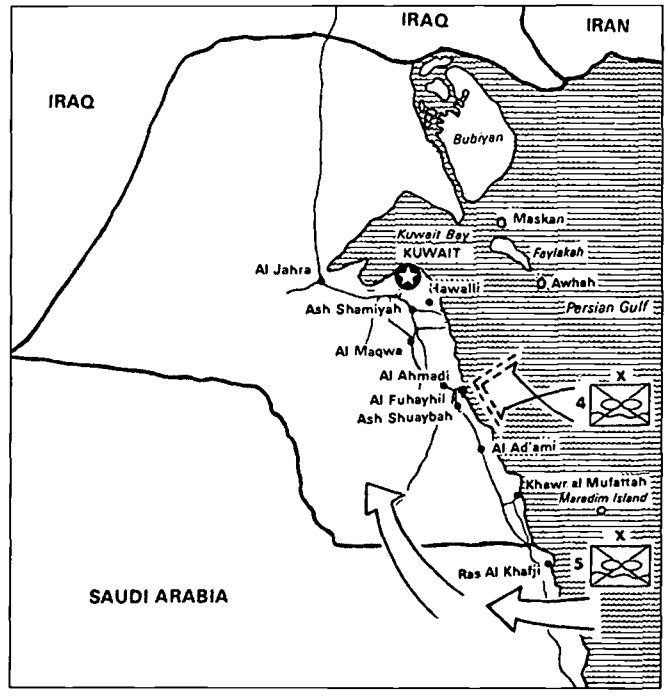
Flight deck personnel on board the amphibious assault ship Nassau *refuel two AV-8B Harriers of VMA-331 as a third comes in to land. Harriers from the* Nassau *became the first such aircraft to conduct combat strikes on 20 February 1991.*

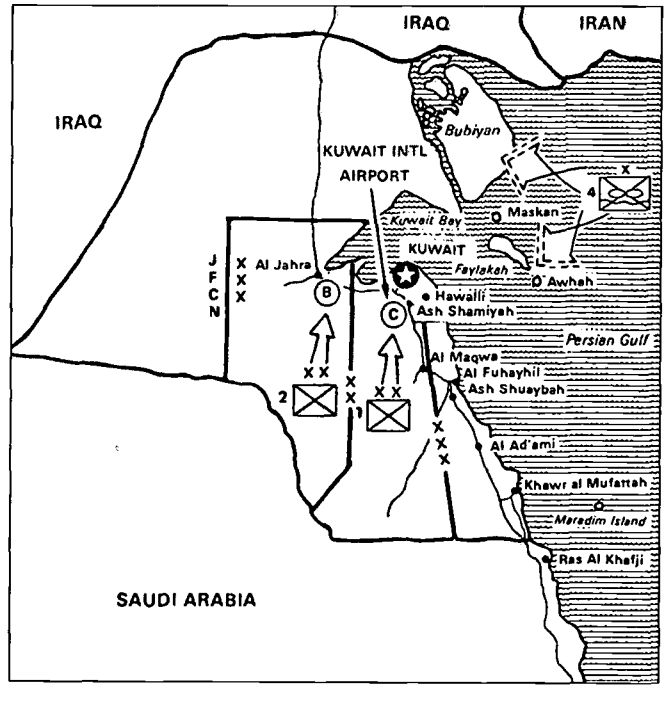
The Navy was concerned that the employment of the *Nassau* as a "Harrier Carrier" was a misuse of a valuable and flexible multi-mission assault support ship which was being called on to do things it was not designed for. The short range of the Harriers would require the *Nassau* to remain in the forward area. Limited aviation ordnance storage, about three days of ordnance, would create resupply problems and tax the already under-strength logistics fleet. It was, therefore, the Navy view that the Harriers could be better supplied and maintained if they operated from shore bases. This debate was never satisfactorily resolved.[245]

On 20 February, four AV-8Bs of VMA-331 made history when "Magic" flight lifted off the deck of the *Nassau* to make the first-ever combat strike by fixed-wing aircraft operating from an amphibious assault ship. This mission was the culmination of long and arduous deployment training during which the squadron logged 2,838 sorties with 2,426 hours of air time and had tragically lost a shipmate off the coast of Oman. The workup had begun seven months before when the "Bumblebees" flew on board the *Nassau* on 18 August. Training emphasized the particular skills that would be needed in the Persian Gulf: situational awareness exercises; low altitude operations; tactical air control party workshops; and dissimilar air combat training. Night and low visibility operations, armed reconnaissance missions, and close air support techniques were honed to a fine edge at Masirah and Ras Al Madrakah after Desert Saber was announced and Ash Shuaybah was named as the primary target.

Lieutenant Colonel Jerry W. Fitzgerald and his Harrier pilots were anxious to get into the fray after the Desert Storm air campaign was unleashed, but they were held on a close tether because they might be needed to support various contin-

24-25 February Movements of 4th and 5th MEB





gency plans generated by NavCent's 14 January initiating directive. The *Nassau* remained on station in the North Arabian Sea, well out of AV-8B range for strikes on Kuwait, until early February. Once in range, plans called for the Harriers to first hit targets on Faylakah Island and in southern Kuwait. They could be used farther north as the ground campaign progressed. The main air plans dealt with operations in support of Desert Slash so most of VMA-331's primary targets were on Faylakah Island.

Specific targets were selected from the landing force target list. These nominations were then passed from Tactical Air Control Squadron 2 (TACRon-2) on the *Nassau* to Battle Force Zulu (CTF 154). Colonel Burgess used guidance from the 4th MEB staff to compile the number of AV-8 sorties available each day and passed them on to Battle Force Zulu. Admiral March, commanding Battle Force Zulu, would then fold them into his daily allocation of sorties to the JFACC staff at Riyadh, who would place them in the daily air tasking order. Individual targets included missile sites, antiaircraft positions, and command and ammunition bunkers. Just before the ground assault, VMA-331's primary mission would be battlefield interdiction to isolate the landing area from Az Zwar and the eastern half of Faylakah. After the landing force was ashore, however, the primary mission would switch to on-call close air support of RLT 2. Although VMA-331 possessed 19 Harriers, only 12 were scheduled for use on any one day according to air tasking procedures. The *Nassau*'s magazine spaces could hold enough ordnance for six days. Normal operations prescribed up to 40 sorties per day, but this number could be almost doubled for surge operations.[246]

The initial air plan called for VMA-331 to strike three geographical areas. The first target area was Faylakah Island which was slated for a destruction raid, Operation Desert Slash, no later than 22 February. When Desert Slash was canceled on 19 February, however, Harrier operations were directed at Bubiyan Island and central Kuwait to support the amphibious deception and the I MEF advance. Once the Iraqi forces inside Kuwait had been routed and were in full retreat the primary targets became the roads running from Kuwait City to Basrah and Umm Qasr in northern Kuwait and southern Iraq.

The first Harrier combat launch from an amphibious ship came at 0540 on 20 February. Marine Attack Squadron 331 lit the "amphibious flame" when a four-plane Harrier division took off and headed toward Iraqi antiaircraft batteries and SAM missile sites at Az Zwar on the western end of Faylakah Island. Secondary targets were mortar and artillery positions within range of the planned landing zone on Auhah Island. The weather, however, did not cooperate and the flight was diverted to Ras Al Subiyah near Iraq's Umm Qasr Naval Base to hit targets of opportunity. The Bumblebees attacked surface targets and maneuvered to avoid antiaircraft guns and SAM missiles. At least one SA-2 surface-to-air missile exploded near the formation. Nineteen of the 43 other strikes planned for that day went as scheduled. The other 23 were scrubbed due to bad weather. Those that did fly chalked up only mixed results because of poor visibility.

The next day, 44 more flights were planned, but 16 had to be canceled again due to bad weather. Artillery, antiaircraft, and mortar sites were again among the

primary targets, but armored vehicles and a command bunker were also added to the list for the second day. The flights were once again hampered by poor visibility and this time heavy antiaircraft fire over Faylakah was added to the equation so only mixed results were reported. The next two days saw 60 more combat flights from the *Nassau*, striking the same targets. This time results were better. The dense wall of antiaircraft fire was significantly reduced after all known sites were pounded from the air. Other targets were thereafter regularly hit. Buildings, missile sites, and trenchlines on southeastern Faylakah were added to the target list as time passed. Strafing runs on Auhah Island destroyed buildings, but bomb damage assessments determined the islet was unoccupied. Auhah was a key target because it was earmarked for an artillery raid by the 13th MEU(SOC) to support Operation Desert Slash.

After the ground assault began at 0400 on the 24th, Harrier strikes were scheduled as close air support sorties for either I MEF or JFC-E. When these missions could not be carried out the Harriers attempted to hit Faylakah rather than abort without hitting any targets. Forty sorties were planned for 24 February but only 22 were actually flown. The rest were canceled because of bad weather and the huge smoke clouds caused by more than 600 burning oil wells which had been set on fire by the Iraqis. Command and control procedures proved tricky because of the large number of aircraft operating in the same area, but no accidents occurred. Artillery positions, armored vehicles, trenchlines, and command posts were struck with good results.

The next day was a light day for VMA-331 as the *Nassau* had to sail about 100 miles into the southern Gulf to replenish its depleted magazines. Major General Jenkins had requested an ammunition ship be sent north so the *Nassau* could remain within Harrier range of Kuwait, but Admiral LaPlante did not concur, hence, the lost flight time. Flight operations resumed as the *Nassau* steamed north toward its holding position. Twelve sorties were launched in the afternoon to support I MEF's drive toward Kuwait City. The targets were Iraqi armored forces attacking Marine lines from the Burqan Oilfield. Target coverage was good despite dense smoke in the target area.

On 26 February, the Iraqi forces in Kuwait began the "Mother of All Retreats." As the Coalition noose tightened around Kuwait City, the two major north-bound roads were choked with fleeing Iraqi troops. Colonel Fitzgerald originally planned 32 air strikes, but Admiral March passed orders for the *Nassau* to go to surge operations so 70 strikes were now on the slate. The Bumblebees joined other strike aircraft to cut off the Iraqi retreat. All aircraft were ordered to a rendezvous point where stacks of aircraft circled waiting for a chance to close in. When there was an opening, the Harriers were turned over to airborne forward air controllers for specific target assignments. The first four Harriers, led by Major Henry J. Coble, launched off the *Nassau* at 0600. They were directed to the vicinity of Al Jahrah road junction just west of Kuwait City to attack trucks, armored vehicles, and artillery positions. These operations continued throughout the day, gradually moving north and northeast as the Iraqi retreat became a rout. The highway below was soon filled with many smoldering wrecks. Fifty-six of the

planned 70 sorties were flown, but the remainder had to be canceled due to weather and cloud cover. This was VMA-331's best day so far.[247]

If 26 February was VMA-331's best day of the conflict, the 27th turned out to be the worst and was later poignantly remembered as "the day the Magic died" by one squadron member.[248] Again assigned to conduct surge operations, Lieutenant Colonel Fitzgerald planned to launch 60 sorties. The first of these took off at 0600 and headed for northern Kuwait. After "Magic" flight arrived at its assigned post a FastFAC directed the four Harriers north to intercept a retreating Iraqi convoy. Although the swirling confusion on the ground was partially covered by low-lying clouds and thick oil smoke, the Bumblebees began their attack. The run was aborted by the FastFAC, due to another flight of aircraft in the vicinity of the Bumblebees target. During the egress, the flight was targeted by several missiles believed to be SA-9s. One of the missiles brought down the AV-8B flown by Captain Reginald C. Underwood and he was killed. This was the only combat loss suffered by VMA-331. The somber Bumblebees flew 47 sorties before Admiral Arthur ordered a standdown that brought AV-8B flight operations to a halt. As it turned out, 27 February was the last day of combat operations for VMA-331.

Although hampered by poor flying conditions throughout the war, Harrier flight operations were more successful than any one had predicted they might be. Long hours of planning, close cooperation, and hard work by deck crews, ordnance men, and plane handlers on board the *Nassau* reduced the time for an arriving Harrier to be refueled, rearmed, and on its way to under 45 minutes. This was less than half the turnaround time for carrier fixed-wing operations. Teamwork, coupled with the Harriers' extraordinary reliability, resulted in sortie rates of more than 3.0 instead of the 1.2 normally expected for fixed-wing aircraft. With the *Nassau* lying close offshore flight time was significantly reduced and an air strike could be launched and arrive overhead seven minutes after receiving a call; again, this was far less time than was needed for most carrier aircraft.[249]

Mine Countermeasures Operations

By far the most difficult issue faced by the naval forces in the Persian Gulf turned out to be how to defeat the underwater mine threat. The U.S. Navy had previous mine warfare experience in the Gulf during Operation Earnest Will, the American escort of reflagged Kuwaiti tankers, from August 1987 to December 1988. Unfortunately, this experience was not a good one and it revealed serious flaws in U.S. countermine capabilities. The *Bridgeton*, a reflagged tanker, struck an Iranian M-08 contact mine on 24 July 1987, during the very first convoy under American protection. In response, the USS *Guadalcanal* (LPH 7) was pulled from Exercise Bright Star 87 in Egypt and sent to the Persian Gulf to join U.S. Joint Task Force Middle East. Embarked was a Navy AMCM squadron with

about 350 sailors and eight RH-53D mine sweeping helicopters.* Also on board the *Guadalcanal* was Detachment 2, 24th Marine Amphibious Unit, to provide close-in ship protection and to support AMCM operations using Huey, Sea Knight, and Sea Cobra helicopters. In November 1987, Contingency MAGTF 1-88 embarked on board the *Okinawa* relieved Detachment 2, then was in turn replaced by Contingency MAGTF 2-88 on board the *Trenton* in February. On 14 April, the American frigate USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (FFG 58) struck a freshly laid contact mine triggering Operation Praying Mantis, a series of raids on Iranian oil rigs used as minelaying support bases. The Marines knocked out the Sassan SAG "B" oil platform on the 18th, but lost a Sea Cobra helicopter and its crew during a subsequent action. Contingency MAGTF 3-88 on board the *Dubuque* took over for CMAGTF 2-88 in June and remained on station until the end of hostilities. The American mission in the Persian Gulf was a success, but Iranian mines had extracted a high toll.[250]

The main problem sweeping Iraqi mines from the northern Gulf in 1991 was the lack of accurate information. There was no firm count of the number or types of mines laid or specifics about their exact location. The only hard intelligence was provided by floating mines discovered in the southern Gulf. Admiral Arthur sought permission to interdict Iraqi mine-laying operations using the justification that Iraq was violating international law, but General Schwarzkopf—mirroring diplomatic concerns from his superiors in Washington—refused to allow Admiral Arthur to interfere with enemy mine-laying operations before Desert Storm was launched. Unfortunately, Schwarzkopf's instructions also precluded reconnaissance flights. Without accurate data, intelligence officers guessed the undersea minefields were a submerged extension of the inland Saddam Line whereby the mines should be planted in the coastal waters just east of Kuwait. This assumption proved to be one of the major American miscalculations of the Persian Gulf War.

In reality, the Iraqis had seeded the Gulf with 1,157 mines laid in a 150-mile-long arc swinging out from the coast into the central Gulf to protect Kuwait, Faylakah, Bubiyan, and the Umm Qasr channel. The most numerous underwater explosive devices were moored contact mines. In addition to these World War II contact mines there were more modern Italian-made Manta influence mines. Mantas were particularly effective because they were hard to detect after they settled into the sea bed of the Gulf and could be detonated by magnetic or acoustic triggers that were sophisticated enough to let minesweepers pass by before exploding. Postwar reports revealed four deep-water mine belts and 10 mine clusters. These were supplemented by land mines and underwater obstacles protecting likely landing beaches.

The Coalition minesweeping effort was a combined operation using primarily British and U.S. resources. The British had five mine countermeasures vessels in

*RH-53Ds were similar to CH-53Ds but had more powerful engines, automated flight controls, longer range, and in-flight refueling capacity.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-SC-91-08128

In a starboard view of the amphibious assault ship New Orleans *(LPH 11), it lies at anchor with several MH-53E Sea Dragon helicopters on the flight deck. The* New Orleans *served as a platform for Gulf mine-clearing operations.*

the Gulf: the HMS *Cattistock* (M 31); HMS *Atherstone* (M 38); HMS *Hurworth* (M 39); HMS *Dulverton* (M 35); and HMS *Ledbury* (M 30), with the casualty receiving ship RFA *Argus* (A 135) and logistics ship RFA *Sir Gallahad* (L 3005) in support. The U.S. Mine Countermeasures Group included the modern USS *Avenger* (MCM 1) and the older ocean minesweepers USS *Adroit* (MSO 509), USS *Impervious* (MSO 449), and USS *Leader* (MSO 490). There was also a Sea Dragon detachment from Navy Mine Countermeasures Helicopter Squadron 14 (HM-14) with six MH-53E Sea Dragons and several SEAL underwater demolition teams.[251] The combined mine force was under the operational control of the Commander, Persian Gulf Surface Action Group (CTF 151), on board the *LaSalle*.* The tactical command was designated Task Unit 151.1.1, and the *Tripoli* was the flagship. Minesweeping tasks mirrored those used by NATO whereby the British flotilla was responsible for sweeping coastal waters, the U.S. would clear deep water, and special warfare teams would clear shallow waters to the high water mark. Beach mines were the responsibility of the landing force.[252]

Sweeping operations encompassed three phases. First, British and American helicopters scouted ahead of the surface fleet to identify likely threats, cut mooring lines, and destroy surface mines. They then made a second pass dragging sleds that emitted signals imitating the magnetic and acoustic signatures of passing warships. Finally, surface mine hunters used special sonar to locate individ-

*RAdm William M. Fogarty was replaced as CTF 151 by RAdm Raynor A. K. Taylor in Feb91.

ual mines so demolitions experts could destroy them. Mine warfare experts originally estimated it would take 18 to 24 days to clear passage lanes and fire support areas.

The import of these operations for the Marine Forces Afloat was that the mine issue decisively impacted potential amphibious operations. Mine strikes on two key ships paralyzed further naval operations in the northern Gulf, the loss of two assault ships reduced the ATF forcible entry options and hampered later air operations, and the time needed to clear mines safely would delay the ground assault beyond a point General Schwarzkopf considered prudent. There was little doubt in the minds of any of the Marine general officers that the mine issue was the single-most important argument against an amphibious assault.

On 6 January, Admiral Fogarty sent a message to Admiral Arthur requesting use of an amphibious assault ship as the AMCM platform and MCM command ship.[253] The decision to do so had been agreed upon at a naval planning conference on 30 December, at which no amphibious representatives were present. The decision to pull an LPH out of the amphibious task force was made without the knowledge of, consultation with, or agreement by either Admiral LaPlante or General Jenkins. This decision incensed General Jenkins who had noted the lack of a dedicated AMCM platform and reported it to NavCent in August, a concern that was reiterated by Admiral Clarey in November; but both men were met with stony silence from their superiors when they pressed the point. Critics later derided this decision which denied the ATF use of big deck amphibious ships as "using a luxury car to do the work of a pickup truck," citing the suitability and previous use of LPDs for similar work.[254]

The amphibious assault ship Tripoli *(LPH 10) lies in dry dock in Bahrain for repairs to a hole in its starboard bow caused by an Iraqi mine. The* Tripoli *struck the mine while serving as a mine-clearing platform in the northern Persian Gulf.*

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-SC-91-08075

Admiral Arthur passed the message to Admiral LaPlante and ordered him to nominate one of the ATF's four LPHs for AMCM support. After careful review the *Tripoli* was selected. Additionally, the Marines furnished personnel for the *Tripoli*'s supporting arms coordination center, a provisional rifle company, and an attack helicopter detachment. Lieutenant Colonel William N. Myers was the officer-in-charge of this detachment. The command element was pulled from RLT 5 headquarters. A provisional rifle company was formed from Headquarters and Service Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, to seize and secure Kobbar Island if it was needed as an emergency landing strip during AMCM operations. Marine Reserve Helicopter Attack Squadron 773 left a detachment of AH-1J Sea Cobras on board the *Tripoli* for close-in protection of the coastal minesweepers and to escort the Sea Dragons.

On 21 January, the 5th MEB began crossdecking 1,500 Marines from the *Tripoli* to other amphibious ships at Dubai. The overcrowding of the amphibious task force resulted in the *Tarawa* sailing to Al Jubayl to offload aviation and support personnel, including all six Harriers of Detachment B, VMA-513. Actual sweeping operations began on 16 February. The next evening, after clearing a lane from Point Echo to Point Foxtrot, the mine group was pinpointed by Silkworm acquisition radar. The small flotilla quickly raised anchor and moved east out of range of known Silkworm sites. This zigzagging convoy was led by the *Tripoli* moving at five knots. At about 0436 on 18 February a huge explosion rent a 20-foot hole near the *Tripoli*'s bow, the result of a strike by a LUGM-145 contact mine. Quick action by the crew and extremely effective damage control allowed Captain G. Bruce McEwen, USN, to maneuver his ship out of the minefield. Later that same morning the Aegis cruiser USS *Princeton* (CG 59) was disabled by a bottom-laid Manta influence mine. In less than four hours the Coalition mine-clearing operations had become a disaster, halting 4th MEB's planned raid on Faylakah Island and depriving the 5th MEB of a second big deck amphibious assault ship.

The loss of the *Tripoli* sent Generals Jenkins and Rowe and Admirals LaPlante and Clarey back to the conference table to find a new amphibious ship for AMCM support. This time they selected the *New Orleans*, the lead ship of PhibRon 1, carrying elements of the 11th MEU(SOC) which was embedded into the 5th MEB.* Since G-Day was imminent and the 5th MEB was already scheduled to become the I MEF reserve ashore, the *New Orleans* was able to delay joining the MCM Group in order to land its embarked Marines. This loss, however, later caused problems with the backload and breakout of the 11th MEU when Desert Storm ended in March. The *LaSalle* acted as the AMCM command and control ship until the *New Orleans* was able to take station on 4 March. On 25 February the *Tripoli*—which remained on station despite the damage—crossdecked

*The assignment was not new for the *New Orleans*. Two decades earlier she had been the flagship for Operation End Sweep to clear North Vietnamese waters of U.S. mines from 23Feb-24Jul73.

AMCM helicopters, equipment, and personnel to the *New Orleans* and then sailed for Al Jubayl.

The temporary loss of the *Tripoli* forced MAG-40 to divert aircraft to support AMCM operations. On 25 February HMLA-269 Detachment A was on board the USS *Raleigh* sailing into the northern Gulf with the Faylakah Island raid force when Lieutenant Colonel Gregory N. Maisel, the officer-in-charge, was tasked to provide armed escort for mine-clearing operations in the vicinity of Ash Shuaybah. Detachment A's aircraft logged 36 sorties and 61 flight hours between 27 February and 2 March.[255]

Helicopter Operations

Helicopters from MAG-40 and HMM(C)-164 played major roles in the amphibious distraction. Conducting well-executed airborne deception operations on G plus one and G plus two, they helped to tie up about 40,000 Iraqis in useless positions along the Kuwaiti coast waiting for the amphibious assault that never came. Saddam's troops were held in place until the morning of 27 February, after which it was too late to turn the tide of battle. Many of these Iraqis were later taken prisoner by I MEF or were caught by aerial bombardment as they fled north.

On the afternoon of 24 February, Admiral Arthur received a signal from General Schwarzkopf requesting a night helicopter assault feint to be conducted in the vicinity of Ash Shuaybah to hold Iraqi defenders in position on the coast to prevent them from turning south or west to meet oncoming ground forces from I MEF and JFC-E which were closing the ring around Kuwait City. Admiral Arthur

A Marine AH-1W Sea Cobra helicopter of HMLA-269 prepares to land on the Nassau*'s flight deck.*

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-06878

notified Admiral LaPlante and Major General Jenkins of this request and told them to execute a deception operation. General Jenkins then tasked the 13th MEU(SOC) to carry out the feint because it was closest to Ash Shuaybah.

Colonel Rhodes received this warning order at about 2215 that night. At 2245, the *Okinawa* and the *Portland* set sail for a position about 50 miles off the coast. These ships were selected because they had TASCAM four-channel deception systems on board and could broadcast tapes to simulate brigade-level radio traffic to fool Iraqi radio intercept technicians. Additionally, Marines from the 2d Radio Battalion detachment were prepared to use heliborne electronic jammers and electronic emissions simulators. Colonel Rhodes held a crisis action team meeting at 2315 on board the *Okinawa* and initiated a rapid planning sequence. Lieutenant Colonel Vanderlinden developed a 10-helicopter deception package containing six CH-46Es, two AH-1Ws, one CH-53E, and one UH-1N.*

At 0300 on the 25th, the advance force coordination center was reopened on board the *Okinawa* to control operations. At 0346 an E-2C Hawkeye and an EA-6B Prowler from the carrier *Roosevelt* checked in with the AFCC and reported they were ready to provide airborne control and electronic countermeasures support for the deception force. The last of the helicopters lifted off at 0413 and headed for Kuwait. It was a difficult low-level, over-water, 50-mile approach in near total darkness. At 0449 the group reached the turnaround point, popped up to be illuminated by Iraqi radar, and hightailed it back to the *Okinawa*. All aircraft were safely recovered within an hour.

The demonstration was very effective. There was considerable Iraqi radar activity and antiaircraft fire lit up the coastal sky. Electronic intelligence indicated that the Iraqi commander flashed messages to Baghdad indicating an amphibious landing was underway, he was taking tremendous casualties, and had begun to withdraw.[256] In a related incident, two Silkworm missiles were launched at the fire support ships USS *Wisconsin* (BB 64) and USS *Leftwich* (DD 984). One fell harmlessly into the sea and the other was destroyed by a Sea Dart missile fired by the British destroyer HMS *Gloucester* (D 96). Radio intercepts confirmed the Iraqis believed an amphibious assault was imminent and that Saddam had ordered reinforcements sent to the coast.

On the second day of the ground assault, the I MEF attack was hampered by dense smoke and low-lying cloud cover which limited the effectiveness of close air support. Lieutenant General Boomer, therefore, contacted Admiral Arthur to request the transfer of all available seaborne AH-1W Super Cobras. The "Whiskeys" could penetrate the clouds and provide badly needed close-in fire support as the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions neared Kuwait City. The helicopters' Hellfire missiles and laser range finders were perfectly suited to deliver accurate antitank munitions in low visibility. General Jenkins surveyed his needs and quickly made six AH-1Ws from HMLA-269 available.

HMLA-269 (Forward), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth W. Hill,

*MajGen John R. Rhodes' comments reflect a larger package of 10 CH-46s, 2 CH-53s, 2 AH-1s, and 1 UN-1.

was embarked on board the *Shreveport*. The transition was a smooth one because the detachment had been attached to the 3d MAW after being flown to Saudi Arabia while the rest of MAG-40 sailed from the United States. Lieutenant Colonel Hill was tasked to fly off the *Shreveport* and report to Landing Zone Lonesome Dove at Al Khanjar. Lonesome Dove was a primitive helicopter landing strip only recently bulldozed from a gravel plain in northern Saudi Arabia. After the Marines entered Kuwait City, HMLA-269 Forward displaced to Kuwait International Airport.

The flyoff was delayed because the *Shreveport* was too far south and LZ Lonesome Dove was out of Super Cobra range. Early on the morning of the 26th, the ship closed on the Kuwaiti coast. Hill led the Cobra flight 90 miles inland, flying with night vision goggles. The crews had been briefed while the ship was enroute and were ready to fly combat missions immediately upon arriving at Al Khanjar. In six days ashore, HMLA-269 Forward flew 51 sorties in 78 flight hours, including 22 combat sorties and 22.5 combat hours in two days. All six Super Cobras remained 100 percent capable throughout the duration of their stay on shore. Missions included close-in fire support of the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions; the 1st Brigade, 2d Armored Division, attached to the 2d Marine Division; and the 5th MEB. Other missions included medical evacuation escort, psychological warfare operations, and aerial reconnaissance. On 4 March, Lieutenant Colonel Hill and HMLA-269 (Forward) returned to the *Shreveport*. All missions were considered successful and the detachment earned a "well done" from the 3d MAW for its support.[257]

The success of the Ash Shuaybah feint on the 25th led to a deeper deception operation in the vicinity of Bubiyan Island to pin the Iraqi *2d Infantry*, *22d Infantry*, and *51st Mechanized Divisions* in place along the northern Kuwaiti coast. The raid was scheduled for the morning of 26 February. Major General Jenkins tasked Colonel Burgess' MAG-40 to carry out the mission. Lieutenant Colonel Robert F. Saikowski, commanding officer of HMM-365, was named mission commander. The helicopter force included 10 CH-46s flying off the *Guam*, 4 CH-53s from the *Iwo Jima*, and 3 AH-1Ts from the *Nassau*. The Navy provided one E-2C Hawkeye for command and control, an EA-6B Prowler for electronic countermeasures, and four A-6E Intruders as a surface strike package. Intelligence reported Iraqi SA-6 radars, numerous antiaircraft guns and missiles, and a possible Silkworm site in the target area.

At 1500 on the 25th, 4th MEB transmitted the execute order. Lieutenant Colonel Saikowski issued his mission brief by message at about 1900. An intership confirmation briefing was held via secure net at about 2100. Final shipboard flight briefs were held on their respective ships at 0100 on 26th. To ensure Iraqi discovery the flight used uncovered radio frequencies. Each section simulated a large flight element and follow-on strikes were mentioned during radio transmissions. At the turn-away point the CH-46s and CH-53s would expend on-board .50-caliber ammunition in order to create confusion and draw attention to the simulated landing. This was to be followed by 16 minutes of electronic jamming and air strikes to cover the helicopter group egress.

The flights from the *Nassau*, *Guam*, and *Iwo Jima* made their rendezvous just after 0350 and headed for shore traveling about 200 feet above the water at a speed of about 100 knots. Visibility was poor with zero illumination due to smoke and cloud cover so the entire 140-mile mission was conducted using night vision goggles. Flying conditions were so bad that most pilots later reported that this was the worst flight of their careers. A mechanical problem with one of the Sea Cobras resulted in an abort and the AH-1Ts returned to the *Nassau*. The Navy aircraft were on station at 0430 and began their role playing at 0455. Shortly thereafter, Saikowski dropped a flare and the helicopters opened fire. At 0505 the flight reached the turn-away point and headed back out to sea.

Once again the Iraqis took the bait. The southern part of Bubiyan Island was soon lit by flares and tracer rounds criss-crossed the night sky forcing the outbound helos to drop to 75 feet until they were out of range. The Navy A-6s immediately rolled in and took out the now highly visible targets arrayed along the shore. Bomb damage assessment reported good coverage with many secondary explosions. Post-mission debriefs confirmed the success of the deception mission. The feint achieved all of its goals. The mission was well executed and there were no casualties despite poor flying conditions.

At about the same time the Bubiyan feint was taking place another helicopter demonstration force was launched from the *Nassau* for a preplanned strike at Faylakah Island. At 0400 on 26th, Major Gary A. Mattes led a flight of six UH-1N helicopters from HMLA-269 to Faylakah. The flight departed the *Nassau*, then located near the Durrah Oilfield, on the low-level 133-mile trip. The aircraft skimmed the water at less than 200 feet. The pilots were using night vision goggles, but visibility was still restricted. In fact, Major Mattes later credited the horizon glow from burning oil wells for allowing him to identify Faylakah and the target areas.

The flight was split into three two-aircraft divisions as the helicopters approached Faylakah. Each Huey was armed with rocket pods and machine guns for strafing Iraqi positions in the vicinity of Az Zwar. The flight slowed to about 60 knots and spread to 2,000 meters between groups when it neared the target area. Target coverage was good and there were several secondary explosions. Pilots reported fires burning as they completed their turn for home. The Iraqi response was to fire flares and light up the sky with ineffective antiaircraft fire. This mission, like the other two helicopter feints, was considered a success.[258]

Evacuation of Faylakah Island

Although combat operations ended on 28 February, there was one major task left for the 13th MEU(SOC). On 1 March, the day after the cease-fire went into effect, Colonel Rhodes received a warning order to evacuate any remaining Iraqis from Faylakah, Auhah, Miskan, Bubiyan, and Warbah Islands. Recent overflights by carrier aircraft and remote piloted vehicles indicated a large number of Iraqis on Faylakah Island were waving white flags and wished to surrender. Colonel Rhodes had little information except that there were between 1,000 and 3,500

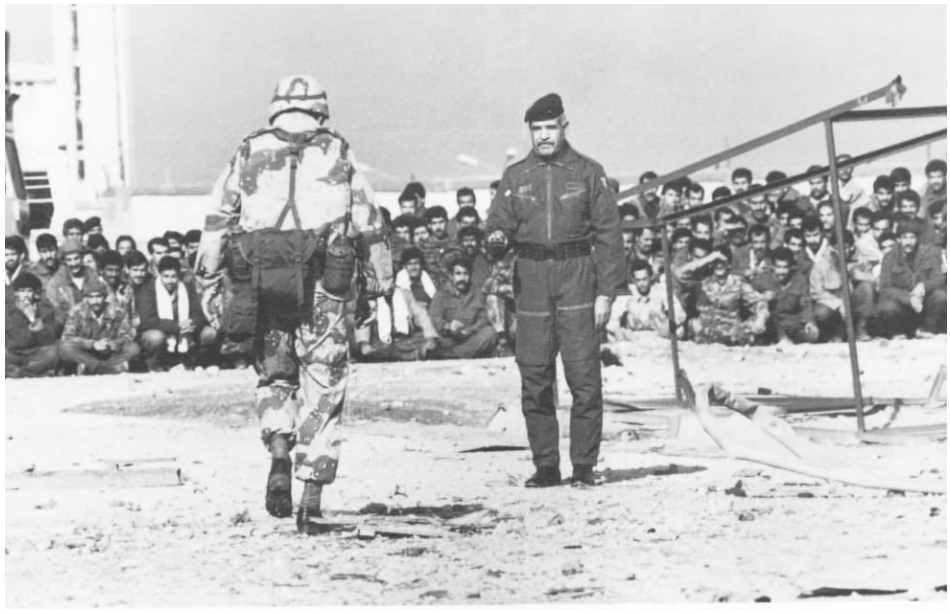
Iraqis on the island and no radio contact had been made. The next morning the *Okinawa*, *Ogden*, *Fort McHenry*, and *Durham* cautiously moved through a channel in the minefields and anchored in the fire support area about 15 miles south of Faylakah.

Colonel Rhodes planned to have psychological operations teams use helicopter-mounted loudspeakers to announce the upcoming prisoner of war operation that evening. This would be followed by a second overflight to give specific instructions for surrender the next morning, just before the Marines landed. The ground force would consist of a command element, a security element, and an evacuation control team. Aviation support would be a joint-service effort that included psyops helicopters, Navy strike aircraft, Army and Marine attack helicopters, the Marine transport group, and an airborne Marine reserve force. The operation would encompass five phases: pre-landing preparation; securing the island; segregation of prisoners and gathering intelligence materials; search and evacuation of prisoners; and the withdrawal. The *Ogden* was designated the enemy prisoner holding platform.

Late in the afternoon of 2 March, two specially configured UH-1Ns from Marine Reserve Light Helicopter Squadron 767 flew to the *Okinawa*. Each mounted a large loudspeaker system and carried a combined Kuwaiti-U.S. Army psychological warfare team that had prepared surrender announcements and would broadcast them. The two helicopters conducted several flyovers at about dusk and reported no fire or hostile actions. The stage was thus set for the next day's operation.

At 0530 on the 3d, the *Okinawa* AFCC was activated. About an hour later an

A Marine takes aim as Company D's commanding officer, Capt Gregory A. Boyle, and the 13th MEU's commander, Col John E. Rhodes, prepare to enter the compound where more than 1,400 Iraqi Marines from the 440th Marine Brigade *have assembled to surrender on Faylakah Island.*



BGen Abbud Gambar Hasen Almiki, commander of the Iraqi Marine brigade, prepares to surrender to Col Rhodes.

Army AHIP attack helicopter reported the Iraqis were waving white flags. Five minutes after that the psyops helos, escorted by Super Cobras from HMM(C)-164, passed overhead. Announcements told the Iraqis to move to a communications compound located at the southwest corner of the island and wait. At 0641 the *Wisconsin*'s RPV confirmed no gun positions were manned and that LZ Eagle, the proposed landing zone, was clear. At 0654 a flight of Intruders was on station ready to provide close air support if needed.

At 0745 eight CH-46s carrying the assault wave of Company D, 4th Marines headed for Faylakah. The flight leader reported "feet dry" at 0759, circled the west end of the island, then landed at 0802. Captain Boyle's Marines quickly fanned out to secure a perimeter. The second wave brought in the rest of Company D and the 13th MEU(SOC) Alpha command group including Colonel Rhodes, Sergeant Major Anthony Reese, Major Cash, Major Russell O. Sherck, Major Marshall K. Snyder, and 10 enlisted Marines. Also on board was Captain Abdullah Al Shuaib, Kuwait Navy, a liaison officer who was the son of the mayor of Faylakah and the senior Kuwaiti representative.[259]

The Iraqis had all gathered at the communications compound and their white flags were clearly visible from LZ Eagle. As Colonel Rhodes approached the compound the Iraqi brigade commander, Abbud Gambar Hasen Almiki, surrendered Faylakah Island and his command which included 1,413 members of the *440th Marine Infantry Brigade* without incident. Aerial searches of Auhah, Bubiyan, Miskan, and Warbah revealed these islands were unoccupied and no further prisoners were taken into custody. When it became obvious that there would be no Iraqi resistance, additional Kuwaiti dignitaries were flown to Faylakah and a formal surrender ceremony was arranged. At 1430, the Kuwaiti flag was raised

in front of the mayor's residence in the town of Az Zwar, and the Iraqi occupation officially ended. Colonel Rhodes, Commodore McClelland, and two rifle squads represented the United States at the ceremony.[260]

MEU Service Support Group 13 provided a 60-man evacuation control team. Final coordinating instructions were given at a 0630 formation on board the *Durham.* Team Gold lifted off at about 0750 and Team Blue left the ship at about 0825. Both teams were on the island by 0843. The evacuation control center began processing Iraqi prisoners at 0940. Six processing points were established. The prisoners were mustered by their own officers and arrived at the proper processing point under close supervision by Company D's security squads. At each point the Iraqis were searched, identified, tagged, screened for medical problems, and forwarded to a consolidation area. At the consolidation area they were organized into 15-man heliteams. These heliteams were escorted to the LZ and restrained with flex cuffs before boarding helicopters for the flight to the *Ogden.*

The prisoner evacuation went very smoothly. The Iraqis were in generally good health and had been well fed while on the island. They were docile and most of them were only interested in protecting the two cartons of cigarettes they had been issued when surrender was imminent. Captain Jeffery A. Robb and two forward air control teams directed the evacuation. Fifteen prisoners were assigned to each CH-46 while groups of 60 were placed on board the CH-53s. Company A and Headquarters and Service Company provided security teams on board ship. Upon arrival at the *Ogden* the prisoners were searched before being led down the

Members of Company D, 4th Marines, carefully search Iraqi Marine brigade prisoners prior to loading them on helicopters of HMM(C)-164 for transport to the Ogden *(LPD 5) offshore.*

Once on board the Ogden *Iraqi prisoners were searched again, given rations, interrogated, and transferred to military police compounds ashore.*

ladder to the well deck. Here they were again searched for weapons and were once more screened for medical problems. After the final screening the flex cuffs were cut off and each man was issued two MREs. The main problems during confinement were minor squabbles over food and cigarettes and poor sanitation. The aloof Iraqi officers were incapable or unwilling to assert leadership and enforce the necessary disciplinary measures. During their confinement the Iraqis ignored the portable heads and so fouled the *Ogden*'s well deck that it required a thorough cleaning after the prisoners left the ship.

While MSSG 13 processed enemy prisoners of war and Company D provided security on Faylakah, the command element performed special tasks. Interrogators, translators, and counter-intelligence specialists were assigned to the evacuation control center. Senior Iraqi officers—one brigadier general and three colonels—were questioned about the location of minefields and barriers. No naval minefield information was forthcoming, but the exact minefield locations on Faylakah were ascertained. The communications section established and maintained contact with the AFCC on board the *Okinawa*. Major Cash, the 13th MEU's intelligence officer, and a team of combat photographers explored Az Zwar and the western defensive positions. Major Cash noted the town had been looted, military equipment had been poorly maintained, and the defensive positions were poorly constructed. Despite the intense aerial bombardment, howev-

er, the Iraqis reported they suffered no serious casualties.*

The last of the Iraqis were processed at about 1515 and the final prisoner of war heliteam was on its way to the *Ogden* at 1530. The Blue Evacuation Team departed Faylakah for the *Durham* at 1519 and the Gold Team was airborne an hour later. All hands from MSSG 13 were back on board ship by 1700. The last American personnel lifted off the island at 1656 and all aircraft and personnel were on board PhibRon 5 shipping by 1720. The task group remained at anchor that night, departing for Mishab the following day. On 5 March, the final group of Iraqi prisoners was flown off the *Ogden* and turned over to military police, closing the books on MFA operations in support of Operation Desert Storm. The time to prepare for the journey home had arrived.[261]

5th MEB Operations On Shore

5th MEB Becomes I MEF Reserve

The 5th MEB was the only major Marine unit to participate in both the amphibious deception and ground operations during Desert Storm. This was the result of a chain of events that began when Boomer radically changed the I MEF scheme of maneuver from a frontal attack up Kuwait's east coast to a flank attack in the western desert. This new plan eliminated the need to seize a coastal enclave to support over-the-shore logistics and freed the Marine Forces Afloat for other missions. One of these missions was for General Jenkins to release part of the MFA to move ashore and become the I MEF reserve.

Boomer's bold new attack plan was not without risk. It created a huge gap in the Marine defensive lines along the border. The movement of the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions to their assembly areas left almost no defenders in place along the Kuwaiti border near the Al Wafrah National Forest. This void left Combat Service Support Area 1 at Kibrit and the main supply route from Mishab to Al Khanjar at risk. Boomer addressed this problem in two innovative ways. First, he created a special purpose force, Task Force Troy commanded by Brigadier General Thomas V. Draude, to carry out deception operations to convince the Iraqis that offensive forces were preparing to attack. Second, an afloat Marine brigade would slip ashore to become the I MEF reserve. By occupying the Al Wafrah gap this reserve force could ensure the uninterrupted advance of the units on each of its flanks—I MEF on the left and JFC-E on the right—and prevent Iraqi attacks to sever vital lines of communication. That this could be done on such short notice was a testament to the inherent flexibility of amphibious forces.

On 5 February, Boomer requested that an afloat brigade be placed under his operational control to become the I MEF reserve for the duration of Desert Storm. General Schwarzkopf and Admiral Arthur agreed, and on 7 February, the 4th

*The low casualty figure was attributed to the fact that the Iraqis generally abandoned their fighting positions and raced for safe areas whenever aircraft warnings were received.

MEB was so designated. It was soon apparent, however, that this assignment would have to be changed because the bulk of 4th MEB was scheduled to conduct an amphibious raid at Faylakah Island. With 4th MEB thus engaged, the 5th MEB would have to become the I MEF reserve. This was ironic since Brigadier General Rowe's final departure report stated the 5th MEB was poorly equipped for sustained inland operations.

Preparing to Go Ashore

On 13 February, General Rowe learned of the new assignment and quickly initiated a rapid planning cycle. There were three important elements in the 5th MEB's preparations to become the I MEF reserve force: gathering intelligence; coordinating logistics support; and planning operations. Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm Arnot's intelligence section and the 5th SRISG worked with the MEF's intelligence officer, Colonel Forest L. Lucy, and their own MSE intelligence sections to create and disseminate an accurate picture of the battlefield. Colonel Eugene L. Gobeli, the MEB's logistics officers, and Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lupton, heading BSSG 5, assessed support needs and made arrangements for assistance with Brigadier General James A. Brabham, Jr.'s General Support Groups at Al Jubayl and Mishab. Colonel Robert J. Garner, commanding officer of the 11th MEU, prepared a concept of operations and listed execution tasks for the 5th MEB major subordinate elements.

Tactical intelligence was a major area of concern throughout Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Ground reconnaissance was practically nonexistent because of operational restraints imposed by upper command echelons. The only tactical aerial reconnaissance readily available was provided by remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs) because the Marines no longer flew McDonnell Douglas RF-4B Phantom II reconnaissance aircraft.*[262] The RPVs—often mistaken for model airplanes—were difficult to detect, could linger over the target area for extended periods, and provided near real-time data. The main problems were their limited numbers and the poor quality of the grainy monochrome imagery they produced. Requests for national- and theater-level assistance were not often granted. The high altitude reconnaissance photos that were made available seldom arrived in a timely manner. Marine tactical intelligence, therefore, came primarily from signal intercepts and information supplied by human resources.

These limitations notwithstanding, the following picture of the battlefield emerged: The 5th MEB would face units from the elite *III Corps*, generally recognized as Iraq's best regular army formation. The *8th Infantry Division* was dug in along Kuwait's central border. Its flanks were guarded by the relatively immobile *18th* and *29th Infantry Divisions*. These units were expected to defend in place. The major offensive threat to the 5th MEB were elements of the *5th*

*The last Marine RF-4B flew in Aug90 and promised TARPS reconnaissance pods for F/A-18 Hornets were not yet available.

Mechanized Division lurking near Al Wafrah. This force, believed to be the residue from the earlier Iraqi attack on Khafji, numbered up to 500 men and was thought to possess as many as two dozen tanks and a similar number of armored personnel carriers.*

The logistics situation was a difficult one because General Rowe's concern about the 5th MEB having to operate inland had become reality. Plans to rely on sea-based logistics had to be abandoned due to the overland distances involved and the loss of several key ships. These problems were compounded because an undermanned BSSG 5 would have to unload assault echelon equipment and sustainment supplies at two ports about 100 miles apart, in addition to lacking necessary transportation assets. An alternative logistics plan was formulated. Instead of relying on PhibGru 3 ships for support, the 5th MEB would plug into the I MEF combat service support system by drawing supplies from General Support Group 2 (GSG 2) or Brigadier General Charles C. Krulak's Direct Support Command (DSC). The 5th MEB would land its supplies and deliver them to rear area supply dumps then would later draw ammunition, fuel, and water at forward supply points. As the 5th MEB displaced farther forward, the supply burden would shift from GSG 2 to the DSC.

Transportation was a formidable obstacle because the 5th MEB line haul assets consisted of only 16 five-ton trucks from a provisional truck company. Compounding the seriousness of the situation was the fact that these trucks were intended to operate within 50 miles of the coast, but the 5th MEB was being sent more than 150 miles inland. A partial solution was the use of what became known as "Saudi Motors," a fleet of civilian tractor-trailers and elaborately decorated trucks, called "circus wagons" by Marines, driven by Pakistani and Philippine immigrant workers under control of the 6th Motor Transport Battalion, Selected Marine Corps Reserve.

Although unloading the 5th MEB landing force operational material and follow-on supplies would be a difficult task, several factors eased the burden. General Support Groups 1 and 2 were already well established at Al Jubayl and Ras Al Mishab and were ready to render assistance. The port at Jubayl was an excellent facility with ample material-handling equipment. An experienced local labor force, a U.S. Navy support group, a U.S. Army transportation battalion, and a Marine shore party were on hand to help BSSG 5 with cargo handling.

The Royal Saudi Naval Forces port at Ras Al Mishab was less impressive. There was only one pier and port entry was tricky because an incoming ship had to move through an offshore oilfield, negotiate a narrow channel, and turn around in a very tight space. This difficult sea approach was complicated by two additional factors, the threat of floating mines, and Silkworm anti-ship missiles located near Ras Al Qulayah. Despite these limitations Mishab had to be used because

*This force was later deemed to be a Republican Guard-trained commando battalion attached to the *5th Mech.*

it was so close to the forward combat service support areas.[263]

Another logistics problem was the need to cross-deck personnel and reconfigure ship loads because of the loss of several amphibious ships. This created a domino effect that began when the 5th MEB lost the use of the *Tripoli*, which was detached to support mine countermeasures operations. This required an extensive reshuffling of embarked personnel and equipment. Companies E, F, and most of H&S Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines moved to the *New Orleans*. The transfer of more than 1,500 men forced other ships to cram supplies into any available nook and cranny and to resort to surge quartering.

The resulting "ship squeeze" required the *Tarawa* to put into Jubayl to transfer VMA-513's Harriers to nearby King Abdul Aziz Naval Air Base and to unload some personnel and equipment on 15 February. Early the next morning, crewmen and Marines on board the *Tarawa* learned why the Jubayl area was known as the "Scud Bowl." They were rudely roused from their sleep by sirens screeching a warning of incoming ballistic missiles. One of them, a Scud that may have been specifically aimed at the *Tarawa*, hit the water about 120 meters off the *Tarawa*'s port side.[264] Luckily, the warhead did not detonate and the missile strike caused no casualties or damage.

The *Germantown* had been scheduled to detach from 5th MEB so its LCACs could support the 4th MEB amphibious raid on Faylakah Island, but the requirement was dropped when Operation Desert Slash was downgraded to an artillery raid. The 5th MEB unexpectedly lost the *New Orleans* after the *Tripoli* was disabled by a mine. Fortunately, the *New Orleans* was able to land BLT 3/1 and HMM(C)-268 before departing, but its loss left 1,096 Marines without boat spaces when ground operations ended. For General Rowe, the bottom line was that the 5th MEB retained only one of its original three assault ships to support combat operations ashore. This circumstance dictated that MAG-50 would have to move ashore during the ground war.[265]

After receiving the warning order on 13 February, the 5th MEB command element had to conceive and refine an operations plan in less than 10 days. The resulting plan called for RLT 5 to come ashore as quickly as possible with its advance elements manning positions on G-Day in order to screen the I MEF right flank and to protect supply routes.* In order to keep the amphibious deception viable most of the 5th MEB would remain at sea until the ground attack had been launched. This meant that RLT 5 would not be allowed to begin landing at Mishab until mid-morning on G-Day.

The concept of operations envisioned 5th MEB landing at both Jubayl and Mishab. Regimental Landing Team 5 was to relieve Task Force Troy and guard the I MEF flank in its zone, be prepared to move on order to protect the I MEF northwest flank, secure breach sites, provide main supply route security, and clear by-passed enemy positions while moving in trace of the 2d Marine Division.

*G-Day was the start of the ground offensive and had been given that designation to avoid confusion with D-Day (Desert Storm) and A-Day (amphibious assault).

Initially, the zone of operations would stretch along the border directly across from Kuwait's Al Wafrah National Forest.* The 1st Marine Division would be on the left and JFC-E units would be on the right. The main limiting factor was logistics; the entire 5th MEB could not be unloaded in one day and all of its ships could not use the same port. An additional concern was the lack of organic transportation. Without heavy equipment transporters for rapid movement, the mechanized task force, BLT 3/5, would have to move cross country at a very slow pace to avoid costly vehicle and equipment breakdowns while in transit.

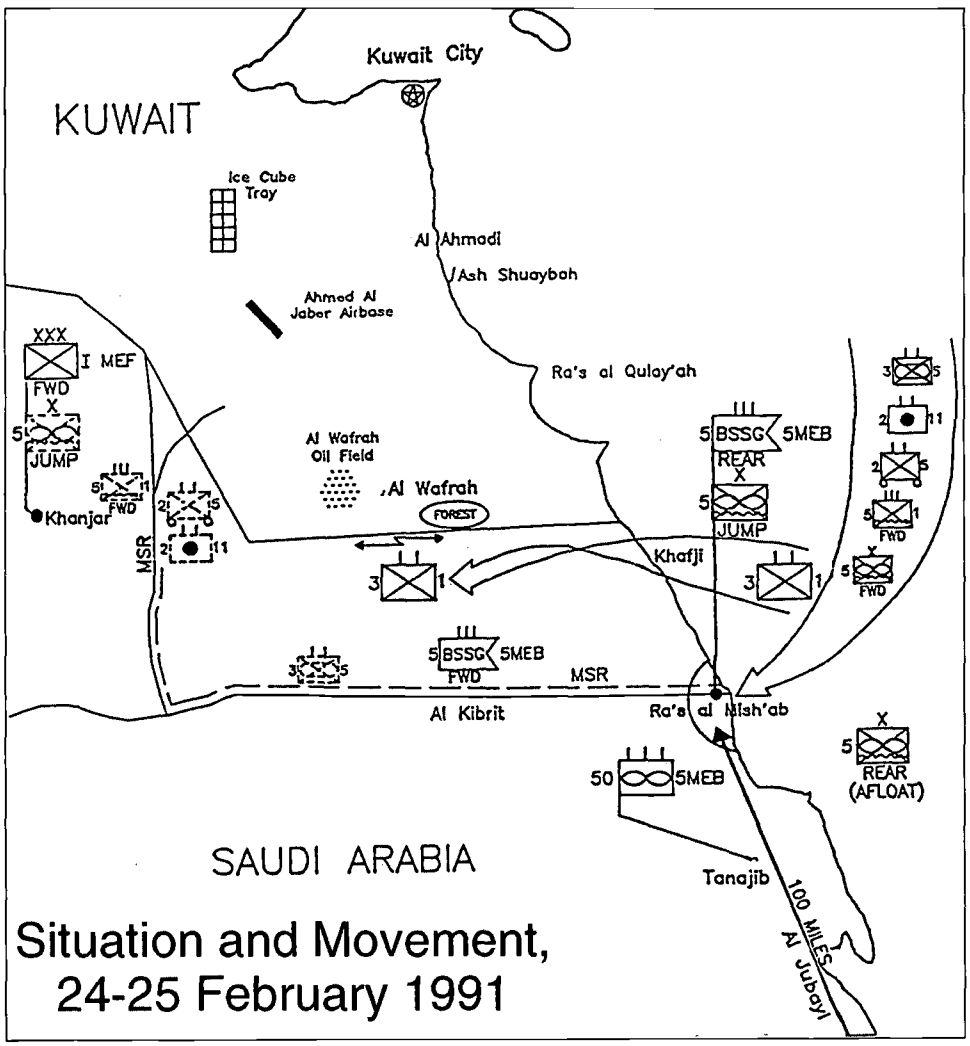
Before going ashore the 5th MEB was task organized for combat operations. The command element was divided into 5th MEB Forward and 5th MEB Rear. The forward command post would move ashore to coordinate operations while the rear remained on board the *Tarawa*. The forward command post was further subdivided into a "jump CP" and the "main CP." The jump CP would be mobile, either vehicle- or helicopter-borne, and would consist of General Rowe, his communicators, and designated staff members. The main CP would be stationary and was under the direction of General Rowe's chief of staff, Colonel Drake Trumpe. A liaison team from the 5th MEB had been attached to I MEF on 16 February to coordinate plans and keep Brigadier General Rowe abreast of the ever-changing tactical situation ashore.

Regimental Landing Team 5 was divided into four combat elements. Battalion Landing Team 3/1 was the heliborne assault element, BLT 2/5 would be the motorized element and emergency heliborne back-up force, BLT 3/5 comprised a mechanized combined-arms task force, and the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, would control artillery support. Marine Aircraft Group 50, less the Harriers of VMA-513 under the operational control of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing and a detachment of HMA-773 Sea Cobras on board the *Tripoli*, was slated to move ashore and operate from Tanajib Air Field near Mishab. Brigade Service Support Group 5 had forward and rear headquarters detachments; two port operations groups, one at Jubayl and one at Mishab; a combat service support detachment (CSSD) to operate the main logistics center; and three mobile CSSDs to service forward units.

Initial Operations on Shore

The 5th MEB was placed under General Boomer's operational control at 1800 in the evening of 23 February.[266] The next morning, I MEF initiated the Coalition ground offensive to recapture Kuwait. The assault began at 0400 and by mid-morning lead elements of the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions had penetrated the vaunted Saddam Line between the Al Manaqish and Al Wafrah oilfields. Breaching operations went so smoothly that General Schwarzkopf later lauded

*The term "National Forest" is misleading. Al Wafrah was an agricultural station with its vegetation evenly spaced in neat rows rather than a dense growth of trees and underbrush as the title infers.



the Marine effort as a textbook example that should be studied for years. The Marine attack routed the Iraqis and soon the main problem became handling an unexpectedly large number of enemy prisoners of war. This success was due, at least in part, to effective deception operations. Task Force Troy held the Iraqis defending the southern border in place, and the amphibious threat tied at least four Iraqi divisions to static positions along the coast south of Kuwait City.

The 5th MEB "hit the deck running and didn't stop until it reassembled in March."[267] The first ground elements ashore were helilifted into a key blocking position just south of the Kuwaiti border. The bulk of the ground combat element came ashore and conducted a 130-mile overland bypass of Iraqi lines to join I MEF combat units in Kuwait. Marine Aircraft Group 50 moved ashore and provided combat aviation support to the 5th MEB, I MEF, and 3d MAW. Brigade Service Support Group 5 accomplished herculean logistics feats despite being handicapped by ship, personnel, and resource shortfalls. Combat operations started on 24 February and ended on 3 March, but some elements of the 5th MEB

remained ashore to support I MEF until 17 March.[268]

Regimental Landing Team 5 divided its operational focus into two distinct phases. During the first phase BLT 3/1 carried the load. It made a helicopter assault near the Kuwaiti border to reinforce Task Force Troy, engaged Iraqi forces in the Al Wafrah National Forest, then moved north into Kuwait to assist the 2d Marine Division. Meanwhile, the remainder of RLT 5 landed at Mishab, organized and consolidated, made a two-day motor march to join I MEF, and conducted route security operations. These roles were reversed for the second phase. After its release by the 2d Marine Division, BLT 3/1 returned to Mishab and the focus of 5th MEB operations shifted to the Al Wafrah area being swept by RLT 5.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert S. Robichaud's BLT 3/1 was the first 5th MEB unit ashore. Its mission was to establish a blocking position south of the Kuwaiti border in support of Task Force Troy. Battalion Landing Team 3/1, as the rest of the 5th MEB, was task organized to best accomplish its mission. Captain Glenn E. Gearhard's Company L and the AAVs were attached to the BLT 3/5 mechanized combined-arms task force and would not participate in the helicopter assault. Battery G, 3d Battalion, 12th Marines, had no maps of the area so it was attached to Lieutenant Colonel Paul A. Gido's 2d Battalion, 11th Marines. Battery E, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, was instead placed in direct support of BLT 3/1. Captain Carlyle E. Shelton divided Headquarters and Service Company into four elements: a forward command post; a main command post; an administrative and logistics operations center; and a rear marshalling party. Captain Eric H. Carlson's Weapons Company jump CP and the heavy machine gun section made the helicopter assault, but most of the rest of Weapons Company moved ashore by surface craft and would affect a later link-up with its parent unit. Detachment 11, 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion, was assigned to escort the follow-on convoy from Mishab to Al Wafrah and landed over Blue Beach.

Battalion Landing Team 3/1's forward command element, three rifle companies, and a weapons company detachment were helilifted into positions seven kilometers south of the Al Wafrah National Forest during the afternoon of 24 February. The first unit in was Captain Michael F. Reineberg's Company I, which departed the *Denver* at about 1135 and set down in Landing Zone Inca at about 1205. Captain Rodney S. Nolan, the BLT, S-2, met with the Task Force Troy intelligence section to confirm enemy and friendly positions and to make last-minute adjustments to BLT 3/1's dispositions. He was shown breaks in the protective berm, alerted to minefield locations, and informed that BLT 3/1 would face an estimated battalion-size enemy force. Lieutenant Colonel Robichaud used this information to establish night defensive positions and to plan an artillery raid for the following day.

The helilift of BLT 3/1 continued throughout the afternoon of G-Day. After Company I was safely on shore, Company K followed. Captain Ronald F. Baczkowski established Company K's defensive positions to the right of Company I. Captain Dane H. Skagen's Company M lifted off the *New Orleans* then set up its company battle position on BLT 1/4's east (right) flank. Although the helilift was cut short by ground fog, the forward command post, including

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DM-ST-93-02254

An aerial view reveals the Marine Corps combat service support area near Al Kibrit in Saudi Arabia.

Lieutenant Colonel Robichaud, Major George E. Stratmann, Jr., and Sergeant Major William A. D. Leblanc, was able to assume control of the ground units and coordinate supporting arms before sunset.[269]

At the forward edge of the battlefield, BLT 3/1 maintained a close watch over the Al Wafrah National Forest for two days. Robichaud covered the most likely avenues of approach with antiarmor teams and ordered his rifle companies to be alert for enemy movement. His artillery, firing harassing and interdiction missions, struck enemy positions, but the BLT encountered no enemy the first night. While their comrades were manning the lines south of Al Wafrah, the surface-landed combat support elements of BLT 3/1 came ashore and then gathered in an assembly area about three kilometers west of Mishab until they could move up to Al Wafrah the next morning. The first night was uneventful except for two explosions believed to have been caused by a pair of incoming Scud missiles, which shook the earth south of BLT 3/1's defensive lines.[270]

While BLT 3/1 defended the border, the rest of RLT 5 came ashore. This force remained in the Mishab area until it had consolidated and formed into three convoys on G-Plus One. Throughout G-Day, Mishab harbor was a flurry of activity. Landing craft carried men and equipment from the amphibious ships to the landing beaches while helicopters raced overhead carrying more men and equipment from ships outside the harbor. H-Hour was delayed due to bad weather and harbor entry was slowed by the mine threat, so the 5th MEB offload began at 1400 instead of mid-morning as planned. The *Anchorage*, *Germantown*, *Mount Vernon*, and *Peoria* landed their men and equipment over the beach while the *Mobile* unloaded at the pier. The landings were halted about midnight and resumed at first light the following day.

The offload was conducted in tactical sequence and lasted until 0956 on 27 February. The first units to land were elements of BLT 3/1, the LAVs, and Battery E, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines. Next ashore was Battalion Landing Team 2/5 from the *Tarawa*, *New Orleans*, and *Juneau*. Lieutenant Colonel Gido's artillery landed from the *Anchorage* with the following echelon. Battalion Landing Team 2/5 continued its offload while Lieutenant Colonel Kevin M. Kennedy received final instructions and was given maps and written orders. The final evolution included the regiment's command element from the *Juneau* and BLT 3/5 debarking from the *Mount Vernon*, *Vancouver*, *Frederick*, and *Peoria*. The Marines came ashore wearing woodland green cammies and carrying a one-day ammunition supply, two days of rations, and full NBC gear including CPOG suits, hooded gas masks, boot covers, and gloves. Marine Aircraft Group 50 used CH-46 and CH-53 helicopters from HMM-268 to move from the *New Orleans* to nearby Tanajib Airfield. At Mishab the BSSG 5 shore party completed its offload operations after bringing 310 vehicles and 280,250 cubic feet of cargo ashore in less than 72 hours. The 4th MEB lent a hand as helicopters from MAG-40 lifted much-needed 5th MEB supplies and equipment off the *Tripoli* as it limped along off the coast on its way to the shipyard to undergo repairs after the mine strike.[271]

The 5th MEB support ships *Flickertail State* and *Cape Girardeau* could not be accommodated at Mishab, so they had to sail more than 80 nautical miles south to Jubayl to be unloaded. Two hundred fifty-three Marines were cross-decked from nine different ships to the tank landing ship *Barbour County* to accompany the MSC ships south. The black bottom ships closed Jubayl on 23 February and the *Barbour County* arrived shortly thereafter. The Jubayl offload took nearly 72 hours. As a result, the equipment, vehicles, and accompanying Marines, including more than two dozen badly needed drivers, did not reach the main body of 5th MEB until after the cease-fire.[272]

Into Kuwait

Early on the 25th, a BLT 3/1 follow-on convoy departed Mishab and soon linked-up with Lieutenant Colonel Robichaud and the main body at the Al Wafrah overwatch position. The LAVs were made the command post security element. Their primary mission, however, was to act as BLT 3/1's reserve, standing ready to mount a counterattack or to reinforce any weak point in the defensive line. The Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Target Acquisition section was tasked to scout across the border in order to find safe passages through the minefields. Weapons Company established a fire support coordination center to integrate aviation, naval gunfire, and ground indirect fire support. The heavy machine gun section shifted one of its teams north to the border to relieve the TOW platoon. The 81mm Mortar and Anti-armor Platoons set up in overwatch positions located on South Ridge.

The reconnaissance platoon was helilifted to LZ Inca where it briefly joined Company I before being attached to Task Force Troy. The platoon was assigned to positions Alpha, Outpost 2, and Echo, located near openings in the protective

sand berm that marked the Kuwaiti border. Alpha and Echo positions were small lookout brackets cut into the berm. Outpost 2 was much more substantial. An abandoned Saudi police station, it was nicknamed the Castle because it was made of brick and had a watch tower reminiscent of a French Foreign Legion fortress. The reconnaissance team shared the Castle with a forward air control party and a naval gunfire liaison team.

Throughout the day, BLT 3/1 directed aerial close-in-fire support and artillery fire into Al Wafrah. The support missions were flown by AH-1W Super Cobras from MAG-40's HMLA-269 and AH-1J Sea Cobras of MAG-50's HMA-773. These actions resulted in the capture of about 25 Iraqis who crossed the border to surrender. The prisoners were wearing camouflage battle dress and red berets and carried folding-stock AKM rifles, confirming they were members of an elite commando battalion. During intelligence debriefings Iraqi prisoners reported that they had suffered more than 40 casualties. They further stated that the force had split into small groups for safety reasons and was no longer a cohesive fighting unit. They believed, however, that some Iraqi diehards would continue to fight if attacked.

Lieutenant Colonel Kennedy, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines' Alpha command group, and 1st Platoon, Company E, flew into Mishab before dark on G-Day. The Heavy Machine Gun Platoon came in by LCU. These two groups linked up and immediately moved inland to coordinate the 2d Battalion's movement. The Bravo command group and the battalion aid station landed the next morning, as did the remainder of the battalion. Company E flew ashore first, and was followed by Companies F, G, and Weapons Company. The Anti-armor Platoon and most of the battalion's vehicles landed by surface craft throughout the afternoon. That evening the 2d Battalion mounted trucks and moved west.

On 25 February, the 5th MEB Forward command post flew to Al Khanjar and set up its combat operations center adjacent to the I MEF forward headquarters. After RLT 5 completed reorganization, it displaced west along the main supply route. Colonel Gangle planned to set up near Kibrit so RLT 5 could back up BLT 3/1 or move forward to Al Khanjar as the situation warranted. A convoy of humvees, trucks, and LAVs left in the early afternoon. BLT 3/5's mechanized task force, including a few humvees and all of the RLT 5 tanks and AAVs, formed at Checkpoint 5 west of Mishab and departed for Kibrit in the mid-afternoon.

This trip turned out to be only the first leg of a 28-hour journey. It was slow going for the tracked vehicles. The AAVs and tanks could move only at about 10 miles per hour and every hour the convoy halted for 10 minutes. Although this snail's pace was frustrating, the task force moved 186 miles without a single vehicle breakdown.

Colonel Gangle's forward command element, BLT 2/5, and the artillery in the motorized convoy soon outpaced the slower moving mechanized task force. The convoy which included RLT 5 forward CP; BLT 2/5 jump CP; Companies E, F, and G; and the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, arrived at Kibrit at about 1930. When he reported in at CSSB 1, Colonel Gangle learned that the Marine offensive was moving far more rapidly than had been expected and he was given a warning

order for RLT 5 to continue the march to the forward support base at Al Khanjar rather than remain at Kibrit as had been planned. After arriving at Khanjar, RLT 5 was slated to provide security for the main supply routes and breach points.

On the 26th, BLT 2/5 made a motor march from Kibrit through Khanjar to vicinity of Umm Gudair Oilfield where Lieutenant Colonel Kennedy established a battalion patrol base from which motorized patrols could secure the main supply route and protect vital minefield breaches. The column passed through a protective berm on the Saudi border and then moved through two mine belts and into the Kuwaiti desert. Although enemy mines were marked, a damaged D-9 Combat Excavator reminded the Marines of the constant danger. During the afternoon, the Marines established defensive positions oriented north. Each company was reinforced with Dragons and had a heavy machine gun section in direct support. The 81mm mortars were in general support. During the rainy night, the artillery and a LAV unit moved into positions nearby.

The next morning, Kennedy's Marines moved to Al Jaber Air Base, a march slowed by poor visibility caused by burning oil wells and a low-lying slow-moving weather front.* The Heavy Machine Gun Platoon led the 2d Battalion northeast toward the inky black clouds emanating from the burning oil wells. At 1400 the convoy drove into total darkness and became entangled with a 1st Marine Division convoy near Al Jaber. At dusk, the 2d Battalion reached rubble-strewn Al Jaber Air Base where it joined the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines and the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines for the night.

Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Selvage's BLT 3/5 made a 43-mile road march along Route Green from Mishab to Kibrit in order to relieve Task Force Troy, but this plan was changed when General Boomer ordered the BLT to refuel at Kibrit and then continue moving forward. The mechanized task force finally arrived at Al Khanjar at about 1130 on 26th. Selvage was then ordered to continue forward using Route California to move through the minefield breaches, and alerted that the BLT might have to engage elements of the Iraqi *6th Infantry Division* during the movement to Al Jaber Air Base.

At 1505, Battalion Landing Team 3/5 entered Kuwait. Lieutenant Colonel Selvage established night defensive positions in the vicinity of Phase Line Mary and ordered patrolling to begin at midnight. Almost two hours later, at 0155, Captain Steve L. Suddreth reported BLT 3/5's first contact when a TOW gunner discovered a T-55 tank in the vicinity of the police post at Phase Line Jill. Suddreth ordered him to hold fire because the target might be a Syrian tank from Joint Forces Command North. With daylight, the tank was identified as a disabled Iraqi T-55. On the 27th, most of the task force moved to Al Jaber Air Base except for Companies K and L, BLT 3/1, which remained behind to secure BLT 3/5's southern flank.

Late in the day on 25th, BLT 3/1 was affected by actions farther north. On G-

*Visibility was extremely limited even during daylight hours; the author's journal records that at noon that day it was as dark as the foggy moonless nights he recalled from his youth in northern Michigan.

Day the 2d Marine Division had penetrated the Saddam Line, poured through the breaches, and consolidated at Phase Line Red just north of Al Jaber Air Base. The next morning the division repulsed an early-morning attack and then pushed north to capture a fortified built-up area, commonly referred to as the "Ice Cube Tray" because of its graphic representation on tactical maps, in the vicinity of Al Kabd. These actions yielded an estimated 9,000 Iraqi prisoners, an unexpectedly high number which overwhelmed the division's ability to handle them all.[273]

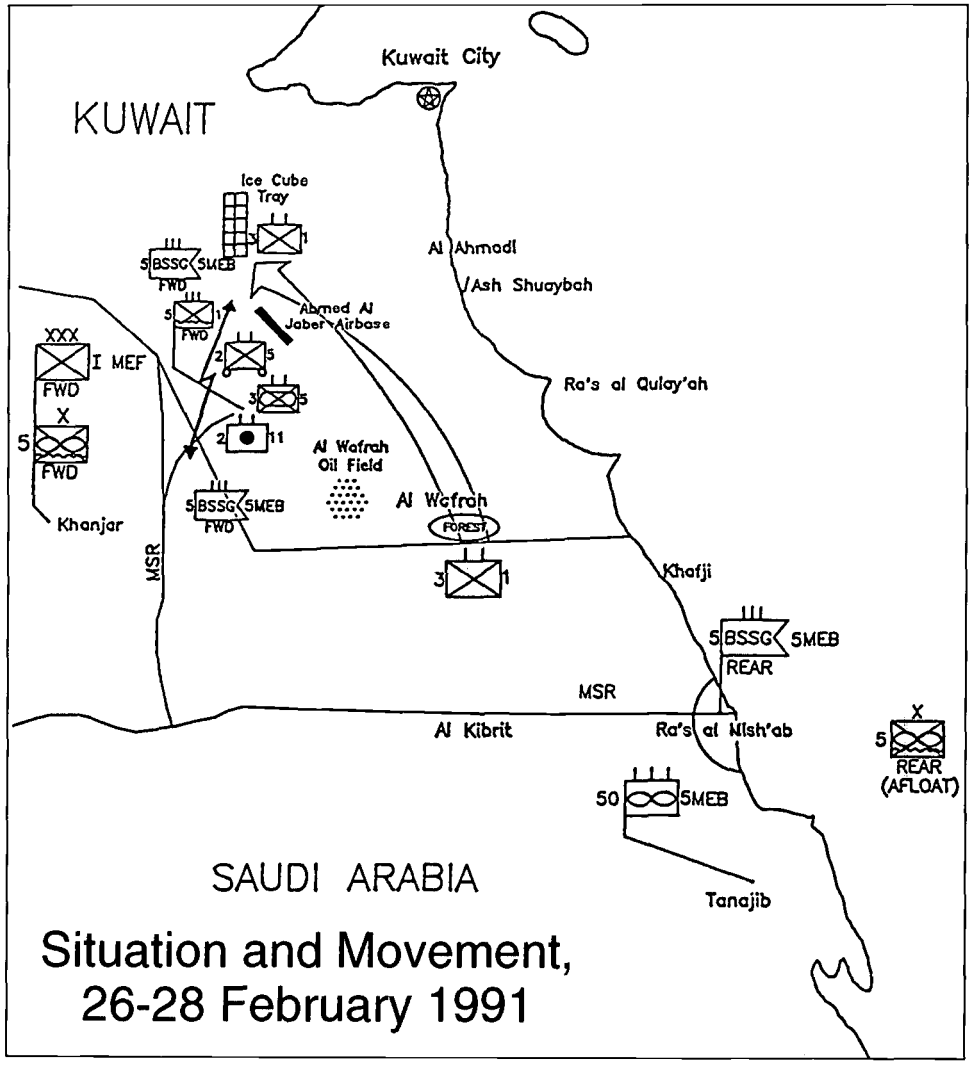
Major General William M. Keys, the division's commanding general, radioed I MEF for assistance. General Boomer quickly decided to use his reserve force to solve this crisis. Up to that time Lieutenant Colonel Robichaud's primary worry had been blocking an Iraqi spoiling attack, but now BLT 3/1 was being transferred to Kuwait. The forward command post and part of Headquarters and Service Company were immediately helilifted to the Ice Cube Tray to assist the 2d Marine Division with the handling and evacuation of Iraqi prisoners.

During the final two days of the conflict, BLT 3/1 was attached to the 2d Marine Division to conduct combat patrols and to handle enemy prisoners at Al Kabd and Al Jaber. The BLT's main command post and logistics train made a motor march from Kibrit to catch up with the forward CP and main body. Headquarters and Service Company guarded and evacuated about 1,500 Iraqis, while Company K provided prisoner of war camp security. Company I and Company M assumed defensive positions northeast of the Ice Cube Tray and began vehicle and foot patrols. Searches of the built-up area revealed large amounts of ammunition, weapons, and stacks of documents. Weapons Company was split: the 81mm mortars and heavy machine guns remained at Landing Zone Lonesome Dove (Al Khanjar), while the Anti-armor Platoon made a motor march to join BLT 3/1. The Reconnaissance Platoon tried to fly into Kuwait International Airport, but was diverted to Lonesome Dove because of poor visibility.[274]

RLT 5 Clears Al Wafrah

By the evening of the 27th, it was obvious Saddam's forces in Kuwait had been defeated. The Coalition's east wing (IMEF, JFC-E, and JFC-N) was pushing hard for Kuwait City and the enemy was on the run. Iraqi forces that had occupied Kuwait City fled north and were being pounded by air strikes as they moved along roads to Basrah and Umm Qasr. In the Euphrates Valley, VII Corps had crushed an Iraqi armored column destroying more than 300 enemy tanks and was moving east to cut off the last escape routes. After consultation with General Powell, President Bush ordered General Schwarzkopf to suspend offensive operations. Central Command ordered a cease fire, effective at 0800 on 28 February. Coalition forces were, however, authorized to engage any Iraqi units or individuals that showed hostile intent or refused to honor the cease fire agreement.

With operations at a standstill, Brigadier General Rowe thought it prudent to begin moving the 5th MEB out of Kuwait so it could backload on board amphibious shipping and resume the role of an afloat reserve. However, he was first



ordered to sweep through the Al Wafrah Forest and clear it of Iraqi soldiers. It was hoped that the Iraqis would surrender without a fight, but considering statements made by Iraqi prisoners who had surrendered to BLT 3/1 and the poor state of Iraqi communications, it was not certain this would be the case.

Intelligence reports indicated there were an estimated 70 to 100 Iraqis still holding out in the Al Wafrah Forest. Because the exact situation was uncertain General Rowe elected to approach it as a combat operation. Colonel Gangle was to use RLT 5 to clear Al Wafrah, BLT 3/1 would be the reserve force, MAG-50 would provide air support, and BSSG 5 would provide logistical support. The clearing operation was to begin on 1 March and would be concluded as soon as possible, hopefully, the next day.[275]

Colonel Gangle issued his orders to RLT 5 at 2300 on the 28th. He wanted BLTs 2/5 and 3/5 to clear their respective zones from west to east beginning at dawn on 1 March. A captured map overlay indicated the Iraqi minefield locations

so he ordered BLT 3/5 to sweep the north side of the minefield while BLT 2/5 moved along the south side. Company A, 4th Tank Battalion, and the TOW Platoon were designated the reserve and collectively labeled Team Tank. Several units from BLT 3/1, LAV Detachment 11, Battery G, and Company L, were attached to the RLT for the clearing operation. The 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, would handle fire support.[276] The attack would be proceeded by psychological operations helicopters announcing the cease-fire and giving surrender instructions. MAG-50 helicopters were to be available for medical evacuation, command and control, transportation, and close-in fire support. Brigade Service Support Group 5 would have to serve two masters, supporting the combat units in the field while simultaneously preparing an amphibious backload at Mishab.

At 0600 on the 1st, RLT 5 left the assembly area and moved to the line of departure. At about 0700 it began moving south on two axes toward the Al Wafrah Oil Processing Complex. There was a three-hour delay at Phase Line Janice while psychological operations helicopters crisscrossed Al Wafrah. Some dropped leaflets announcing the cease-fire while others carried loudspeakers blaring surrender instructions. At about 1100, RLT 5 resumed the advance with BLTs 2/5 and 3/5 forward and Team Tank moving in trace. Lieutenant Colonel Kennedy opted to use a battalion "V" formation with Companies E and G following a screen of LAVs while Headquarters and Service Company and Company F brought up the rear. Lieutenant Colonel Selvage, on the other hand, used all four of BLT 3/5's mechanized rifle companies on line.

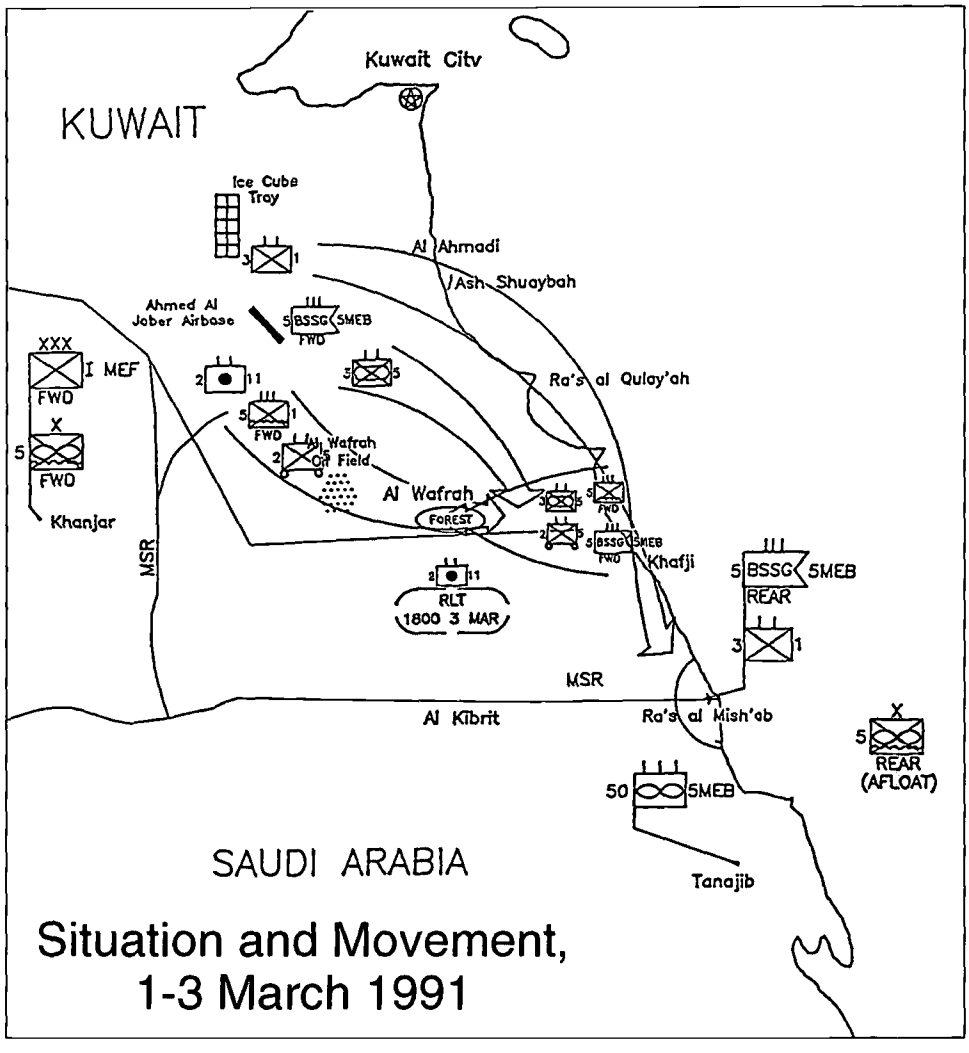
The column passed abandoned artillery positions, wrecked vehicles, and burning oil wells. The 2d Battalion reached the Al Wafrah transfer station in mid-afternoon. At about 1500 BLT 2/5 discovered fresh food while clearing its portion of the built-up area, but spotted no Iraqis. As the unit moved out about an hour later, Captain Mark A. McDonald, in command of Company F, reported an explosion, possibly an RPG round, about 100 meters behind his rear-most truck. At 1730 a burst of Iraqi small arms and automatic weapons fire caused no casualties. Two Reserve AH-1J Cobras from HMA-773 providing on-call, close-in fire support quickly swooped in. They destroyed several buildings and other likely hiding places in the BLT's zone.

The advance then continued to Checkpoint 69 near the edge of the forest. There, each BLT established 360-degree night defensive positions on its respective side of the obstacle barrier. Realizing there was still much left to do, Colonel Gangle requested an extension of time to clear the Al Wafrah Forest. It was granted, but General Rowe was emphatic that RLT 5 had to be out of Kuwait no later than 1800 on the 3d. Satisfied this could be done, Colonel Gangle planned to use a small ruse. Battalion Landing Team 2/5 would move back through the forest as if it was leaving, then BLT 3/5 would follow at a distance. The plan was for BLT 3/5 to catch the Iraqis as they tried to harass BLT 2/5 from the rear. These Iraqis would then be forced to surrender or could be pushed into pre-planned CIFS/artillery kill zones.[277]

Companies E and F led the sweep through the Al Wafrah Forest. Company G moved in trace. They were supported by the 81mm Mortar Platoon at the north-

east corner of the forest and Company E's 60mm mortars supported the movement from the main road. The companies carefully cleared the area moving from house to house and marking all unexploded ordnance. Two provisional security platoons from H&S Company manned a blocking position at the west end of the forest. As the sweep neared the west end, Company E's 2d Platoon was taken under fire. Distinctive green tracer rounds were spotted coming from a nearby brick structure. The 81mm Mortar Platoon fired an immediate illumination mission that allowed two Cobra gunships to strafe the enemy strongpoint. The 2d Battalion consolidated at dusk. Throughout the night, the Marines were serenaded by a psychological operations helicopter playing music and broadcasting appeals to the Iraqis to surrender.

At about 0700 on the 2d, Company B, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, breached an 11-row minefield using AAV-mounted mine-clearing line charges, bangalore torpedoes, satchel charges, and tank-mounted mine rakes to clear a 275- by 20-foot lane through the obstacle belt. The engineers completed the job at 0855 and



the forward elements of BLT 3/5 moved south at 0900. About three hours later, Company L, BLT 3/1, came under automatic weapons and small arms fire. The AAVs, Company L, and snipers returned fire and pinned the Iraqis inside a house. An armed UH-1N destroyed the building and its occupants at 1343. The remaining Iraqis broke contact and fled. Lieutenant Colonel Selvage ordered BLT 3/5 to halt and establish night defensive positions about nine kilometers west of the morning start line. He estimated that the forest was about 75 percent cleared when darkness halted operations.[278]

The advance resumed at daybreak the next morning. At about 0830, BLT 3/5 captured a truck and detained its driver. During mid-morning RLT 5 suffered its first combat casualty when a Marine from Company A, 4th LAI Battalion, tripped a booby trap. Second Lieutenant Bruce S. McGraw, the 2d Battalion motor transport officer, drove straight into the minefield and pulled the injured man to safety. The wounded Marine was lifted out by helicopter to be treated for leg and eye wounds. At about half-past noon, enemy soldiers were spotted and taken under fire by 81mm mortars. The final combat action occurred when the RLT 5 command post was fired upon. Company L, BLT 3/1, immediately engaged an enemy force occupying the built-up area near the Al Wafrah Oil Processing Complex. The buildings were destroyed or damaged by small arms, rounds from MK-19 automatic grenade launchers, TOW missiles, and close-in fire support from HMLA-169 Super Cobras. When the fire fight was over RLT 5 moved into Saudi Arabia at the breach site near the Castle.[279]

MAG-50 Operations

Marine Aircraft Group 50 played an active role throughout Operation Desert Storm. In order to do this effectively the 5th MEB aviation combat element had to undergo a drastic reorganization. The fixed-wing element went ashore and was attached to the 3d MAW to support I MEF air and ground operations. One rotary-wing detachment remained on board ship to support mine countermeasures operations and to protect the amphibious task force. Most of the group, however, moved ashore at Mishab and supported 5th MEB ground operations from Tanajib Airfield. At the end of combat operations MAG-50 was once again restructured to meet new requirements.

The single most important factor that influenced MAG-50 combat operations was the loss of the big deck amphibious assault ships *Tripoli* and *New Orleans*. Colonel West, virtually without warning in each case, lost two-thirds of his afloat aviation support. While the loss of deck spaces were costly enough, he also lost the bulk of his maintenance and ordnance storage facilities. These losses and unexpected operational needs dictated radical changes in the aviation plans.

Colonel West left four AH-1Js from Detachment A, HMA-773, on board the *Tripoli* which separated from the ATF and joined Destroyer Squadron 22 to conduct airborne mine countermeasure operations on 3 February. The Rainbows of HMM-265 moved from the *Tripoli* to the *Tarawa* which, in turn, forced the six Harriers from VMA-513 and Marine Air Control Squadron 7 personnel and

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DM-SC-93-03521

UH-1N Iroquois and AH-1 Cobra helicopters are parked on the flight line at Lonesome Dove Expeditionary Airfield in Saudi Arabia.

equipment to move ashore. The Harriers flew to King Abdul Aziz Naval Air Base and the ground support personnel and equipment landed at Jubayl on 15 February. Colonel West, MAG-50 headquarters and service personnel, HMM-268, and HMA-773 moved to Tanajib Airfield not far from Mishab. Two AH-1Js, tasked to provide emergency defense of the amphibious task force, a light helicopter detachment from HMLA-169, and the CH-46s of HMM-265 remained at sea. Eventually, after the end of the conflict, Marine Composite Helicopter Squadron 268 was absorbed by the 11th MEU(SOC) and HMA-773 was detached from MAG-50 to return to Atlanta by air transport. Four RH-53D Sea Stallions from Detachment A, Marine Reserve Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772 (HMH-772), were attached to MAG-50 to offset the loss of HMM(C)-268's CH-53Es. The MAG-50 command element operated from Tanajib until 17 March, when it returned to the *Tarawa*.[280]

The aviation detachments from MAG-50 were busy throughout the conflict. After leaving the ship, the six VMA-513 Harriers, commanded by Major Eddie L. Holcomb, were assigned to Marine Aircraft Group 13 (Forward) at King Abdul Aziz Air Base and later flew 133.9 hours in 12 days. Most of the 39 combat sorties were over Kuwait and were flown in support of I MEF requirements. The four AH-1Js of HMA-773 on board the *Tripoli* began flying AMCM support missions on 16 February and continued to do so until the 27th when the disabled *Tripoli* was relieved of these duties by the *New Orleans*.

The bulk of MAG-50 worked in direct support of RLT 5 and was not placed under the operational control of 3d MAW. This arrangement caused no problems and Colonel West noted there were no complaints from any agency about the

independent status of MAG-50.[281] On 24 February, the Sea Knights of HMM-268, aided by HMH-461 Super Stallions, lifted 302 Marines and more than 200,000 pounds of cargo to Tanajib. That same day HMM-265 lifted 272 Marines from BLT 3/1 to blocking positions near Al Wafrah. The Sea Cobras of HMA-773 and HMLA-169 provided helicopter escorts, close-in fire support, and anti-armor defense missions. The Hueys of HMLA-169 furnished reconnaissance, command and control, medical evacuation, and resupply support.[282]

The tempo of operations picked up on the 25th. The Sea Knights from HMM-265 and -268 made 58 combat sorties in support of BLT 3/1 at Al Wafrah. Two AH-1Js from HMA-773 provided on-call, close-in fire support, two AH-1Ws from HMLA-169 provided antitank support, and two Hueys from HMLA-169 provided medical evacuation support for BLT 3/1. The Sea Cobras made 45 combat sorties over the Al Wafrah area, destroying two and damaging four buildings, in addition to causing two secondary explosions, neutralizing an enemy observation post, destroying a radio tower, and engaging an unknown number of Iraqis hiding in the treeline. These actions resulted in the surrender of 14 Iraqis. One Sea Cobra sustained minor damage from small arms fire, but was able to return to Tanajib safely. The enemy antiaircraft battery was immediately destroyed by 20mm fire from the rest of the flight. The Vipers of HMLA-169 flew 40 combat sorties over Al Wafrah and southern Kuwait. Two Viper Hueys carried Colonel Gangle and Lieutenant Colonel Robichaud on several visual reconnaissance missions of the operational area. Detachment A, 3d LAAD, accompanied RLT 5 as it displaced forward from Mishab.[283]

The next day, MAG-50 continued to provide six aircraft in direct support of BLT 3/1 at Al Wafrah. One UH-1N was provided to General Rowe to serve as the 5th MEB airborne command post. The Sea Knights made 44 sorties to transport elements of BLT 3/1 to Al Kabd and elements of BLT 2/5 to Al Khanjar. Viper Super Cobras conducted 38 fire support missions and two Hueys flew emergency medevacs. Nineteen more Iraqis surrendered to BLT 3/1 after aerial attacks on positions inside Kuwait. An AH-1J from HMA-773 escorted six Iraqis waving a white flag into the waiting arms of the Marines of Task Force Troy. Two HMA-773 Sea Cobras remained with BLT 3/1 Rear at Al Wafrah, and two HMLA-169 Hueys supported BLT 3/1 Forward inside Kuwait.[284]

The next two days were difficult for aviation operations because of the deteriorating weather. The already limited visibility was further restricted by rain and low-lying cloud cover that made flight operations almost impossible. The weather delayed the lift of BLT 3/1 from Saudi Arabia to Kuwait on the 27th, then delayed until 1 March the return from Al Kabd to Mishab of some of BLT 3/1. Brigadier General Rowe, Colonel Gangle, and Lieutenant Colonel Selvage on board Hueys escorted by Super Cobras, conducted a visual reconnaissance of the Al Wafrah Forest and its approach routes prior to moving RLT 5 into the area.[285]

Helicopters from HMA-773 and HMLA-169 worked in direct support of RLT 5 during its sweep of the Al Wafrah area. They provided continuous on-call fire support and emergency evacuation support. A section of Hueys and Cobras remained with the RLT 5 command post during its overnight halts. One Huey

conducted an emergency medical evacuation of two Marines from BLT 2/5 and the Huey carrying General Rowe had to make an emergency landing south of Kuwait City due to a gearbox failure. A backup helicopter flew in and continued the mission. The grounded bird was taken to Kuwait International Airport for repairs. From 27 February to 3 March HMA-773 conducted 150 combat sorties, HMM-265 flew 45, and HMM-268 flew 39.[286]

On 4 March, 15 CH-46s, escorted by AH-1Js, lifted more than 1,150 RLT 5 Marines, while overland convoys carried the rest of RLT 5 to Mishab. Two Hueys conducted command and control support for General Rowe and Colonel Gangle. The Vipers of HMLA-169 flew back on board the *Tarawa* that day, but HMM-268 and HMA-773 remained at Tanajib. The crash of an AH-1J Sea Cobra on 6 March resulted in a rotational safety standdown for the next three days. Most of the flight time at Mishab was devoted to cross-decking the 5th MEB staff and bringing on shore more than 300 pallets of HMA-773 supplies and equipment for further shipment to the United States in late March. There were the daily medical evacuation standbys and some aerial logistics support was given to Marine Wing Support Squadron 271 at Tanajib, but for the most part, Colonel West kept flight operations to a minimum until MAG-50 reembarked on 17 March.[287]

Retrograde and Departure

Return of the 13th MEU

It was finally time for the 13th MEU to sail for home. After disembarking the Faylakah prisoners of war at Mishab, the four ships carrying the MEU sailed into the southern Gulf to rendezvous with the *Cayuga*. The ARG remained at anchor off Dubai until 9 March, when it sailed to conduct underway replenishment. While at sea, the *Okinawa* and *Ogden* were tasked to ferry some 3d Marine Aircraft Wing aircraft back to the United States. A detachment from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 165 (HMM-165), a Hawaii-based aviation unit, flew on board while the ships were off the Bahrain coast. This detachment was commanded by Captain Glenn W. Rosenberger and it included 11 CH-46E Sea Knights and 18 aviation support personnel. They had been in Saudi Arabia since the previous August and were long overdue to return home. Once the helicopters had been lashed down, the aviation gear safely stowed, and the Marines quartered, the task group headed south. It passed through the Strait of Hormuz on 11 March, made a turn east, and began the 37-day voyage back to San Diego via the Philippines and Hawaii.[288]

The first leg of the journey home went as planned. On 15 March, the 13th MEU(SOC) left the Gulf and returned to the operational control of the Pacific Fleet. Thus ended the 13th MEU's ninth month of deployment. All hands were looking forward to a final liberty in the Philippines and hoped for a quick stop at Pearl Harbor to be followed by a long-awaited reunion with their loved ones in California. The weather cooperated and it was a smooth sail under sunny skies across the Indian Ocean.

The Marines were given what Colonel Rhodes described as a "Heroes'

Welcome" when they arrived at Subic Bay's Alava Pier on 24 March. The band was playing, a large crowd was clapping and cheering, banners and American flags were proudly displayed, and yellow ribbons abounded. The next day Brigadier Generals George R. Christmas, Commanding General, 9th MEB, and Major General Arthur C. Blades, Commanding General, 1st MAW, saluted the MEU's successful deployment, as did Major General Henry C. Stackpole III, Commanding General, III MEF. While at Subic the 13th MEU embarked additional HMM-165 pilots and aviation support personnel. Shore-anxious Marines got a chance to call home and the 13th MEU enjoyed a well-earned liberty before putting to sea again.

The trip from the Philippines to southern California was not smooth. Only four the of the five ships of PhibRon 5 left Subic Bay on the 28th. The *Durham* remained behind due to engine problems, but was finally able to get underway 36 hours later. Unfortunately, several days later the *Cayuga* developed engine problems and began to lag behind. The *Fort McHenry* reduced speed to escort the limping *Cayuga*, and they were joined later by the *Durham*, and all three sailed the northern circle route home. The *Okinawa* and *Ogden* proceeded to MCAS Hawaii to drop off HMM-165, which on 9 April conducted its fly-off at Kaneohe Bay.

It was a happy group of Marines which left Pearl Harbor for Camp Pendleton. Training during the transit from Hawaii to California included live fire, limited flight operations, and deck-top physical training and recreation time. There were also "reunion and return" classes taught by Navy Family Service representatives from San Diego and Long Beach which stressed potential problems, and a California Highway Patrol officer refreshed the Marines about highway and traffic safety. On 16 April, the ships arrived off California.

The returnees were greeted by Major General James M. Myatt, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, and Major General Harold W. Blot, the commanding general of V Marine Expeditionary Force (V MEF). Following welcome home speeches, most of the Marines went on leave and the V MEF assumed operational control of the 13th MEU. Eight days later V MEF stood down and the 13th MEU was absorbed by recently returned I MEF. By 26 April, all of the 13th MEU major subordinate elements had returned to their parent commands. On 9 June, the 13th MEU participated in the Washington, D.C. Victory Parade and then marched in a similar parade in New York City the next day, ending its bitter-sweet Persian Gulf sojourn.[289]

The 4th MEB Goes Home

Upon receiving the fragmentary order that directed the cease-fire, General Jenkins ordered his staff to begin joint retrograde planning with the amphibious task force staff while the MFA stood by for any further tasking in support of operations ashore. On 7 March, General Schwarzkopf's headquarters announced retrograde plans. The 4th MEB was in good shape because almost all of its men and equipment were already afloat. The main hurdles would be to reembark HMLA-269 and prepare for a detailed washdown of all equipment prior to a rigorous agri-

cultural inspection. Soon, however, the word filtered down that the ATF would also be carrying additional aircraft and equipment back to the United States.[290]

The retrograde and homeward voyage went smoothly and were accomplished without incident. From 5 to 9 March, PhibGru 2 split up for port calls at Dubai and Abu Dhabi. While in port the ships underwent maintenance inspections and conducted repairs prior to the long voyage home. The embarked Marines cleaned equipment and performed preventative maintenance to get ready for agricultural certification. The *Iwo Jima*, *Saginaw*, and *Manitowoc* were certified upon leaving Dubai. Between 11 and 12 March, the 4th MEB embarked two CH-53Es (HMH-362) and four CH-46s (HMM-774) for the trip to the U.S. On the 16th, the *Baugh* and *Bonnyman* sailed from Jubayl for Sunny Point with most of the 4th MEB Port Operations Group on board. These black bottoms arrived on 7 April and began downloading the next day.

On 11 March, Major General Jenkins passed his CTF 158 designation to Brigadier General Rowe. Three days later, Amphibious Group 2 rendezvoused and sailed out of the Persian Gulf for the last time. While in transit the 4th MEB was alerted about trouble in Ethiopia and made plans for a possible non-combatant evacuation of American citizens at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, but no evacuation was required. Admiral Edney made a farewell visit to several ATF ships as they sailed through the Red Sea and thanked the sailors and Marines for their service during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. After exiting the Suez Canal on the 24th, the ATF divided into two transit groups.

Transit Group 1 included the *Iwo Jima, Trenton, Saginaw, Spartanburg County, Manitowoc, Shreveport, Raleigh,* and *Gunston Hall.* This eight-ship task group sailed to Rota, Spain, for washdown and agricultural inspection and then proceeded across the Atlantic to Onslow Beach and Morehead City. The group arrived at Rota on 30 March, passed inspection, then departed on 3 April. After 11 days at sea, the ships of Transit Group 1 offloaded at Onslow beach and then continued offloading at Morehead City the next day. They arrived at Norfolk on 17 April and were returned to the administrative control of PhibRons 10 and 12.

Transit Group 2, consisting of the *Nassau, Guam, Portland, Pensacola*, and *LaMoure County*, sailed to Haifa, Israel. The Marines began washing equipment but the lack of sufficient hard stand parking and sanitized holding areas contaminated most of the backload, so a washdown stop at Rota was necessary. The group departed Haifa on 29 March and arrived at Rota on 4 April. After certification on the 6th, Transit Group 2 was placed under the operational control of the Atlantic Fleet and began its Atlantic crossing. Enroute, Captain Robin Kearns of HMM-263 made the 10,000th landing of the 4th MEB deployment. On the evening of the 17th, it arrived off the North Carolina coast. Selected units crossed Onslow Beach on 17-18 April, while the remaining units were unloaded at Morehead City on 18-19 April. When the debarkation was complete selected dependents boarded the ships for a one-day "Tiger Cruise" to Norfolk on the 20th. On the 21st, the group was deactivated and its ships rejoined their respective administrative amphibious squadrons.[291]

Department of Defense Photo (USN) DN-ST-91-07977

4th MEB Marines wait with their gear on a ramp leading to the well deck of the Nassau *as the ship lies off Onslow Bay, North Carolina. The Marines are departing the* Nassau *after being deployed in the Persian Gulf for nearly eight months.*

Ethiopia Evacuation Contingency

Even though the Gulf War was over and CentCom was in the midst of its retrograde, there were still trouble spots within the CentCom operational area. One such area was the Horn of Africa where civil wars were raging in Somalia and Ethiopia. On 14 March, the U.S. Embassy at Addis Ababa issued an evacuation warning to American citizens in Ethiopia as rebel factions advanced on the capital. On the 18th, General Rowe received a warning order to be prepared to conduct a non-combatant evacuation at Addis Ababa. This contingency mission was first given to the 4th MEB, then went to the 5th MEB, and it was finally passed to the 11th MEU(SOC).[292]

Upon receipt of the NEO warning order on 18 March, Brigadier General Rowe directed the 5th MEB staff to began planning to conduct both a permissive and an opposed evacuation of the Addis Ababa Embassy. These contingencies were collectively codenamed Operation Prompt Relief. Although none of the rebel groups had voiced any hostility for Americans, Charge d'Affaires Robert G. Houdek feared U.S. citizens might be placed at risk during the expected period of chaos and political unrest after the capital fell. The exact number of evacuees was uncertain, but there were at least 600 Americans in Ethiopia. Many of them, however, were relief workers and volunteers who did not wish to leave or were located in the hinterland too far from Addis Ababa to arrive in time to be evacuated.

As had happened during Operation Eastern Exit, it was very possible other diplomats and foreign nationals might seek the safety of the U.S. Embassy or request evacuation.

After careful study of the situation and available assets, the 5th MEB staff presented its plan. An amphibious task group would wait near Djibouti in the Bab Al Mandeb Strait between the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Distance was a problem because Addis Ababa was about 500 miles from the planned evacuation launch site. The initial rescue wave would fly directly to Addis Ababa on board four RH-53D Sea Stallions of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. Miller's Marine Reserve Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772. This wave would be comprised of a command element, a security force, an evacuation control team, and a helicopter support team. The helicopters would have to be refueled at least twice by KC-130s from Marine Reserve Refueler-Transport Squadron 452 operating from either Saudi Arabia or Djibouti. Depending on the situation at the embassy, one or two forward ground refueling points might have to be established inside Djibouti or Ethiopia to support additional fixed-wing or helicopter operations if they were needed.[293] Intelligence, aviation control, and logistics support would be provided by U.S. Navy carrier aircraft and U.S. Air Force special operations aircraft.

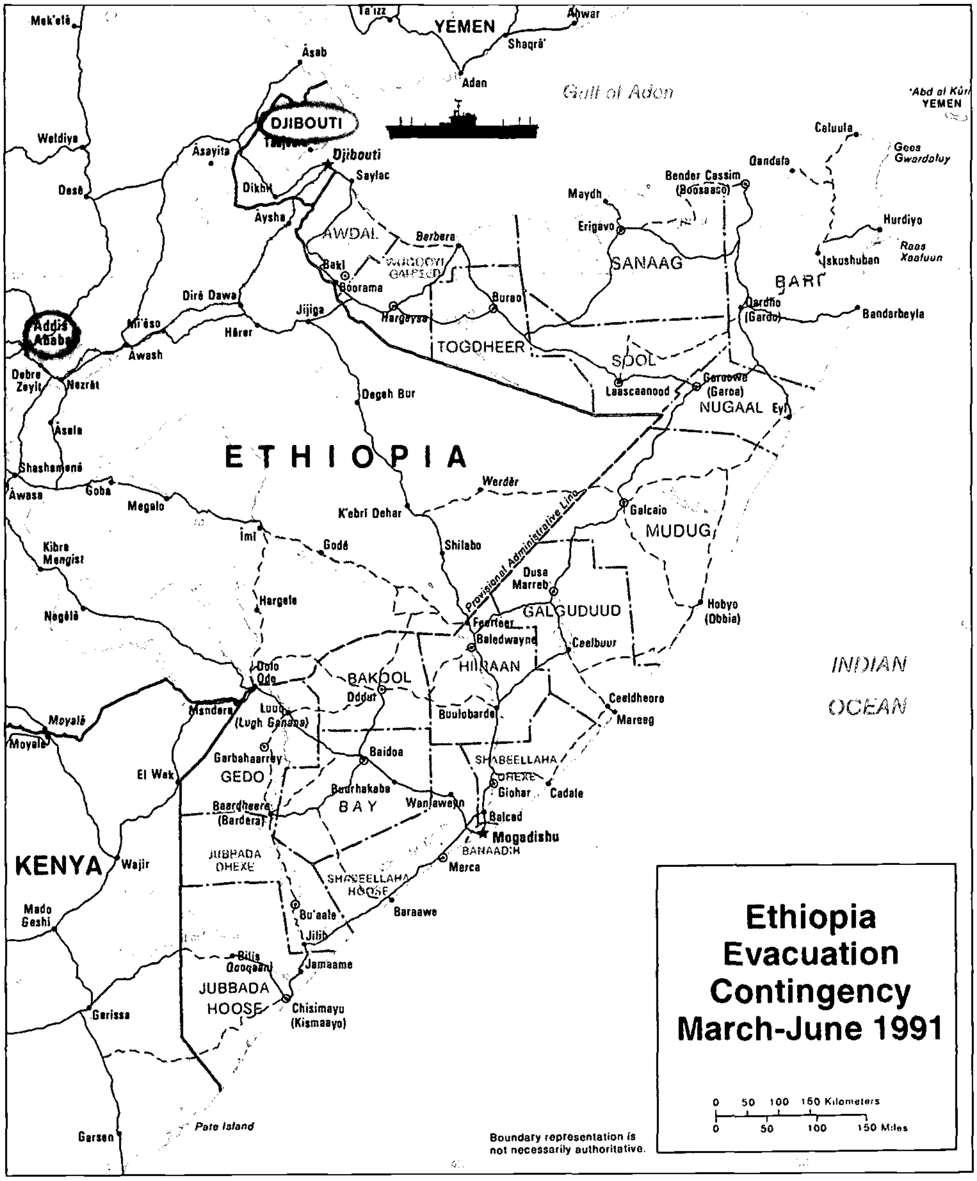
The 5th MEB remained on standby status at locations in the southern Gulf and North Arabian Sea until it departed for home on 7 May. At that time the 11th MEU(SOC), embarked on board the ships of Amphibious Squadron 1 inside the Gulf, picked up responsibility for the NEO contingency.[294] As it turned out, no threat to U.S. citizens developed. The crisis abated when the Communist regime of Lieutenant Colonel Megistu Haile Mariam fell on 21 May and the rebel forces took control of Addis Ababa about a week later. Although an emergency evacuation was not needed the Marines were good to go at a moment's notice.[295]

The 5th MEB Sails

On 3 March, the 5th MEB began backloading at Mishab. The movement from Al Wafrah to Mishab was completed on the 4th when the last of the convoys arrived at the staging area. More than 1,150 Marines had been helilifted back by 15 HMM-268 Sea Knights escorted by HMA-773 Sea Cobras operating from Tanajib Airfield. That same day, HMLA-169, except for one UH-1N at Kuwait International Airport awaiting repair, flew back on board the *Tarawa*. The 5th MEB command post also reopened on board the *Tarawa*.

Unfortunately, only 11 of the original 13 amphibious ships were available for backload because the *Tripoli* was undergoing repairs and the *New Orleans* was still attached to the mine countermeasures force. The retrograde required a massive effort to collect, sort, repack, and turn in more than 300 pallets of Class V(W) supplies at the Mishab ammunition supply point. This took nine 24-hour work days to accomplish. Concurrently, there was a major effort to clean vehicles that were covered with oil and mud and ready them for embarkation.

The 5th MEB underwent several organizational changes prior to sailing for


YEMEN
Shaqrā'
Āsab
Adan
Gulf of Aden
DJIBOUTI
Djibouti
Saylac
Weldiya
Āsayita
Desē
Dikhil
Aysha
AWDAL
Berbera
Baki
Boorama
Hargeysa
Burao
TOGDHEER
Maydh
Bender Cassim
(Boosaaso)
Qandala
Caluula
Erigavo
SANAAG
BARI
Qardho
(Gardo)
Bandarbeyla
Hurdiyo
Iskushuban
SOOL
Laascaanood
Garoowe
(Garoe)
NUGAAL
Eyl
Dirē Dawa
Jijiga
Hārer
Āwash
Addis Ababa
Debre Zeyit
Nazrēt
Āsela
Shashemenē
Āwasa
Goba
Megalo
Degeh Bur
ETHIOPIA
Werdēr
K'ebrī Dehar
Imī
Godē
Shilabo
Provisional Administrative Line
Galcaio
MUDUG
Dusa Marreb
GALGUDUUD
Hobyo
(Obbia)
Kibre Mengist
Negēlē
Hargele
Feerfeer
Beledwayne
HIIRAAN
Ceelbuur
INDIAN
OCEAN
Dolo Odo
BAKOOL
Oddur
Luuq
(Lugh Ganana)
Mandera
Moyalē
Moyale
Buulobarde
Ceeldheere
Mareeg
Garbahaarrey
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KENYA
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SHABEELLAHA HOOSE
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Jilib
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JUBBADA HOOSE
Chisimayu
(Kismaayo)
Garissa
Mado Gashi
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Pate Island
Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.
Ethiopia Evacuation Contingency March-June 1991
0 50 100 150 Kilometers
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home. The most important of these was the breakout of the 11th MEU(SOC), which reduced the command element by about one-half. The ground combat element would have to do without BLT 3/1 and its significant combat power. Marine Aircraft Group 50 would lose HMM(C)-268 and its 12 Sea Knights, 6 Super Cobras, 4 Hueys, and 4 Super Stallions. The resultant loss left the 5th MEB without a helicopter heavy lift capability. Brigade Service Support Group 5 would become a shell of its former self, losing its commander, significant amounts of equipment, and about two-thirds of its personnel. In all, 778 Marines were scheduled to fly back to the States rather than return by ship.

The air combat element was most impacted by these changes. Colonel West had to reshuffle his remaining personnel and assets to meet post-Desert Storm commitments. On 6 March HMA-773 lost an AH-1J when it lost power and crashed in the Saudi desert while on a training mission about 35 miles northwest of Tanajib. Both crew members were able to escape, but one suffered a broken neck. The Reserves of HMA-773 remained at Tanajib until mid-March when they moved to Jubayl for air transport back to Atlanta. Marine Air Control Squadron 7 detached and would remain in Saudi Arabia to assist with the I MEF retrograde. MAG-50's sagging lift capability was bolstered with the return of Detachment B, VMA-513, from 3d MAW and Detachment A, Marine Reserve Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772, with its four RH-53D Sea Stallions.*

By 10 March, all of the 5th MEB at Mishab, except elements of RLT 5 that remained on shore awaiting the return of the *New Orleans* and the Marines scheduled to fly home, had returned to their ships. The *Tarawa* sailed to Jubayl to finish loading, then moved to the United Arab Emirates for five days at Dubai. When the Ethiopia crisis heated up, the ATF gathered in the SAG Box, then spent nine days standing by. With only a few brief respites, the ATF remained at ModLoc in the southern Gulf during most of April.

The 5th MEB patiently waited in the Persian Gulf until the Americans could be relieved by United Nations Forces in Iraq. On shore MarCent was replaced by a brigade-size Marine contingent, Marine Forces Southwest Asia. Despite rumors, counterrumors, and uncertainty about its time remaining in the Gulf, morale in the 5th MEB remained high. Finally, PhibGru 3 raised anchor and sailed through the Strait of Hormuz for the last time on 7 May 1991. The 5th MEB had finished its time in the Persian Gulf, but a storm was brewing on the horizon.

Breakout of the 11th MEU(SOC)

The backload had been carefully planned so that the five ships of PhibRon 1 would carry only the men, supplies, and equipment assigned to the 11th MEU(SOC). This allowed the 11th MEU(SOC) to break out of the MEB easily on 17 March. Commanded by Colonel Robert J. Garner, who had served as the

*RH-53Ds were rated as medium-lift helicopters, but they could lift far more than CH-46s and their in-air refueling capacity extended the reach of MAG-50.

5th MEB operations officer when the MEU was embedded in the 5th MEB during Desert Storm, 11th MEU included Battalion Landing Team 3/1, HMM(C)-268, and MSSG 11. The MEU mustered 162 officers and 2,098 enlisted men. Its combat power included 10 howitzers, 12 AAVs, 6 LAVs, 12 Sea Knights, 4 Super Stallions, 4 Super Cobras, and 2 Hueys.

On 17 March, the 11th MEU(SOC) and PhibRon 1, commanded by Captain Michael D. Barker, USN, were reconstituted. PhibRon 1 included the *New Orleans* (detached for MCM operations), *Denver, Mobile, Germantown*, and *Peoria*. The MEU command element was embarked temporarily on board the *Denver* until the *New Orleans* returned. Battalion Landing Team 3/1 had elements of Headquarters and Service Company and Companies K and M on shore conducting live-fire training at Thunderbolt Range. The rest of BLT 3/1 was spread between the *Germantown, Peoria*, and *Denver*. The aviation combat element, HMM(C)-268, was ashore at Tanajib Airfield, while the combat service support element was on board the *Mobile*.[296]

In the early morning hours of 21 March, a Saudi C-130 transport carrying more than 100 Senegalese Muslim soldiers back to Mishab from their pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca crashed near Mishab.* Despite the fog and overcast night sky, Corporal Juan Jimenez, Lance Corporal Andre Bright, and Private First Class Kevin Mason observed the crash. They reported the incident, then hurried to the site where they, along with other Marines from Companies K and Headquarters and Service, braved the flames to pull injured and dead from the burning wreck. They also provided medical care until Saudi authorities assumed control of the crash site. Despite heroic efforts by Marines and Navy corpsmen, only three of the injured men survived the crash. The official cause of the crash was given as poor visibility produced by thick black smoke from nearby burning oil wells.[297]

Admiral Arthur tasked Colonel Garner to perform an amphibious presence mission and to establish an operational relationship with allied states within the Arabian Gulf area. As a result, Garner initiated a training program to hone basic combat skills and to improve the 11th MEU special operations capability. From 18 March to 6 April, the 11th MEU(SOC) conducted a series of small unit and limited integrated training exercises using facilities at Ras Al Ghar, Mishab, Thunderbolt Range, and Tanajib. On 24 March, the elements of BLT 3/1 located at Mishab moved south to the Saudi Marine Base at Ras Al Ghar. The training period concluded with an international "march, run, and shoot" competition that pitted the 11th MEU against the British 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, which bested the Marines.

On 11 April, the backload of the *New Orleans* was complete and the 11th MEU(SOC) sailed for the United Arab Emirates. A nine-day amphibious exercise at Al Hamra (27 April to 5 May) followed a port call at Dubai. This was the first opportunity for the 11th MEU and PhibRon 1 to function as a separate entity since

*King Fahd generously dictated that any Muslim soldiers defending Saudi Arabia would be allowed to make the *Hadj* Pilgrimage at his expense.

Exercise Kernel Usher in October 1990. The training included an amphibious exercise, small unit tactics, live fire, joint close air support, and Blue-Green coordination exercises. A solid working relationship with the Sultan's Armed Forces was also established. This was followed by a three-day joint maritime interdiction training exercise including elements from the 11th MEU(SOC), U.S. Navy, and U.S. Coast Guard. After the interdiction exercise, the Marines began a series of goodwill visits throughout the Gulf, which included stops at Manama (Bahrain), Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Jebel Ali.

Ethiopia contingency planning was continuous from late March until mid-June. Detailed concepts of operations were developed, presented, approved, and rehearsed. On 2 June, Colonel Garner and the 11th MEU staff met with representatives from PhibRon 1, HMM(C)-268, Central Command Special Operations Command, and Air Force Special Operations to coordinate external support requirements. Following the conference, PhibRon 1 was directed to proceed to a modified location in international waters off the coast of Oman, where it and the MEU were placed on 72-hour alert to launch a heliborne evacuation of the U.S. Embassy at Addis Ababa. While on station, HMM(C)-268 Super Stallions conducted aerial refueling refresher training with Air Force MC-130s and planning conferences were held with the *Nimitz* Carrier Battle Group. Luckily, the Ethiopian situation stabilized and the 11th MEU(SOC) stood down on 16 June. Returning to the Gulf, the MEU continued to train, make port calls, and prepared for its return to southern California in July.[298]

5th MEB's Angels from the Sea

The Winds of Death

In April 1991, a killer cyclone named Marian struck Southern Asia. For eight hours the coast of Bangladesh, located at the tip of the natural funnel formed by the Bay of Bengal, was battered by gale-force winds and swamped by tidal waves. The devastation began on the evening of the 29th when winds reaching a velocity of 145 miles per hour lashed the densely populated coastal lowlands and a 20-foot-high wall of water swept over the offshore islands and cascaded onto the low-lying coastal plain. What the people of the region called "the winds of death" claimed a reported 139,000 lives, killed more than one million livestock, displaced more than 10 million people, ruined more than 74,000 acres of vital crops, and inundated with seawater an additional 300,000 acres of farmland.[299]

Cyclone Marian also destroyed the existing infrastructure making relief operations difficult. The southern port city of Chittagong was awash and could not handle incoming traffic. All roads were cut and electrical service was disrupted throughout the affected area. The survivors of the storm were threatened by starvation and disease. The recently elected democratic government, which had only eight weeks before ended more than 15 years of military dictatorship, was overwhelmed by the forces of nature, so Prime Minister Begum Khaldea Zia appealed for assistance. International aid and assistance was soon on the way; the American response was to launch Operation Productive Effort, later changed by

Photo Courtesy of Col Eugene L. Gobeli, USMC

Salt water inundated the rice fields of Sandwip Island in Bangladesh, destroying much of the dry season rice crop. Devastated areas such as this could only be reached by helicopter.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, to Operation Sea Angel.*

The Joint Task Force

On 10 May, a United States joint task force (JTF) was formed to control and coordinate American relief efforts and led by Marine Major General Henry C. Stackpole III, Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force. Following an aerial reconnaissance of the coastal lowlands from the port city of Chittagong to the coastal resort town of Cox's Bazar, General Stackpole issued his operational intent which stressed three issues. First, the Government of Bangladesh would "call the shots" by setting priorities and controlling relief supplies. The upcoming relief operations were going to be the first real test of democratic government in Bangladesh and all wanted them to be a success. Second, he wanted to reduce culture shock to local civilians unused to American technology and customs. Third, emergency aid must be delivered quickly, but at the same time, long-

*For a detailed account of relief operations in Bangladesh, see Charles R. Smith. *U.S. Marines in Humanitarian Operations. Angels From the Sea: Relief Operations in Bangladesh, 1991*. Washington: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, USMC, 1995.

term programs would have to be developed to deal with future natural disasters.[300]

The Joint Task Force staff formulated a three-stage campaign plan. Stage one involved an estimate of the situation, which would include a survey of the damage, an inventory of all available assets, and a request for appropriate outside assistance. An implied task was to establish liaison with all government and nongovernment agencies and make them aware of the JTF's nature and capabilities. The second stage stressed the speedy delivery of life-saving emergency supplies, potable water production, and medical aid. The campaign plan's final stage involved winding down American participation while local agencies took over relief operations. During this phase the JTF would advise the Government of Bangladesh how to rebuild the countryside and assist in planning for future emergencies.[301]

The concept of operations entailed providing transportation, communications, medical, and logistics support. The priorities of action and the actual distribution of supplies would be left to Bangladeshis. Although there were sufficient relief supplies available in Dhaka, they were located more than 120 miles from the disaster zone. Rapid movement of these supplies would require helicopters and watercraft as Cyclone Marian had destroyed the infrastructure of the disaster area. After the initial survey, it was obvious the existing Joint Task Force would have to be expanded to accomplish the mission.[302]

Luckily, the perfect instrument for such operations was nearby. The homeward-bound PhibGru 3, with the embarked 5th MEB, was sailing across the Indian Ocean when the crisis arose, and it was well-suited for relief operations in Bangladesh. The areas most in need of help were the offshore islands and the coastal lowlands, both of which were well within the reach of the amphibious task force's landing craft, small boats, helicopters, and amphibious vehicles. Operations could be sea-based and would require only minimal American presence on shore, lessening the impact of cultural differences and reducing the drain on already scare resources in the affected area. Although it had been reduced in size and capability after Desert Storm, the ATF could still provide a solid nucleus to support a humanitarian operation.[303]

On 11 May, the task force was ordered to the Bay of Bengal to support the joint task force. Its mission was to deliver relief supplies and provide other humanitarian assistance as needed. Marines and sailors were not deploying to establish a foothold, so Brigadier General Rowe and Admiral Clarey expected to be in country only a short time before resuming the journey home.

From the 11th to the 15th, when the ATF made landfall, Marines and sailors devoted their time to planning and preparation. The intelligence section prepared map studies and gave orientation lectures. The operations section worked out task organizations and prepared contingency operations plans. The logistics section reconfigured landing craft loads to carry engineer equipment and relief supplies instead of combat equipment. Medical personnel gave inoculations and informed Marines about medical dangers ashore. Helicopter crews labored to prepare desert operations-configured aircraft for the vastly different Bangladeshi environ-

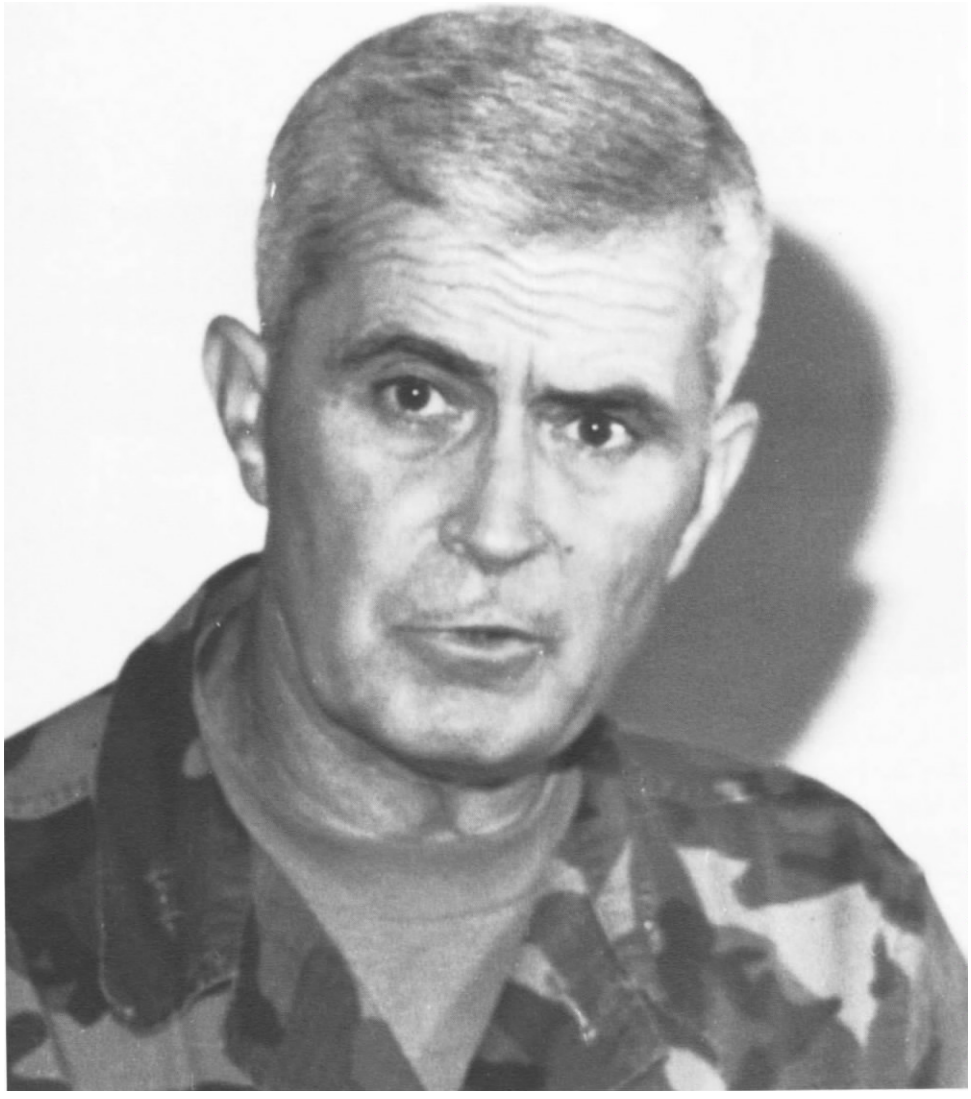


Photo Courtesy of American Embassy, Dhaka

MajGen Henry C. Stackpole III, commanding the III Marine Expeditionary Force, was given command of the joint American effort to provide disaster relief to victims of the Bangladesh cyclone.

ment. Embarkation teams reconfigured their loads so tactical equipment and supplies were replaced by engineer equipment, rations, medical supplies, and relief aid.[304]

When PhibGru 3 arrived off the coast, Admiral Clarey, Brigadier General Rowe, and Colonel Randolph Gangle flew to Chittagong to meet with Major General Stackpole. At the initial briefing, General Stackpole explained the situation as he saw it. There were plenty of relief supplies and more were on the way. A dedicated, but inexperienced, democratic government was struggling to take control of the situation. Non-government relief agencies were at hand, but they

lacked adequate communications and transportation. With these issues in mind, General Stackpole informed General Rowe that the focus of the MEB's effort would be the distribution of food, medicine, and relief supplies. Marines would lend their expertise when requested, but would not run the show; Americans would be the providers, the Bangladeshis the policy makers.[305]

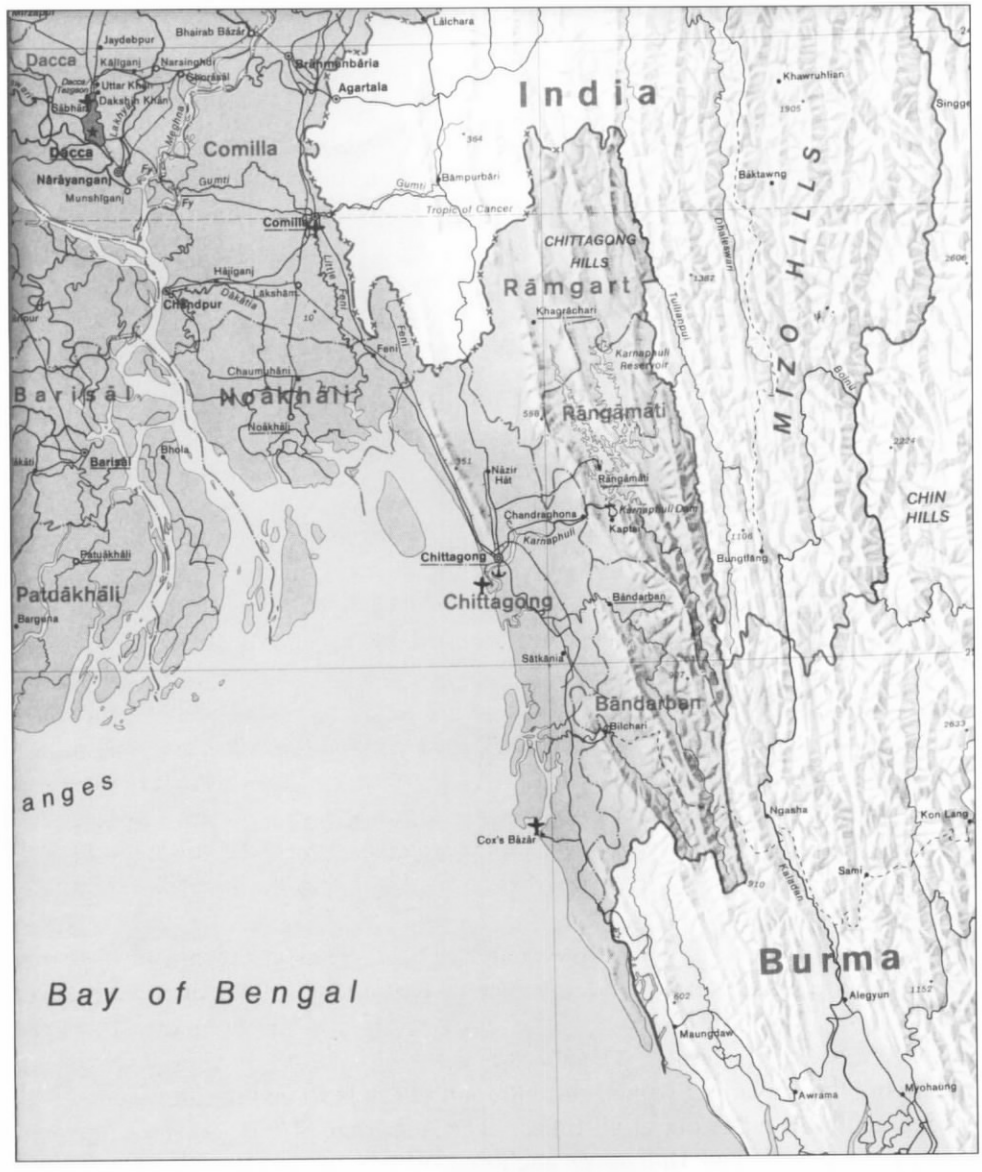
Since MAG-50 possessed more than 90 percent of the helicopters available to the JTF, General Stackpole assigned PhibGru 3 and 5th MEB the largest segment of the disaster zone. A 9,000-square-mile area of operations, it included more than 150 miles of coastline, stretching from the apex of the Bay of Bengal south to Cox's Bazar, and the outlying islands of South Hatia, Sandwip, Kutubdia, Matabari, and Maheshkali Islands.[306] General Stackpole's intent was to complete the relief effort within two weeks; that the forces ashore should carry no weapons; and that a minimum "footprint" would be created by using as few Americans on the beach as possible.

5th MEB Command, Control, and Coordination

General Rowe and his staff developed a six-phase concept of operations; a forward command element would be collocated with JTF Forward Headquarters at Chittagong; helicopter insertion of communications personnel and liaison teams into designated landing zones to coordinate operations with JTF/relief agencies on the scene and positioning ATF ships in the northern Bay of Bengal to provide sea-based logistics support; lifting supplies ashore employing ATF helicopters and landing craft, including movement of water-making facilities and potable water; provide additional support as directed; turnover the relief mission to international agencies or follow-on relief organizations within two weeks; and backload equipment to ATF ships.[307]

Planned operations included five major areas: command and control; force enhancement; water craft operations; aviation operations; and medical assistance. The 5th MEB remained sea-based throughout the operation, so there were never more than 500 personnel on the shore at one time. Most of the ships closed the beach, but the prevailing winds, currents, and sea state forced the *Tarawa* to keep sailing about 30 miles out at all times. The *Achorage, Mount Vernon, Barbour County, Frederick,* and *Vancouver* anchored off Chittagong to offload materials and serve as forward replenishment stations. The *Juneau* was centrally located near Kutubdia Island.

Admiral Clarey and General Rowe were designated the JTF Navy and Marine component commanders, but retained their respective command posts on board the flagship *Tarawa*. General Rowe then chose Colonel Gangle mission commander to control operations ashore. He opted to use his ground combat element commander for this mission because he felt his aviation and combat service support commanders would be too busy to effectively wear "two command hats." General Rowe described Gangle as "senior and savvy" and noted that the RLT 5 staff was "a sound base around which to build an integrated mission command."[308]



Colonel Gangle established a mission liaison detachment in the 250-man JTF Forward Headquarters at Chittagong. The cell contained Marine and Navy personnel, including Gangle, Commander Thomas J. Hirsch, USN, to supervise surface craft operations, Major Timothy P. Hughes and Captain Jon S. Hoffman, to coordinate operations, and aviation officers to create air tasking orders and coordinate airfield control. The mission staff would work closely with the JTF, government representatives, and non-government relief agencies to deliver bulk supplies, distribute relief aid, and provide medical attention.[309]

The cell's functions included manning the center around the clock, coordinating with host-country personnel and civilian workers, acting as a clearinghouse for information, tracking operations and evaluating their effectiveness, planning

future operations, networking administrative and tactical radio traffic, handling public affairs, and escorting important visitors. While these were typical command functions, they had to be adapted for non-combat humanitarian relief operations.

Colonel Randall L. West coordinated the movement of Marine aircraft in accord with the wishes of the JTF and mission commanders. To facilitate the movement, he formed an aviation forward control element composed of an operations and logistics section and a team from Navy Tactical Control Squadron 11. Throughout the operation, Colonel Gangle allowed Colonel West maximum latitude to accomplish his tasks.[310]

Relief Operations

On 16 May, the 5th MEB began relief operations. Mission control centers were manned 24 hours each day to receive reports, constantly update information, maintain communications with forward deployed units, and ensure reliable information was disseminated up and down the chain of command. The ground combat element provided work parties, communicators, and liaison officers. The aviation combat element provided helicopters and air control assistance. The combat service support element provided skilled technicians and special equipment.

One of the 5th MEB's major contributions to the Joint Task Force was force enhancement provided by BSSG 5 and the MEB command element. Although equipment and logistics expertise were important, Major General Stackpole noted that the most important support was communications. Neither the Bangladesh government nor the relief agencies had sufficient communications equipment. Even Bangladeshi military communications had been degraded to the point where officers were unable to communicate with units inside the disaster zone. Fifteen hundred volunteer workers had come to Bangladesh, but their agencies could neither transport them to the field nor communicate with representatives already there. To alleviate this problem about a dozen communications sites were established using assets from the JTF, the 5th MEB, and fly-in elements of the Marine 7th Communications Battalion.[311]

Lieutenant Colonel William V. Cantu, 5th MEB's communications officer, developed a communications plan and established a communications network covering all aspects of air, ground, and seaborne operations. Small detachments, each consisting of only two or three Marines, manned high frequency radios at government buildings, relief storehouses, and distribution points. These sites supported government and non-government relief agencies. Although only a temporary measure, communications detachments helped to double the amount of supplies reaching the Chittagong and Cox's Bazar distribution centers. This communications support allowed Prime Minister Zia's government to coordinate relief efforts and simultaneously rebuild commercial communications links to the disaster zone.

At first, relief efforts were limited to the vicinity of Chittagong, however, operations rapidly expanded and soon included many of the outlying areas and off-

Department of Defense Photo (USAF) DF-ST-92-06111

A common sight throughout the devastated areas of southeastern Bangladesh were Marines hurrying to unload sacks of rice.

shore islands. On 19 May, Colonel Gangle ordered Lieutenant Colonel Selvage's BLT 3/5 to move ashore from the *Vancouver* and establish a second control center at Cox's Bazar, a small resort city located at the southern tip of the area of operations. Its 6,000-foot airfield and small boat harbor became the focal points for relief efforts at Kutubdia, Matabari, Chokoria, and Maheshkali.[312]

Battalion Landing Team 3/5's efforts at Cox's Bazar received a welcome boost when the British Navy and Royal Marines reported for duty with the Joint Task Force. Royal Fleet Auxiliary large logistics support ship RFA *Fort Grange* (A 385) arrived from Sri Lanka on 21 May. The *Fort Grange* was crewed by 208 men, including 20 Royal Marines of Assault Squadron 529 to man six rigid raiding craft. It also carried four Westland HAS.5 Sea King helicopters from Flight G, Naval Air Squadron 825.

The first day of operations set a pattern that became standard operating procedure throughout Operation Sea Angel. At first light, helicopters and landing craft carried personnel and equipment ashore. After unloading cargo transportation assets they were directed to various pick up and delivery points by mission control centers. During the day, working parties and medical teams assisted with ongoing relief efforts; when these missions were completed or when darkness approached, the Marines on shore were picked up and returned to their respective ships.

5th MEB Departs

As the month of May came to a close, the allotted two-week period came to an end. In accord with JTF plans the 5th MEB backloaded its equipment, reconsti-

tuted its combat capability, and sailed for home on 29 May. In less than two weeks ashore the 5th MEB had delivered 5,485 passengers and transported almost 700 tons of supplies. The hard-working helicopters of MAG-50 flew 1,208 helicopter sorties in 1,111 flight hours. Watercraft had delivered 99,500 pounds of relief aid. The medical assistance program treated 6,470 patients.[313] These achievements earned PhibGru 3 and the 5th MEB a hard-earned "well done."

The amphibious task group entered the Strait of Malacca on the first day of June and headed for the Philippines. While the task group was in port at Subic Bay, Colonel Gangle conducted a battle study of Corregidor Island, and Detachment B, VMA-531 detached from MAG-50.* On the 9th, the 5th MEB sailed on the next leg of its journey home. Six days later PhibGru 3 entered the Third Fleet operational area. The "Rainbows" of HMM-265 flew off the *Tarawa* for MCAS Kaneohe Bay and the ATF put into Pearl Harbor where the remainder of HMM-265 disembarked. On the morning of 22d, the 5th MEB was underway again and closed the California coast on the 28th. The "Roadhogs" of HMH-772 departed the *Tarawa* for Naval Air Station Alameda the same day. The next day the rest of the 5th MEB began off loading at Camp Pendleton and San Diego. Its 210-day deployment was finally over.[314]

'Bravo Zulu'

When the 4th and 5th MEBs and the 13th MEU(SOC) united in January 1991, they constituted the largest Marine combat landing force since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Together, the Marine Forces Afloat and the Gator Navy posed a powerful amphibious threat which Saddam Hussein could not ignore.

The amphibious deception was a strategic victory of the first magnitude. The impact of the amphibious threat was brought home when a large sandtable was discovered in a schoolhouse near Kuwait City. This impressive display showed exactly where the Iraqis expected landings and the disposition of their defenses. These elaborate plans left little doubt that the focus of the Iraqi defenses in and around Kuwait City was coastal defense. Major General James M. Myatt, the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, reported about half of the Iraqi artillery in his sector was aimed to repel an assault from the sea rather than positioned to defeat an inland attack.

In retrospect there is little doubt that, given the circumstances, the decision not to land the landing force was the correct one.** The strategic distraction caused

*Its aircraft remained in the Philippines while VMA-513 personnel flew home for 10 days leave before returning to join the 15th MEU on board the USS *Peleliu* (LHA 5).

**There remains some controversy over exactly when the amphibious option was dropped; Adm Mauz and Col Wickersham believe it happened in Sept90, others point to the *Blue Ridge* meeting on 2Feb91; Gen Rowe felt it remained on the table until the 5th MEB came ashore on 24Feb91. (Arthur, Mauz, Jenkins, Rowe, and Wickersham comments).

by the Marine Forces Afloat hovering over the horizon yielded a far greater tactical advantage than could have been gained by a landing. The simple threat of a landing drew Saddam's attention away from the actual attack area and caused him to use precious resources to defend the coast. The threat to the seaward flank allowed the amphibious forces to influence the outcome of the overall campaign without sustaining a single battle casualty.[315]

Throughout the Persian Gulf Conflict, embarked Marine forces were an integral part of a naval expeditionary force that performed a wide variety of combat and non-combat operations in the air, on land, and at sea. Eminent British military historian Sir Basil Liddle-Hart once observed, "amphibious flexibility is the greatest strategic asset a sea power possesses." The Marine Forces Afloat were not limited to the solitary role of amphibious assault, but provided the theater commander with a versatile tool capable of rapid response to a wide variety of contingencies. They executed no less than two dozen amphibious operations (assaults, raids, and demonstrations); put teeth into the U.N. embargo by providing highly capable forces to seize Iraqi ships; conducted five large-scale training exercises; executed one short-notice non-combatant evacuation and were ready to do a second one; launched the first fixed-wing combat strikes from amphibious ships; moved almost one-half its combat power ashore to support the largest Marine ground offensive since World War II; and participated in the largest Marine humanitarian effort to that time while sailing for home. It is no wonder that as each element of the Marine Forces Afloat departed the Gulf, it received a commander's "bravo zulu" message conveying the traditional naval congratulations for a job "well done."

Notes

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Appendix A
Command and Staff List

13th Marine Expeditionary Unit

13th MEU Command Element

CO	Col John E. Rhodes
XO	LtCol Rollin G. Napier
SEM	SgtMaj Anthony Reese
S-1	Capt Christopher G. Wright
S-2	Maj Steven J. Cash
S-3	LtCol John A. Clauer
S-4	Maj Russell O. Scherck
CommO	Maj Marshall K. Snyder
1st SRISG	Capt Jon A. Stallings
Det, 1st Radio Bn	1stLt Henry C. Kaufman
Det, MACG-38	Capt Michael S. Maciel
2d Plat, 2d Recon	Capt Ignatius P. Liberto
1st Plat, 4th Recon	Capt Kenneth Grimes

Battalion Landing Team 1/4

CO	LtCol George W. Flinn
XO	LtCol Charles K. Curcio
SEM	SgtMaj Michael J. Eschbach
S-1	1stLt Richard D. Hall
S-2	Capt Kurt M. Conrad
S-3	Maj Steven J. Piccirilli
S-4	Capt David T. Colbert
H&S Co	Maj Robert K. Jennings
Wpns Co	Capt Richard L. deTriquet
Co A	Capt Larry J. Richards
Co B	Capt Garrett J. McKenzie
Co C	Capt Michael J. Brown
Co D	Capt Gregory A. Boyle
Bty B, 1/11	Capt Jon K. Lowrey
Co B, 1st LAI	Capt Bruce L. Cornish
3d Plt, Co A, 1st Rcn	Capt Dane P. Kucera
1st Plt, Co A, 3d AAV	1stLt Peter W. Cushing
1st Plt, Co A, 1st CEB	1stLt Alford G. Kyle

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 164 (Reinforced)

CO	LtCol Guy M. Vanderlinden
XO	Maj Peter O. Francescon

SEM	MSgt Stephen A. Posey
S-1	Maj Mark J. Gibson
S-2	Capt John J. Nelson
S-3	Maj Michael B. Minnehan
S-4	Maj Anthony E. Van Dyke
MaintO	Maj Michael Duva
SafetyO	Maj Philip C. Peterson
MEU Service Support Group 13	
CO	LtCol Bradley M. Lott
XO	Maj Charles D. Workman
SEM	1stSgt Larry Campbell
S-1	SSgt Miguel A. Ramirez
S-3	Capt Charles A. Dallachie
S-4	1stLt David L. Rhodes
CommO	1stLt Andrew J. Frie
OIC HQDet	1stLt Michael J. Reilly II
OIC EngrDet	1stLt Keith F. Stewart
OIC SupDet	1stLt Hoke M. Rose
OIC MaintDet	CWO2 Walter Shihinski
OIC MTDet	1stLt Terrance T. Rosato
OIC MedDet	Lt Olen R. Robinson, USN

4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade

4th MEB Command Element	
CG	MajGen Harry W. Jenkins, Jr.
C/S	Col William W. Scheffler
SEM	SgtMaj Douglas E. Berry
G-1	Maj John R. Turner
G-2	LtCol Michael M. Bullen
G-3	LtCol Robert P. Mauskapf
G-4	LtCol Gary W. Collenborne
G-6	LtCol Glenn R. Williams
H&SCo	Capt Richard O. Bartch, Jr.
Regimental Landing Team 2	
CO	Col Thomas A. Hobbs
XO	LtCol Michael J. Franks
SEM	SgtMaj Michael G. Keith
S-1	Capt Beau Peterson
S-2	Capt Andrew J. Rand
S-3	Maj Robert M. Carroll
S-4	Maj Vincent Pontani, Jr.
H&SCo	Capt Richard B. Fitzwater

LAI Det	Maj John A. Toolan, Jr.
Co A, 2d AAV Bn	Capt Glenn L. Wagner
Co A, 2d Tank Bn	Capt Michael A. Alpiger
TOW Plt, 2d Tank Bn	1stLt Andrew D. Bianca
CEB Det	2dLt Christopher W. Rollins

Battalion Landing Team 1/2

CO	LtCol Robert P. McAleer
XO	Maj Michael G. Waters
SEM	SgtMaj Claude J. Vananebee
S-1	1stLt Stuart M. Sutley
S-2	Capt Franklin D. Baker
S-3	Maj Thomas M. Corbett
S-4	Capt James E. Reilly III
HQCo	Capt Michael S. Aiken
Co A	Capt Bradley A. Barker
Co B	Capt Richard G. Houck
Co C	Capt David B. Dysart
Wpns Co	Capt John J. Chester

Battalion Landing Team 3/2

CO	LtCol James T. Conway
XO	Maj Richard S. Garretson
S-1	Capt William D. Andrews
S-2	Capt Harry A. Frank (to 15 Jan 91) SSgt Alvin B. Morse (fm 16 Jan 91)
S-3	Capt Ronald J. Johnson
S-4	Capt Irvin E. Evans III
H&SCo	Capt Scott A. Graham
Co I	Capt Joseph C. Munch
Co K	Capt Thomas R. Kelly, Jr.
Co L	Capt John F. Kelly
Wpns Co	Capt Thompson A. Gerke (to 9Mar91) Capt Donald A. Graczyk (fm 10Mar91)

1st Battalion, 10th Marines

CO	LtCol Douglas A. Okland
XO	Maj Richard D. Mullins
SEM	SgtMaj Phillip J. Holding
S-1	1stLt Stephen D. Means
S-2	1stLt Euseekers Williams, Jr.
S-3	Maj James A. Haig
S-4	Maj Robert S. Rayfield, Jr.
Hq Bty	Capt Christopher P. Lagay
Bty A	Capt Owen W. Englander

Bty B	Capt Timothy M. Barnes
Bty C	Capt Doman O. McArthur
Bty I, 3/12	Capt Noel S. Wood

Marine Aircraft Group 40

CO	Col Glenn F. Burgess
XO	LtCol Bruce H. Moran
SEM	SgtMaj Joseph E. Forbes
S-1	Maj Thomas E. Powers
S-2	Maj Ronald G. Greene
S-3	LtCol Troydale Caraway
S-4	Capt Clayton E. Smith
ComO	CWO3 Jack A. Stoner
MaintO	Maj Paul F. Lease
AvSupO	Maj Richard J. Gough

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 263

CO	LtCol Robert J. Wallace
XO	Maj George E. Busfield, Jr.
SEM	SgtMaj Peter M. Gants
S-1	Capt Robin W. Kearns
S-2	1stLt Carlos J. DeJesus
S-3	Maj Alfia Mirabella, Jr.
S-4	Capt Steven D. Fox
MaintO	Maj William J. Davin
SafetyO	Capt Paul A. Evans

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 365

CO	LtCol Robert F. Saikowski
XO	Maj Kenneth J. Glueck, Jr.
SEM	SgtMaj Richard M. Roark
S-1	Capt Odin F. Leberman, Jr.
S-3	Maj Alan C. Sproul
S-4	Capt Shaun L. Cash
MaintO	Maj Daniel E. Cushing
SafetyO	Capt Daniel W. Hackman

Marine Attack Squadron 331

CO	LtCol Jerry W. Fitzgerald
XO	Maj Edward A. McGuigan, Jr.
SEM	SgtMaj Daryel Epperson
S-1	Maj Charles L. Myer
S-3	Maj Henry J. Coble
S-4	Capt Charles G. Hughes II

MaintO	Maj Michael W. Smyth
SafetyO	Capt James T. Moore, Jr.

Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 269

CO	LtCol Kenneth W. Hill
XO	Maj Gary A. Mattes
SEM	SgtMaj E.L.G. Salas
S-1	Maj George F. Ranowsky II
S-2	Capt Thomas E. Stone, Jr.
S-3	Maj Jeffrey L. Speer
S-4	Capt Harold R. Gielow
MaintO	Capt James R. Derda

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461

CO	LtCol Daniel J. Moseler
XO	LtCol Larry E. Johnson
SEM	SgtMaj Lewis Zimmerman III
S-1	Capt Timothy W. Blunck
S-2	Capt Mark A. Clark
S-3	LtCol Samuel T. Helland
S-4	Capt Robert B. Holder
MaintO	Maj Douglas F. Ashton
OIC Det A	Capt James E. Bender
OIC Det B	Maj Richard A. Mehaffey
OIC Det D	Maj Daniel C. Schultz

Brigade Service Support Group 4

CO	Col James J. Doyle, Jr.
XO	Maj William N. Saunders
SEM	SgtMaj F. H. Kinsley, Jr.
S-1	2dLt John R. Giltz
S-2	SSgt T. L. Fulton
S-3	Maj Wallace W. Hills, Jr.
OpsO	Capt Gary L. Carter
S-4	Capt Donald G. Vrooman
EmbarkO	CWO2 Michael A. Bowman
OIC MTDet	Capt Walter
OIC LSptDet	Capt Douglas A. Gethers
OIC MDet	Capt Dennis W. Ray
OIC EngrDet	Maj Edward J. Maguire
OIC MPDet	Maj Randy R. Smith
OIC MedDet	LCdr M. Gentry
OIC DentDet	Cdr W. Melby

CO Hq&Svc Co	Capt Jorge Ascunce

5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (24 February 1991)

5th MEB Command Element	
CG	BGen Peter J. Rowe
C/S	Col Drake F. Trumpe
SEM	SgtMaj Joseph I. Celestine
G-1	Maj Leslie E. Garrett
G-2	LtCol Malcolm Arnot
G-3	Col Robert J. Garner
G-4	Col Eugene L. Gobeli
G-6	LtCol William V. Cantu
H&S Co	Maj Clifton R. Weyeneth
Regimental Landing Team 5	
CO	Col Randolph A. Gangle
XO	LtCol William N. Myers
SEM	SgtMaj Paul D. Hershey
S-1	Capt Nathan S. Turner (to 1 Feb 91)
	Capt David A. Bethel (fm 2 Feb 91)
S-2	Capt Michael Gallagher (to 13 Jan 91)
	Capt Jon S. Hoffman (fm 14 Jan 91)
S-3	Maj Thomas M. O'Leary
S-4	Maj David Bedworth
Hq Co	Maj Gary K. Schenkel
Co A, 4th AAV	Capt John W. Saputo
Co A, 4th Tks	Capt John V. Geary
Co A, 4th LAI	Capt Larry O. Christian
Co B, 1st CEB	Capt Truman D. Anderson, Jr.
Co A, 4th CEB	Capt John S. Sharpe
Co B, 1st Recon	Capt Erik Grabowsky
Trk Co, 6th MT	Capt David G. Brown
Battalion Landing Team 2/5	
CO	LtCol Kevin M. Kennedy
XO	Maj Michael Wisloski, Jr.
SEM	SgtMaj Michael J. Stevenson
S-1	1stLt Charles C. Adams IV
S-2	1stLt Wesley S. Hannon
S-3	Capt Thomas J. McGrath (to 1 Jan 91)
	Capt Mark H. Bean (fm 2 Jan 91)
S-4	Capt Mark H. Bean (to 1 Jan 91)
	Capt Louis R. Herrera, Jr. (fm 2 Jan 91)
CommO	2dLt Vincent F. Simpson
H&S Co	Capt Lee E. Reynolds, Jr.
Co E	Capt Dave C. Reinaman II
Co F	Capt Mark A. McDonald
Co G	Capt James R. McLenagan

Wpns Co	Capt Clarke J. Schiffer
Battalion Landing Team 3/5	
CO	LtCol Donald R. Selvage
XO	Maj Thomas M. Ochala
SEM	SgtMaj Harold L. Johnson
S-1	1stLt James P. Connolly
S-2	Capt Jeffrey W. Bolander
S-3	Capt David A. Bethel (to 1 Dec 90) Maj Frank J. DiFalco (fm 2 Dec 90)
S-4	Capt Bruce G. Kesselring
H&S Co	Capt Karl A. Schwarm
Co I	Capt Steve L. Suddreth
Co K	Capt James W. McKellar
Co L	Capt Bruce A. MacCaulay
Wpns Co	Capt Joshua W. Dorsey IV
3d Battalion, 1st Marines	
CO	LtCol Robert S. Robichaud
XO	LtCol Reno C. Bamford II
SEM	SgtMaj William A.D. LeBlanc
S-1	1stLt Joshua L. Collins
S-2	Capt Rodney S. Nolan
S-3	Maj George E. Stratmann, Jr.
S-4	Capt Michael G. Dana
CommO	1stLt Marc G. Shechtman
H&S Co	Capt Carlyle E. Shelton
Co I	Capt Michael F. Reineberg
Co K	Capt Ronald F. Baczkowski
Co L	Capt Glenn E. Gearhard
Co M	Capt Dane H. Skagen
Wpns Co	Capt Eric H. Carlson
2d Battalion, 11th Marines	
CO	LtCol Paul A. Gido
XO	Maj William M. Brumbach
SEM	SgtMaj Royce G. Coffee
S-1	1stLt Thomas J. Egan
S-2	1stLt Patrick M. Kelleher
S-3	Maj Douglas L. Clubine
S-4	Capt Thomas G. Peery
CommO	1stLt Edward D. Williams

Marine Aircraft Group 50

CO	Col Randall L. West
XO	LtCol Keith L. Maxfield
SEM	SgtMaj Robert W. Holub
Adj	LtCol Michael P. Wilson

S-2	Capt James B. Semple
S-3	LtCol Robert H. Settle
S-4	Maj Ruben Baca
MaintO	Capt Dwight S. Lada
SafetyO	LCdr Robert Hertan, USN

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265

CO	LtCol John D. Holdstein
XO	LtCol Raymond Bevlieu
SEM	SgtMaj Thomas J. Elston
S-1	Capt Matthew C. Taylor (to 23 Jan 91)
	Capt Robert D. Clinton (fm 24 Jan 91)
S-2	Capt Mark L. Rohrbaugh II
S-3	Maj Stephen C. Upton
S-4	Capt Raymond W. Hammer
MaintO	Maj Robin R. Renken
SafetyO	Capt Thomas J. Lindblad

Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169

CO	LtCol Theron D. Rogers
XO	Maj George J. Trautman III
SEM	SgtMaj Dennis W. Lara
S-1	Capt Frank D. Mazur
S-2	Capt Kenneth D. Randall
S-3	Maj Billy C. Bell
S-4	Maj Harry E. McClaren
MaintO	Capt Mitchell A. Jaurena

Marine Helicopter Attack Squadron 773

CO	LtCol James M. Dunn
XO	LtCol Karl T. Schwelm
SEM	SgtMaj Ray L. Riggins
S-1	Maj James D. Tharp
S-2	Maj Bradley C. Lapiska
S-3	Maj Robert C. Eikenberry
S-4	Maj Willard D. Cragg
DOSSO	Maj James A. Smith, Jr.
MaintO	Maj Gerald S. Cory

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772, Det A

CO	LtCol Thomas J. Miller
XO	Maj Richard F. Hamilton (ashore)
	Maj William Haines (afloat)
SEM	1stSgt Anthony Bricca
S-1	Capt Douglas J. Wadsworth
S-2	Capt Timothy Bruton
S-3	Maj Michael T. Lovejoy
S-4	Capt Mark Powell

Brigade Service Support Group 5

CO	LtCol Robert E. Lupton
XO	Maj Robert G. Johnson
SEM	1stSgt Wally C. Hardwick
S-1	1stLt Donald W. Brookins
S-2	1stLt Clay A. Brown
S-3	Maj Kelly W. Kvigne
S-4	Capt Andrew S. Haeuptle
OIC HqDet	1stLt Gregory J. Maradei
OIC EngrDet	Capt Scott D. Nelson
OIC MTDet	1stLt David L. Giesen
OIC ComDet	1stLt Robert M. Gatch, Jr.
OIC LSptDet	Capt Douglas E. Keeler
OIC MedDet	Lt Kevin L. Little, USN
OIC SupDet	Capt Barnaby N. Wiesner
OIC MaintDet	CWO2 Kevin J. Howell

5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (after 17 March 1991)

5th MEB Command Element	
CG	BGen Peter J. Rowe
C/S	Col Drake F. Trumpe
G-1	Maj Leslie E. Garrett
G-2	LtCol Malcolm Arnot
G-3	LtCol Thorys J. Stensrud
G-4	Col Eugene L. Gobeli
G-6	LtCol William J. Cantu
Regimental Landing Team 5	
CO	Col Randolph A. Gangle
BLT 2/5	LtCol Kevin M. Kennedy
BLT 3/5	LtCol Donald R. Selvage
2d Bn, 11th Mar	LtCol Paul A. Gido
Marine Aircraft Group 50	
CO	Col Randall L. West
HMLA-169	LtCol Theron D. Rogers
HMH-772, Det A	LtCol Thomas J. Miller
VMA 513, Det B	Maj Eddie J. Holcomb
HMM-265	LtCol John D. Holdstein
3d LAAD	Maj Gerald L. Troupe
Brigade Service Support Group 5	
CO	Maj Robert G. Johnson
XO	Maj Steven C. Miller
SEM	1stSgt D. K. Pence

S-1	1stLt David W. Brookins
S-2	Capt Clay A. Brown
S-3	Capt Bruce K. Bancroft
S-4	Capt Andrew S. Haeuptle
OIC HqDet	Capt David L. Robbins
OIC EngrDet	Capt Scott D. Nelson
OIC MTDet	2dLt Matthew J. Waters
OIC LSptDet	Capt Douglas E. Keeler
OIC MedDet	HMC R. Bains, USN
OIC SptDet	Maj Steven C. Miller
OIC MaintDet	GySgt B. James

11 Marine Expeditionary Unit (from 17 March 1991)

MEU Command Element	
CO	Col Robert J. Garner
XO	LtCol Charles L. Baker (to 26 May 91)
	LtCol Paul S. Graham (fm 27 May 91)
SEM	SgtMaj Robert W. Holub
S-1	Capt Edward S. Lopez
S-2	Maj Thomas M. Vanderhoof
S-3	Maj Bobbie J. Martin, Jr.
S-4	Maj William E. Holdorf
BLT 3/1	LtCol Robert S. Robichaud
HMM(C)-268	LtCol Melvin W. Forbush
MSSG 11	LtCol Robert E. Lupton

Appendix B
Chronology

1990

20 June--13th MEU(SOC) sails for WestPac on board PhibRon 5.

22 July--5th MEB CE participates in USCentCom Exercise Internal Look to test OpPlan 1002-90 at Eglin AFB, Florida.

2 August--Iraq invades Kuwait.

7 August--Operation Desert Shield begins. I MEF, 1st MEB, 4th MEB, and 7th MEB receive warning orders for possible deployment to the Persian Gulf.

10 August--4th MEB ordered to Gulf.

11 August--BSSG 4 opcon to 4th MEB.

12 August-RLT 2 and MAG-40 opcon to 4th MEB.

15 August--VAdm Mauz assumes duties as ComUSNavCent.

17 August--TransGru 1 departs Morehead City, NC for Gulf.

19 August--Landing Force Planning Cell (LFPC) embarks on board *Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) at Subic Bay, P.I.

20 August--TransGru 2 departs Morehead City for Gulf.

22 August--TransGru 3 departs Morehead City for Gulf. ARG A (13th MEU) sails for Gulf.

25 August--CMAGTF 6-90 departs Okinawa for Gulf.

3 September--TransGru 1 opcon to USCinCCent.

4 September--ComUSNavCent/FMO brief amphibious operations/training plans to Gen Schwarzkopf on board *Blue Ridge* (LCC 19).

5 September--4th MEB contingency plans issued.

6 September--ATF ordered to ModLoc in North Arabian Sea.

7 September--TransGru 2 opcon USCinCCent.

7 September--13th MEU(SOC) arrives in North Arabian Sea.

8 September--13th MEU chops to ComUSNavCent. RLT 4/ARG B chop to ComUSNavCent.

9 September--TransGru 3 opcon USCinCCent.

13 September--ARG B lands at Al Jubayl, RLT 4 chops to ComUSMarCent.

16 September--ATF rendezvous in North Arabian Sea.

17 September--4th MEB chops to ComUSNavCent.

19 September--Amphibious Conference held on board *Blue Ridge*; NavCent, MarCent, CinCCent, PhibRon 2, and 4th MEB reps attend.

24-25 September--CMC/CG FMFPac visit LCC 19, amphibious operations discussed.

28 September--CATF/CLF present 10 amphibious option package to NavCent; ATF has no mission assigned by either CinCCent or ComUSNavCent.

29 September--Exercise Camel Sand (later renamed Sea Soldier I) begins at Ras Al Madrakah, Oman.

6 October--FMO begins negotiations for amphibious training area in UAE.

8 October--Helicopter collision kills eight Marines from 13th MEU(SOC).

13 October--13th MEU(SOC) HMIF boards *Al Mutanabbi.* 5th MEB receives warning order to deploy to SWA. ComUSNavCent visits ATF at Masirah.

16 October--4th MEB transfer of equipment from MSC to MPF shipping begins at Jubayl.

17 October--4th MEB Hawk battery opcon to 3d MAW.

21 October--13th MEU(SOC) HMIF boards *Al Bahar.*

26 October--CentCom amphibious planning conference.

28 October--13th MEU(SOC) HMIF boards *Amuriyah.*

30 October--Exercise Sea Soldier II begins at Madrakah.

4 November--13th MEU(SOC) departs NAS for Philippines.

5 November--Co B, BLT 1/4 (Rein) conducts first live-fire training at Al Hamra, UAE.

6 November--H&S, 3/2 lands at UAE for training ashore, 3d MAW CAS/air delivery ops conducted.

8 November--Exercise Sea Soldier II ends. Stop/loss instituted to stabilize personnel. 13th MEU(SOC) ordered to Subic Bay; placed on 72-hour alert to redeploy to Persian Gulf. CinCCent given amphibious update by FMO.

9 November--PhibGru 3 assigned 13 ships and sail date for SWA is set as 1Dec90.

8-10 November--Combined USMC/UAE forces training at Al Hamra, UAE.

10 November--13th MEU(SOC) released to CinCPac by 4th MEB.

15-21 November--Joint/combined amphibious Exercise Imminent Thunder held at Ras Al Ghar, Saudi Arabia.

19 November--11th MEU(SOC) embedded into 5th MEB.

23 November--Presidential party visits 4th MEB. 2d RPV Company, 2d SRIG, released from 4th MEB to I MEF.

29 November--CentCom moves from defensive to offensive posture. 5th MEB ordered to join not replace 4th MEB.

1 December--5th MEB sails from San Diego. VAdm Arthur replaces VAdm Mauz as ComUSNavCent.

1-5 December--Combined 4th MEB/UAE training at Al Hamra.

8-18 December--Exercise Sea Soldier III held at Madrakah.

13-14 December--CinCCent planning conference at Muscat. NavCent amphibious conference on board *Blue Ridge.*

17-19 December--5th MEB liaison team assigned to 4th MEB.

19 December--CG 4th MEB meets with CG I MEF at Al Jubayl, Saudi Arabia.

20 December--ComUSNavCent briefs SecDef on amphibious options.

26 December--HMIF boards *Ibn Khaldoon* "Peace Ship." CMC & CG FMFPac visit *Blue Ridge.*

28-29 December--CG 4th MEB meets CMC and KTO VIPs at I MEF HQ.

30 December--HMIF boards *Ain Zallah.* Rebel forces enter Mogadishu, Somalia.

1991

1 January--CG 4th MEB designated CLF/CTF 158. Amphibious Coordination Conference held on board the USS *Blue Ridge.*

2 January--Operation Eastern Exit launched when 4th MEB CMAGTF departs Masirah for Somalia.

5 January--Two CH-53s launched from *Trenton* insert 60-man evacuation force then return to *Guam* with 61 evacuees. TF 158/I MEF holds planning meeting.

6 January--Somalia evacuation complete. MarCent(Fwd) boards *Blue Ridge* to coordinate phib ops.

7 January--Planning conference for Exercise Sea Soldier IV.

9 January--MarCent (Fwd) embarks on board *Blue Ridge.*

10 JanuaryOperations conference with ComNavCent staff and MarCent(Fwd) staff on board *Blue Ridge.*

11 January--Operation Eastern Exit ends; 262 evacuees debark at Muscat, Oman.

12 January--13th MEU(SOC) opcon to CTF 158.

13 January--5th MEB joins 4th MEB to form largest ATF since 1950.

14 January--NavCent issues PhibOp Initiating Directive to CTF 158.

15 January--5th MEB opcon to CTF 158.

17 January--Operation Desert Storm begins; TF 158 assumes DefCon II.

18 January--Maritime Planning conference held on board *Blue Ridge.*

18-27 January--4th and 5th MEBs conduct Exercise Sea Soldier IV at Madrakah.

23 January--Warning order for Operation Desert Sting issued to 13th MEU(SOC).

29 January--Co C (-) (Rein), BLT 1/4, 13th MEU(SOC) conducts Operation Desert Sting, a heliborne EPW raid at Umm Al Maradim Island off Kuwaiti coast.

2 February--Amphibious Operation Desert Saber replaced by amphibious deception plan.

4 February--ATF enters Gulf.

6 February--Desert Slash warning order issued to 4th MEB to attack Faylakah Island.

8 February--Iraqi Navy destroyed by air strikes at Umm Qasr.

11 February--NavCent issues execute order for Desert Slash.

12 February--USS *Tripoli* designated AMCM platform.

13 February--5th MEB designated I MEF reserve; 4th MEB and 13th MEU (SOC) assigned to conduct raids and demonstrations in support of CentCom deception plan.

15 February--USS *Tarawa* offloads AV-8Bs at Jubayl; undergoes Scud missile attack. CinCCent briefed about Desert Slash.

17 February--*Tripoli* disabled after it hits mine. 5th MEB liaison team moves to I MEF CP at Al Khanjar, Saudi Arabia.

20 February--VMA-331 (MAG-40) conducts 20 combat sorties from USS *Nassau*; this is first fixed-wing combat strike from LHA.

23 February--5th MEB opcon to I MEF.

24 February--RLT 5 lands at Mishab. BLT 3/1 reinforces TF Troy at Al Wafrah. MAG-50 displaces to Tanajib Airfield. CinCent cancels Desert Slash.

25 February--5th MEB FCE moves to Al Khanjar. BLT 3/1 artillery raid. MAG-50 conducts CIFS instead of GCE. 13th MEU(SOC) ACE conducts demonstration at Ash Shuaybah.

26 February--BLT 3/1 captures 25 EPWs. MAG-40 demonstration at Bubiyan

Island. BLT 3/1 moves to Ice Cube Tray. RLT 5 screens I MEF left flank and provides MSR security.

27 February--RLT 5 processes more than 3,000 EPWs.

28 February--CinCCent declares cease fire.

1 March--RLT 5 begins combat clearing operations at Al Wafrah.

2 March--RLT 5 penetrates Al Wafrah minefields.

3 March--RLT 5 completes clearing operations at Al Wafrah.

4 March--5th MEB opcon to NavCent. 13th MEU(SOC) captures more than 1,400 EPWs on Faylakah Island.

5 March--2d MP Co transferred from 4th MEB to 1st FSSG. Faylakah EPWs debark *Ogden* at Mishab.

8 March--13th MEU(SOC) departs Persian Gulf.

9 March-4th MEB begins retrograde.

11 March--CG 5th MEB designated CTF 158. MarCent (Fwd) departs. PhibGru 2/4th MEB ordered home.

13 March--13th MEU(SOC) released by CTF 158.

16 March--11th MEU(SOC) breaks out of 5th MEB.

18 March--Warning order to conduct Ethiopia NEO issued by CinCCent to ComUSNavCent.

19 March--ComUSNavCent directs 4th MEB return via Red Sea due to trouble in Ethiopia.

23 March--PhibGru 2 enters Suez Canal.

24 March--PhibGru 2 divided into TransGru 1 and 2.

11 April--U.N. cease fire declared.

13 April--UAE PhibEx plans meeting begins.

14 April--CentCom orders US forces out of Iraq and Kuwait; 11th MEU/5th MEB

act as residual force afloat.

15 April--TransGru 1 arrives at Camp Lejeune.

16 April--13th MEU(SOC) arrives at Camp Pendleton.

17 April--TransGru 2 arrives at Camp Lejeune.

20 April--4th MEB deployment ends when CE arrives at Norfolk.

21 April--MarCent replaced by MarForSWA.

24 April--ComUSNavCent replaced by ComUSMEFor.

27 April--PhibRon 1/11th MEU begin amphibious training at Al Hamra.

30 April--Bangladesh ravaged by Cyclone Marian.

7 May--TF 158 dissolved. 5th MEB departs Arabian Sea. 11th MEU(SOC) opcon to ComMidEastFor.

11 May--CinCPac orders 5th MEB to Bangladesh.

15 May--5th MEB commences two-week humanitarian effort in support of Operation Sea Angel.

29 June--5th MEB arrives at San Diego.

Appendix C
Task Organization

ARG A/LF7F
PhibRon 5
- USS *Okinawa* (LPH 3)
- USS *Fort McHenry* (LSD 43)
- USS *Ogden* (LPD 5)
- USS *Cayuga* (LST 1184)
- USS *Durham* (LKA 114)

13th MEU (SOC)
- HQ
- BLT 1/4
- HMM(C)-164
- MSSG 13

4th MEB
- HQ
  - H&S Co
  - SRISG 2
- RLT 2
  - HQ Co, 2d Mar
  - BLT 1/2
  - BLT 3/2
  - 1st Bn, 10th Mar (Rein)
  - Co A, 2d AAV Bn
  - Co A, 2d Tk Bn
  - Det 2d LAI Bn
  - Det 2d Recon Bn
  - Det 2d Trk Co, HQ Bn, 2d MarDiv
- MAG-40
  - HQ
  - VMA-331
  - HMM-263
  - HMM-365
  - HMH-461
  - HMLA-269
  - MALS-14
  - Det H&HS-28
  - Det MACS-6
  - Det MWCS-28
  - Det MASS-1
  - Det Btry A, 2d LAAD Bn

MWSS-274
BSSG 4
HQ
Det H&S Co, 2dFSSG
Det 8th ESB
Det 2d LSB
Det 2d Maint Bn
Det 2d Med Bn
Det 2d Dent Bn
Det 2d Supply Bn
Det 8th MT Bn
Det 8th Comm Bn
Det 2d MP Co

PhibGru 2
Transit Group 1
USS *Shreveport* (LPD 12)
USS *Trenton* (LPD 14)
USS *Portland* (LSD 37)
USS *Gunston Hall* (LSD 44)
Transit Group 2
USS *Nassau* (LHA 4)
USS *Raleigh* (LPD 1)
USS *Pensacola* (LSD 38)
USS *Saginaw* (LST 1188)
Transit Group 3
USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH 2)
USS *Guam* (LPH 9)
USS *Manitowoc* (LST 1180)
USS *LaMoure County* (LST 1194)
MSC Support Ships
USNS *Wright* (T-AVB 3)
MV *Cape Domingo* (T-AKR 5053)
MV *Strong Texan* (T-AK 9670)
MV *Bassro Polar* (non-NRV)
MV *Pheasant* (non-NRV)
MV *Aurora T* (non-NRV)
MV *PFC William Baugh Jr.* (T-AK 3001)
MV *1st Lt Alex Bonnyman Jr.* (T-AK 3003)

Operation Eastern Exit
Amphibious Task Unit
USS *Guam* (LPH 9)
USS *Trenton* (LPD 14)
Contingency Marine Air-ground Task Force

Command Element
HQ Det 1
Det 2d SRISG
Det 8th Comm Bn
Det 2d Intel Co
Det 2d Force Recon Co
Ground Combat Element
Det HQ Co, 2d Mar
Co C, BLT 1/2 (-) (Rein)
Seal Team 8 F (USN)
Aviation Combat Element
HMM-263
HMM-365
Det HMLA-269
Det HMH-461
Combat Service Support Element
Det HQ Co, BSSG 4
Det 2d MP Co
Det 2d LSB
Med Det
Support
Det VMGR-252
Det VMGR-352
Mogadishu MSG Det
Det 1st SOW (USAF)

PhibGru 3
USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1)
USS *Tripoli* (LPH 10)
USS *New Orleans* (LPH 11)
USS *Denver* (LPD 9)
USS *Juneau* (LPD 10)
USS *Mobile* (LKA 115)
USS *Vancouver* (LPD 2)
USS *Anchorage* (LSD 36)
USS *Barbour County* (LST 1195)
USS *Frederick* (LST 1184)
USS *Mount Vernon* (LSD 39)
USS *Germantown* (LSD 42)
USS *Peoria* (LST 1183)
USNS *Flickertail State* (T-ACS 5)
MV *Cape Girardeau* (T-AK 2039)

5th MEB Operations Ashore
5th MEB

- HQ
  - H&S Co (-) (Rein)
  - SRISG 5
    - Det 1st Radio Bn
    - Det Co A, 9th Comm Bn
    - Det 4th Recon Co
    - Det 4th MP Co
- RLT 5
  - HQ Co, 5th Mar
  - BLT 2/5
  - BLT 3/5
  - BLT 3/1
  - 2d Bn, 11th Mar (Rein)
  - Co B, 1st Recon Bn (Rein)
  - Co A, 4th Tank Bn (Rein)
  - Co A, 4th AAV Bn (Rein)
  - Co D, 1st LAV Bn (Rein)
  - Co F, 2/25 (-) (Rein)
  - Co B, 1st CEB (Rein)
  - Co A, 4th CEB (-)
  - TOW Plat, HQ Co, 23d Mar
  - Prov Trk Co, 6th MT Bn
- MAG-50
  - HQ, MAG-50
    - Det MACG-38
    - Det MACS-7
    - Det MALS-39
    - Det MALS-16
    - Det MALS-24
    - Det MWHS-3
    - Det MWHU-3
    - Prov MWSS (RW)
    - Prov MWSS (FW)
  - HMM(C)-268
  - HMM-265
  - HMLA-169 (-)
  - HMA-773 (-)
  - Det HMH-466
  - Det MWSS-372
  - Bty A (-), 3d LAAD Bn
- BSSG 5
  - MSSG 11
  - Det H&S Bn, 1st FSSG
  - Det H&S Bn, 4th FSSG
  - Det 1st LSB

Det Prov Comm Co
Det 6th MT Bn
Det 7th MT Bn
Det Med & Den Bns
Bridge Co, 6th ESB
Det 6th ESB
Det 4th Supply Bn
Det 1st Supply Bn
Det 1st Main Bn
Det 4th Main Bn
Prov POG, Jubayl

ARG A/LF7F, Mar91
PhibRon 1
USS *New Orleans* (LPH 11)
USS *Denver* (LPD 9)
USS *Germantown* (LSD 42)
USS *Peoria* (LST 1183)
USS *Mobile* (LKA 115)
11th MEU(SOC)
HQ
BLT 3/1
HMM(C)-268
MSSG 11

Operation Sea Angel
Amphibious Task Force
USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1)
USS *Juneau* (LPD 10)
USS *Vancouver* (LPD 2)
USS *Anchorage* (LSD 36)
USS *Mount Vernon* (LSD 39)
USS *Barbour County* (LST 1195)
USS *Frederick* (LST 1184)
USNS *Passumpsic* (T-AO 107)

5th MEB
HQ
RLT 5
BLT 2/5
BLT 3/5
2d Bn, 11th Mar
MAG-50
HQ
HMM-265

HMLA-169
HMH-772, Det A
Det 3d LAAD Bn
Det MWSS-372

BSSG 5

HQ
Med Det
Maint Det
Supply Det
Engspt Det
LdgSpt Det
Prov Trk Co, 6th MT
Comm Det
MP Det

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The device reproduced on the back cover is the oldest military insignia in continuous use in the United States. It first appeared, as shown here, on Marine Corps buttons adopted in 1804. With the stars changed to five points, the device has continued on Marine Corps buttons to the present day.